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Aileen Bassis  
Artist

**Race Art Exhibit**  
Artists from the community and University contribute to the exhibit in OP Art Gallery

Continued from Page 9

There are serious questions about race in American history, but also things that entertain and amuse and that are beautiful.”

Walking through the gallery, visitors can view pictures, installations and graphic designs, which all touch upon the theme of race from a different perspective.

Aileen Bassis is one of the artists who participated in American Race. Bassis was an art teacher in New York City who worked with minorities for almost 20 years.

“This exhibit talks about so many concerns that I have that it seems natural for me to contribute to it,” Bassis said. “I think it is interesting to have an impact on people about this topic by art.”

Aaron Fine said everything started with Obama's campaign in 2008. For Bassis, she said this campaign was particularly interesting from a racial point of view.

“It was very exciting,” Fine said. “During the campaign, people were asking questions like, ‘But we do not know him, why should we vote for him?’ That was showing a fear that I related to a race problem. After that, I started collecting text about race and slavery.”

Senior Joyce Wong also contributed to the exhibit as an installation manager. Talking about race is not a topic that has been explored in depth in Truman's Art Gallery in the past, which makes this exhibit particularly relevant, she said. Wong said the show's location in Kirksville is another point of interest for her.

“I feel like a lot of subjects do not get touched on here because of our location, or the Bible belt,” Wong said. “America is very diversified, and we miss a lot of that from being in Kirksville. What I do like with this show is that there are more things opened up.”

After gazing around the exhibit Wong said the visitors do not look like the usual ones.

“It is a very successful show because it includes a lot of people who don't usually come to the gallery,” Wong said. “I think it's a very educational show too — we have more classes coming than [usual].”



Brian O'Shaughnessy/Index

Before Sieren's Palace became a clothing store it was a theater that specialized in silent films, second-run movies and local acts.

# Theater turns clothing store

BY SHANNON WALTER  
Staff Reporter

High, ornate ceilings flank a balcony pointing toward what once was a stage that showed silent films, but now holds women's clothing.

The building is currently home to Sieren's Palace, a retail store on 202 S. Franklin St. with clothing ranging in styles for young to elderly women.

“We sell clothing for teenagers up until you pass away, so we say that our customers can shop here for most of their life,” owner Herb Sieren said.

The building was originally home to the Princess Theater, which was a beloved spot to catch a film on a Friday night in Kirksville until the late 1950s.

Prominent Kirksville businessman Valentine Miller purchased the lot in 1915 and hired architect Irwin Dunbar to design and construct the theater, according to the 1987 Historic Inventory of Kirksville. Dunbar built many structures in town, including the Miller block located northeast of the building. At various times, the theater specialized in silent films, second-run movies and local acts. Miller operated the theater until his death in the 1920s, and his daughter, after whom the theater was named, operated the business until she closed its doors in the early 1950s. The building then was left vacant until the early 1970s when it was transformed into a fabric shop.

Sieren said he started his business in 1977. He was a traveling businessman representing several clothing brands out of Kansas City when he said he decided he wanted to sell the clothing in his own store.

## Historical Homes

Sieren said the shop has retained much of the original theater's architecture, including the plaster work that forms several medallions on the ceiling and walls and a large archway over what used to be a stage. However, the seats and stage have been removed to provide space for clothing racks and display shelves.

“As far as the inside, it has pretty much stayed intact,” Sieren said. “We're trying to keep it in its original form as much as we can. The interior has remained the same other than some slat walls to showcase merchandise.”

The original balcony extends around the walls in a U-shape facing the stage. Sieren said the balcony still contains the original projector and many of the seats.

“There's parts of the old projector up above in the balcony, and I hope that someone will come along someday and restore that because it's really neat,” he said.

Sieren said he thinks the building is a large attraction for many of his customers.

“We really enjoy it because when people come in here and they see the building, say they're from out of town, they always come back because they remember the uniqueness of the building,” he said.

Brad Selby, codes administrator for the city and staff representative for the Kirksville Historic Preservation Commission, said he hopes this building continues to be preserved historically by being taken care of and showcasing the features that are immediately

recognizable in Sieren's Palace.

“I'd love to see more people come to the downtown area to these places,” Selby said.

Kirksville was selected for the Dream Initiative earlier this year, Selby said. The goal of the Dream Initiative is to revitalize the downtown.

“One of the things that can be done to revitalize downtown is to focus on the historic features,” Selby said. “Our downtown — we've got a beautiful downtown — it's got many historic buildings and [we need] to focus on our historic assets.”

Historic preservation isn't at the top of Sieren's list when running the business, but he said the upkeep of the building always involves maintaining the historic portions of his store.

“The only negative part of it is the high ceilings and the cost of heating the property,” he said. “I think of the historic stuff as upkeep of the building and keeping it nice. I love the building though.”

Historic preservation consultant Karen Bode-Baxter recently held a meeting at City Hall explaining the benefits of historic restoration for Kirksville and business owners.

“Almost 20 years ago I came to Kirksville to see the downtown,” Bode-Baxter said. “I thought it was beautiful, and I'm so happy to be back working on the historic preservation of the area.”

Buildings in the area do not qualify as historic places simply because they are old, Bode-Baxter said. The owner needs to be dedicated to the upkeep and to maintaining the historic value of the property.

“Buildings are listed because they are either important nationally, statewide or most often because they are important to the development of the local community,” Bode-Baxter said.

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