

Campus to showcase pieces from New York

Program to direct art acquisition will be a first for the University

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Doug Dempster, dean of the College of Fine Arts, said he is looking forward to a more interesting walk to the office next semester that will bring him past a new art installment by famed minimalist sculptor Tony Smith.

"It's just going to be fabulous," Dempster said.

The sculpture, which will be located on Trinity Street, is one of 28 modern pieces from New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art that will be installed on campus over the next few months, with the first official unveiling scheduled for Sept. 12.

Acquiring the collection is the "kick-off initiative" for UT's public art program, called Landmarks, said program director Andrée Bober. The program is UT's first attempt to provide a comprehensive direction for the acquisition of public art installations on campus.

"If you think about any kind of collection, you see that you can't just get one of these and one of those," Bober said. "The Met collection will provide a historical context from which we can build cohesiveness and depth. We're beginning to not only beautify the campus but collect art that tells a story about what's happening aesthetically elsewhere in the world."

The first 17 sculptures will be installed throughout campus during August, Bober said. Eleven more will be installed in the Bass Concert Hall and revealed when the building's renovation is complete in January 2009. All of the sculptures are modern pieces created by notable 20th-century sculptors.

UT is only paying for transportation of the artwork, or the monetary equivalent of a typical three-month art exhibition, Bober said. The five-year loan is renewable, and the University plans to keep the artwork indefinitely.

Bober said she first began developing the Landmarks program in 2004 and heard of the Met's sculptures from a colleague.

"Essentially, [the Met] collected all of these works with the intent of exhibition, but collections change," Bober said. "They don't have the real estate necessary to display these sculptures."

In cooperation with Peter Walker Partners, Bober developed a "Public Art Master Plan" in 2007

for the Landmarks program to guide the acquisition and placement of artwork based on architectural appropriateness, cohesion and quality.

"Having these quality works of art can create a sense of place, really shape people's lives and perhaps even provide daily inspiration," Bober said. "Students come here not only to learn about their disciplines but about the world. When students see a sculpture by Deborah Butterfield or Tony Smith every day, it creates a point of reference ... and it might even inspire them to learn something about the importance of these artists."

For further information on the works of art, each sculpture will have its own Web page address displayed on a plaque, Dempster said. Visitors can use mobile devices to access information about a particular sculpture or download an audio tour.

"This is one of the things I'm most excited about as a new dean," Dempster said. "The collection will be the envy of college campuses across the country."

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