

'ART ATTACK'

LOCAL ART HISTORIAN PREMIERES ON TRAVEL CHANNEL SHOW C1



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COURTESY PHOTOS
Lee Sandstead discusses an art work at the Walters Art Museum in Baltimore, and below, describes a painting at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston.

Lee Sandstead hopes to foster art appreciation with new Travel Channel show



'ART ATTACK'

BY SUSAN ELZEY
Special to the Register & Bee

South Boston art historian Lee Sandstead has taken his high energy and enthusiasm for art all the way to the Travel Channel. His show "Art Attack with Lee Sandstead," which premiered the weekend after Thanksgiving, follows Sandstead as he travels to 10 of America's biggest cities to visit 10 of America's biggest museums.

It all began with a lecture he gave. "I was giving a lecture on art at George Mason University, and a TV marketer was in the audience," Sandstead said. "Her response to my lecture was, 'We have to get you on TV!'"

"I then gave a tour of the National Gallery of Art to her marketing staff, and then I was contacted by an executive from the Travel Channel."

The process from the lecture to series premiere took almost two years. The

On-air information:

"Art Attack with Lee Sandstead" will air locally at the following times on the Travel Channel.

- Sunday, Dec. 14:**
 - 9 a.m. - Walters Art Museum, Baltimore
 - 9:30 a.m. - Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
- Sunday, Dec. 21:**
 - 9 a.m. - Norton Simon Museum of Art, Pasadena, Calif.
 - 9:30 a.m. - Los Angeles County Museum of Art

actual shooting inside the museums took two months this past year, and then another three months of post-production work, such as editing, sound, voiceovers and graphics.

During the half-hour shows, Sandstead discusses five pieces of art from

each of 10 museums that were selected for their "big bang" effect—and that just happen to be his favorites.

"Basically, we wanted museums in large population centers that have extensive collections," he said. "Of course, they had to want us in their museums as well!"

Watching the shows, it might seem amazing that a museum would want a fast-talking man running through the galleries and climbing up on the larger statues, but Sandstead said the museums were great to work with and the crew took extreme precautions with each shooting.

"Museum staff was on hand at all times to give us permission for my museum antics," he said.

Film crews were hired locally, but two staff from the Travel Channel traveled with Sandstead at all times—the

ART

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director Nick Brigden and the field producer Carrie Kaylor.

On an average set, there were anywhere from eight to 15 people standing behind the camera.

Each half-hour show took two 12-to-14-hour days of shooting with most of the museum shots being done overnight.

Out of the hundreds of pieces in a museum, Sandstead had to narrow his selections down to five to highlight. Because of the nature of TV and the nature of TV audiences, the selection of the pieces was based largely on two criteria: a compelling image and a compelling story.

"The artwork discussed first and foremost had to have an interesting story," Sandstead said.

"So the Albert Bierstadt piece we covered in the Brooklyn Museum was a great image and a great story, i.e., the landscape painting was actually a romantic painting from the artist to his lover."

Sandstead said shooting the shows was among the most exciting—and difficult—things he has ever done in his life.

"The making of TV is so intense that it is almost impossible to describe to those not in TV," he said. "But it was even harder for me because I was new to TV. It was the professionalism of the crew that got me through the shooting."

"On the second day of shooting at Brooklyn, I was so exhausted that I was literally sleeping in front of the museum on a bench waiting for the crew to arrive. It was a horrible day for me, but the

professionalism of the crew really carried us home."

HELPING PEOPLE UNDERSTAND ART

He said that for some reason he doesn't quite understand, the mainstream of the American public does not love the fine arts.

"Americans love art," he said. "They love the theaters, and their iPods are filled with music, but they just don't embrace the fine arts, or 'non-verbal art,' such as sculptures and paintings."

At one time, Americans loved art, Sandstead said, and at the turn of the 20th century even threw parades whenever new artwork was produced.

Although he said the reason that Americans don't embrace the fine arts anymore is best left to philosophers, Sandstead believes that around the 1930s, the critics, art historians and artists began to create art that had little to do with middle America.

He wants to help change that attitude, however, through his television shows. "My shows will help people understand art," he said.

And even after just the first show, Sandstead said the response has been "amazing."

"I've heard from art educators who have said the shows are just perfect for their students," he said. "I've also gotten responses from 5-year-olds to 80-year-olds."

For the first time in a long time now, Sandstead has no big projects ahead of him and is content to take a vacation for a while in the town he calls "South Paradise."

His biggest goal is enticing people to watch his television shows.

"I urge people to tune in," he said. "Will they like every single artwork on the show? Heck no! But tune in, give art a chance and I guarantee that I can get you fired-up for art!"

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