

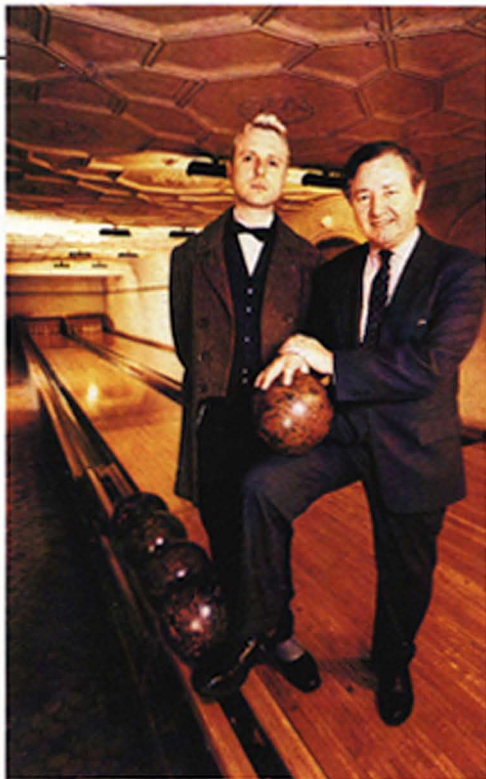
MUSEUMS

Bowling For Dührers

The secret lanes in the Frick's basement.

WHEN SAMUEL SACHS II signed on as director of the Frick Collection last September, he knew the museum had a distinguished collection of Western art. It wasn't until some months later, however, that he learned it also had an antique two-lane bowling alley. The unmechanized lanes were built in 1913, back when such amusements were de rigueur for any halfway-decent mansion. But as the fashion changed, the Frick's were re-floored and forgotten.

Sachs vowed to continue the process, already under way, of restoring the lanes to their former glory. But it soon became clear that while skilled craftsmen and quality materials are merely expensive, pinsetters—real live ones, just like in the old



Wales and Sachs in the Frick's bowling alley.

days—no longer exist. Sachs had almost given up hope of finding anyone when he met David Arthur Wales.

The 33-year-old transplanted Australian painter isn't a pinsetter by profession, though the lost art isn't the most obscure stop on his career path: He has been a "mail-order flatterer" and acted in infomercials and karaoke videos. "I applied recently to be a butler at the St. Regis," he says. "But I haven't ever done anything like this before."

To perfect the technique of resetting the pins and then quickly ducking out of the way, Wales practiced with one of the Frick guards after hours. "I've got it down to about ten seconds. I'm actually rather impressed. There's something wonderfully Dickensian about it."

The grandly restored room, on the other hand, is straight out of Edith Wharton: hand-carved wood paneling, period fixtures, and mother-of-pearl buttons labeled VALET, BUTLER, and PANTRY. Open only

for museum functions, the alley made its debut on March 4, in a party for the collection's patrons. "How often do you get to play on a nearly antique bowling alley?" asks Sachs. "With Mr. Wales's help, the lanes worked quite admirably."

From the far end of the lanes, Wales adds, "The pay's not bad, and after the party, I got to polish off some leftover 1928 Sauternes—really a very nice drop. So for me, it's quite a step into another world." JOHN BOWE