

# *The Civilization of Llhuros*

Cornell Alumni News | March 1972

*Mrs. Marilyn Kawin (Marilyn Rivchin), assistant to the director of the White Museum, wrote an advance story for the exhibition that might have helped warn a visitor.*

The Andrew Dickson White Museum of Art at Cornell University announces a remarkable exhibition experience, the "discovery" of a previously unknown civilization, "Llhuros." Amazingly, all of the fragmentary remnants of the Llhuroscian culture-its utilitarian and ritual objects, its scientific instruments, its architectural ruins-are in fact the product of the unique conception of a single contemporary artist, Norman Daly.

Daly, who has been a professor of painting and sculpture at Cornell since 1942, has worked within this pseudo-anthropological framework for the last several years. Besides creating "artifacts," he has written Llhuroscian poetry and music and has established a considerable body of Llhuroscian scholarship. It is critical to note that the exhibition will present Llhuros as a "real" ancient civilization of archaeological, anthropological and aesthetic study and will not expose the work as that of an individual artist.

The exhibition will consist of over one hundred objects, including sculpture, paintings, and facsimiles from temples, photo-montages, etc. Larger pieces include temple doors, huge fragments of frescoes, and two full-scale, spectacular works: a thirty-six foot wall, a nine-foot tall full temple wall, decorated in bas-relief, and the reconstruction of the priests' circle of effigy chairs within the Temple of Holmeek.

These dramatic works will be reached after the viewer has travelled through a maze-like passage in which the smaller works are displayed.

At various points on the way, taped sound will provide introductory information, music, and translations or ritual chants.

The implications of the exhibition and Daly's concept go well beyond imitation and parody. The "artifacts" are, most importantly, quite beautiful; their qualities endure independent of the Llhuroscian context. Many are ingeniously constructed out of found objects, carefully patinated to suggest an ancient origin. The degree of disguise varies, offering constant challenge to the visitor's innocent assumptions of the reality of the ancient culture and of the reliability of his own senses.



"The simulated anthropological milieu," writes Daly, "provides an appropriate ambience for the gallery-goer to involve himself in mentally reconstructing the disassembled sculpture and shards by

responding to the visual clues provided in the frescoes and paintings." The complex environment of music, painting, sculpture, crafts, sounds, costumes and writing are meant to "engage the gallery-goer on visual, auditory, and tactile levels—all vital supplementary aids for fuller audience involvement. But the artist's full objective will not be achieved unless the foibles, follies, superstitions, cruelties, fears, and anxieties of this mythical culture are recognized as having disquieting resemblance to our own civilization."

Interpretations of Daly's work will necessarily have to deal with issues on several levels: his ingenious formal and satirical use of the found object; his vast conceptual scheme paradoxically realized in meticulously wrought art objects; his position as an environmental artist intent on deception so as to urge the viewer into perceiving intensely and thinking associatively (i.e., creatively). He shows us, through our senses, how history and art can teach us. If this is a large metaphysical project, it is nevertheless uniquely expressed in vivid material forms.

*The exhibition will continue at the White Museum through March 5. After it leaves Cornell, the Llhueros show will be displayed at several other museums, including the Memorial Art Gallery of the University of Rochester, November 3 to December 3, and the State University of New York at Albany, January 15 to February 11, 1973. Other dates are not yet definite.*