

Background
of
“The Civilization of Llhuros”

Norman Daly, 1988

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My project, “The Civilization of Llhuros”, is the first multi-media of its genre in Archaeological Fiction.

The project is comprised of more than 150 works of visual art, ranging from a match-box size of pseudo-scientific instrument to an eight by thirty-six foot temple wall in bas-relief. Besides examples of painting, sculpture, mosaic, frescoes, there are example of architectural ruins, scale models of temples, poetry, prayers, liturgical music, maps, costumes, jewelry, votives, fetishes, civic and sacred (sepulchral) steles, pictograph, facsimiles and replicas.

A recorded enactment of a religious festival— “The Tokens of Holmeek” — simulates an orgiastic procession moving from the sea to a hill-top and uses natural sounds (wind, rain, surf, birds) together with incidental life sounds—dialogue in Llhuroscian, animals cries and children and women choruses.

Separate from this auditory background is a twenty-five minute sound track of an interview of two Llhuroscian scholars by a science editor. Purportedly recorded ‘in situ’, at the excavation site of the Temple of Atraxos, the tape features an interview with an English paleographer and a Swedish archaeologist. The scholars present readings and sometimes opposing interpretations of various aspects of the Llhuroscian culture.

There is also an hour-long narrated slide show of the origins, the visual art, the salient characteristics and chronological history of Llhuros. This exhibition was shown in seven American museums in 1972-73; It was augmented by new large sculpture, bas-relief and a mosaic, and stained-glass windows created in Cologne especially for the 100th anniversary of the Wallraf-Richartz museum – “Projekt '74” – “Llhuros—Eine entdeckte Kultur”. My catalog was translated into German and selections were later shown in Rotterdam in 1982.

This project is an original work of fiction presented as a “real” ancient culture with an invitation to the viewer to share with me common appraisals of some human experiences.

I attempt to go beyond the boundaries of a conventional exhibition of painting and sculpture in various ways. I parody the analytical methods of anthropologists, sociologist, psychiatrists and art historian. I challenge the reliability of the viewer’s own senses by creating ambiguity – by using real stone, marble and metal along with carefully patinated styrofoam, plastic and found objects to suggest an ancient origin. I emphasize deception, obscurities and satire.

All these strategies are aimed at stimulating audience involvement. I pursue this mode of presentation because I am opposed to exhibiting in a passive environment contrived to eliminate interferences and to foster servile acquiescence. The way I present this project leads to opposite goals



Fig 69- Trallib (Oil Container)

where a sense of beauty is heightened and lowered by alternately strengthening and weakening the credibility of this civilization.

Thus, in an initial presentation of apparently reasonable and sound information, works of



Fig. 7 - Pair of Fornicating Gods

logically varied scale and purpose, a feeling of congruity of style and ancient appearance are dispelled by uncovering a disguise—[the metal pair of fornicating gods – Figure 7 – are actually an old-fashioned stove-lid handle and a flag-holder— or the heavily encrusted earthenware – Figure 69, a sacred oil-container—is really a plastic detergent bottle.] Among the original Llhuroscian pieces are both copies and facsimiles. In relation to the small scale models, the huge fragments give a notion of awesome size to the full-scale original entity. Chattering human voices interweave with electronically-generated sounds.

These provocations, denials and even frustrations are used as activating forces which would urge, if not goad to viewer to wonder, question, consider and perhaps decide that there is a disconcerting similarity between the foibles, fears, absurdities, eccentricities and pervasive eroticism of this imaginary culture and our own society.