

Art Relics of a Non-existent People

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By Desmond Ryan

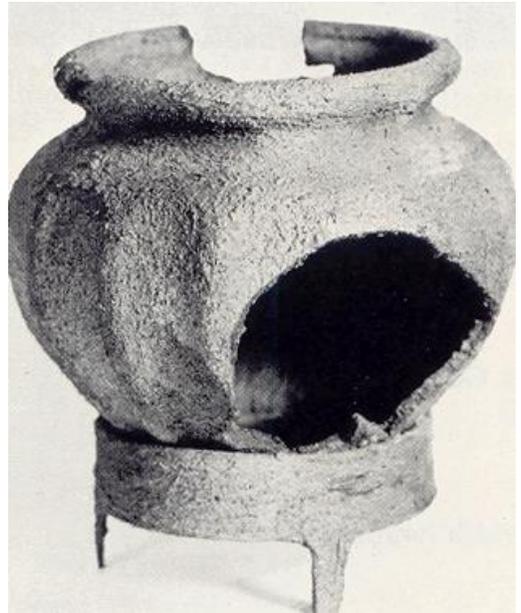
Visitors to the University of Pennsylvania Museum's exhibition of "The Civilization of Llhuros" may be particularly intrigued by a small artifact of the lost race a corroded bronze shield used in temple rites.

Closer scrutiny permitted to a reporter revealed that the other side of the shield bears an astonishing resemblance to an ordinary Wool-worth's ashtray, circa 1966.

In fact, museum officials cheerfully admit, it once was a Woolworth's ashtray, circa 1966.

*"My show is like that
Pennsylvania Dutch expression
'half jest and all in earnest.'"*

The display should have opened on April Fool's day instead of last Friday, because every artifact in the exhibition is a hoax. The tools, weapons, phallic symbols, votive statues, household trappings were all convincingly crafted by Norman Daly, a Cornell University art professor who has spent five years fleshing out his fantasy civilization.



Early Archaic water clock was "presumably used for finding the hour at night"

"We've never had anything like this before, and I think it's great that a serious institution . . . can take a month off and laugh at itself," declared Crownover.

Daly is a serious artist, but his archeological tour de force is nothing short of hilarious. His artifacts are shaped from the debris of industrial society old farm tools, bricks, tiles, odd bits of machinery and his talent for simulating corrosion with acrylic paints makes them appear absolutely genuine.



Votive believed to contain an 'imprisoned' image of a minor deity

The hoax is compounded by an imposing catalog written by Daly in the kind of scholarly claptrap that passes for English in abstruse academic periodicals.

The catalog is replete with pompous prose, references to such renowned Llhuroscian scholars as Sir Adrian Hartley Cruickshank and citations of German pedants; "Professor Schilaneder sees in this mural copy evidence of the occasional archaism of the middle period (Lebende Symbole, p. 84)," the catalog notes soberly.

Half the diversion of visiting the exhibition lies in trying to determine what commonplace objects were transformed by Daly's touch. A convincing helmet for a temple virgin was once an ordinary basket holder; an old gear cog has been turned into an astrolabe and an amalgam of shoemaker's equipment became a votive statue.

This exhibition has appeared in six other cities. Daly said many people have been astounded to learn it is not genuine and Llhuros is a figment of his imagination. "Some artist friends of mine have been very affronted when they found out," the professor, who has been at Cornell since 1942, remarked cheerfully. Speaking by phone from Cornell, Daly said he

considered his work serious, but "It isn't inappropriate have humor when you're trying to be deadly serious."

Daly said he created fantasy civilization and a literature and music to go with it because he wanted draw attention to his art. Placing it in an "anthropological milieu," he feels he succeeded because "the idea is to get people involved a mental level."

Half the diversion of visiting the exhibition lies in trying to determine what commonplace objects were transformed by Daly's touch.

But a visitor had best go to this exhibit ready to laugh at such things as "Trallib oil container found in excavations of Vanibo." Looks suspiciously like a bottle of liquid detergent, which is exactly what it was until Daly worked his witty alchemy on it.

"You know, people won't listen if you talk to them seriously," he said. "My show is like that Pennsylvania Dutch expression 'half jest and all in earnest.' "



Model of the Temple of Holmeek found at Houndee by Swedish Institute of Archaeological Science

Art relics of a non-existent people

By Desmond Ryan
Knight Newspapers

Visitors to the University of Pennsylvania Museum's exhibition of "The Civilization of Llhuros" may be particularly intrigued by a small artifact of the lost race — a corroded bronze shield used in temple rites.

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"It's a spoof of archeology," said David Crownover, the museum's executive secretary, who cackled with delight as he wandered among the ersatz ceramics and counterfeit wall panels and bronze doors from a long non-existent temple.

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Early Archaic water clock at left was "presumably used for finding the hour at night." Votive (right) "is believed to contain an 'imprisoned' image of a minor diety."



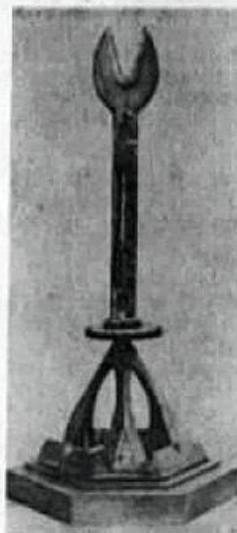
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