



Art in America

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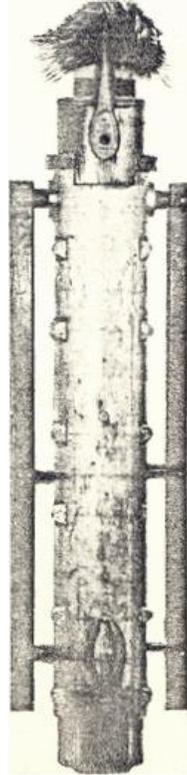
Norman Daly at Cornell

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Recently "excavated" artifacts, ritual objects, architectural fragments, scientific instruments as well as poetry chants from the strange culture of Llhuros are featured in an exhibition at the Andrew Dickson White Museum of Art at Cornell University. The display consists of over one hundred objects, including sculptures, paintings and facsimiles from temples, photomontages, etc. Larger pieces include temple doors, huge fragments of frescoes, and two full-scale spectacular works: a thirty-six-foot temple wall, nine feet tall, decorated in bas-relief; and the reconstruction of the priests' circle of effigy chairs within the Temple of Holrneek. These dramatic works are reached after the viewer has traveled a maze-like passage in which the smaller works are displayed. At various points on the way, taped sound provides introductory information, music and translations of ritual chants.

The perceptive viewer soon becomes uneasy as he confronts one peculiar yet somehow familiar object after another. For all the remnants of Llhuros are created by one contemporary artist, Norman Daly, who has assumed the post of Director of Llhuroscian Studies at Cornell University, where he has been a professor of painting and sculpture since 1942.

Daly's conception of an entire civilization is realized on several levels. It is a game in which the visitor is invited to take an active part by suspending disbelief and embracing the fantasy evoked by Daly's images and words. It is a spoof of the methods, jargon and pretensions of archeologists, anthropologists and psychologists. It is an invented context for works of considerable esthetic interest in their own right. And, finally, it is a disquieting reflection upon the rituals and practices of our own time.



An artifact described as follows in catalogue for "The Civilization of Llhuria, " Cornell University: "Llhurian Mace. Carried by a secular official in the procession of the most important religious service of the Llhurian culture-The Tokens of Holrneek. The bearers of these maces were of a minor form of royalty, and the abstract design of each mace served almost as a coat of arms. Because the office of the Royal Mace-Bearer was elective rather than hereditary, maces were found in large numbers in excavated urban sites. Found at Houndee, 1966. "

The complex environment of sounds, painting, sculpture, crafts and writing is, according to Daly), 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 resemblances in our own civilization.

"The Civilization of Llhuria" is being shown at Cornell January 25-March 5. The material from Llhuros will later be displayed at the Albany Institute of History and Art and the Memorial Art Gallery of the University of Rochester.