

Professor, Crafty Devil, Puts Fantasy on Display

University of Pennsylvania Museum | March 18, 1974

The Philadelphia Inquirer | Desmond Ryan

Visitors to the University of Pennsylvania Museum's forthcoming 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 previewer revealed that the other side of the shield bears an astounding resemblance to an ordinary Woolworth's ashtray, circa 1966.

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



Three Llhuroscian artifacts displayed during the exhibition

The display ought to open on April Fool's Day instead of March 22, 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.

It's a spoof of archaeology," 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 nonexistent temple. "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 archaeological 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.

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society...*

The hoax is compounded by an imposing catalogue written by Daly in the kind of scholarly claptrap that passes for English in abstruse academic periodicals. The catalogue is replete with pompous prose, references to such renowned Llhuroscian scholars as Sir Adrian Hartley Cruickshank and citations of German pedants: "Professor Schilander sees in this mural copy, evidence of the occasional archaism of the middle period (Lebende Symbole, p. 84)," the catalogue 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, which runs to the end of April, has appeared in six other cities. Daly said many people have been astounded to learn that 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 telephone from Cornell, Daly said he considered his work serious, but "It isn't inappropriate to have humor when you're trying to be deadly serious."

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

But a visitor had best go to this exhibition ready to laugh at such things as "Trallib"—oil container found in the excavations of Vanibo." It 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 in jest and all in earnest.'"



Exhibits and visitors, all in fun

Photos by Robert L. Mooney