

The Civilization of Llhuros

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Print of Phallic Monument destroyed in 1807 by Napoleonic Troops. Part of the exhibit, "The Civilization of Llhuros," by Norman Daly.

Irishmen seem to have a penchant for recreating ancient myth to illuminate contemporary truths. Norman Daly's "Civilization of Llhuros," currently on exhibit at the State University Art Gallery, treads on the paths of fellow countrymen Yeats and Joyce who also created mythical landscapes for their art. Daly's conception began with a concert he attended at Cornell University six years ago. Although the music was avant-garde, the composer's audience seemed to be working for him even though there was interference from outside (concert-goers' late

entrances, paper rustling etc.). The listeners were attuning one sense to the music and attempting to block out interference. Daly, the philosopher artist, envied the audience concentration and longed for gallery goers to participate in the same way. If he could construct some planned interference, perhaps his art audience would respond in the same manner.

Daly had always been intrigued with ancient surfaces and pastiches with cracks. His previous work had been rendered with found objects and after integrating all these areas, he secluded himself in a deserted Quonset hut five years ago and imagined a mythic land, a lost civilization named Llhuros which exists only in the reality of the artist's mind.

Daly's mythic civilization is a complete entity which includes "authentic" artifacts, menstrual charts, ritual objects, poetry, chants and a sex simulator. The viewer is also armed with an extensive glossy catalogue in the tradition of the Metropolitan which mimics art, archaeology, scholarship and just about everything else. The guiding principle in the exhibition is metamorphosis, but in this show the viewer becomes the participating transformer. It is annoying, provocative and humorous to realize that the huge stone tribal thrones are fashioned from styrofoam and not onyx, and are draped with a typical headshop leather vest.

His votive tablets are rippled with simulated cracks while ritual objects, seemingly encrusted with the crud of time, turn out to be can openers, shoe horns or motorcycle parts. A constant tension exists between the new and old and keeps the viewer in the same state of anticipation. As a modern myth maker Daly makes a statement on our times and on himself. For him, the creation of his imagination was therapy and his racial or fictional memories become a structure of our own.

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