

The Civilization of Llhuros

Akron Art Institute (Akron Art Museum)

The Toledo Blade | Louise Bruner | October 1, 1972

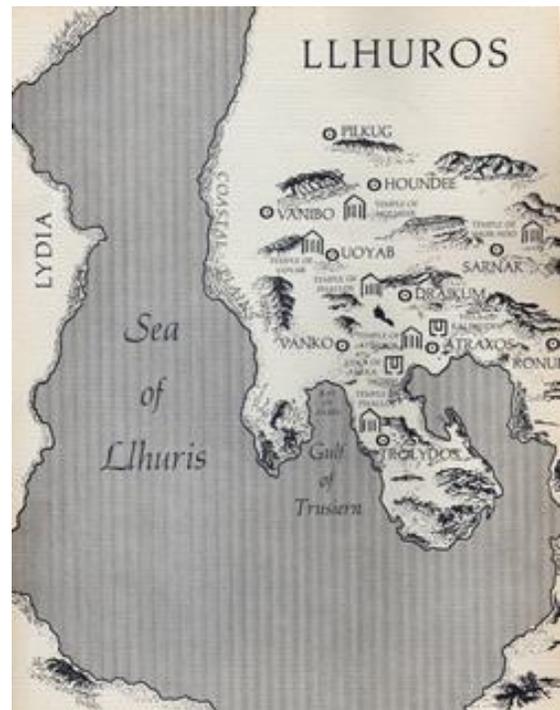
EVER hear of the Civilization of Llhuros?

I hope you said, “No.” because. there never was one.

Yet the Akron Art Institute has a full-scale exhibition, “The Civilization of Llhuros,” replete with artifacts and weapons, wall paintings, and icons, plus a scholarly catalogue with maps, bibliography and footnotes.

Well, it’s a spoof, a glorious spoof – on archaeologists, anthropologists, art historians and us, the gullible public, that looks but does not see, and sets great store on anything that bears a label and is exhibited in a museum.

From the drab catalog in ultra-proper format to the pompously obtuse language and labored nitpicking (designed to impress your colleagues with your erudition), it is done so convincingly that it takes a while before your initial yawn turns into a broad grin.



ANCIENT culture lay within boundaries indicated by this map, but to date athropological historians ahve yet to disentangle legend from fact, according to Norman Daly, director of Llhurosian Studies at Cornell



HOME VOTIVE, left, depicts an ithyphallic god with a small image of minor god

The wit who is responsible, Norman Daly, listed as “director of Llhuroscian Studies at Cornell University. Actually, he is a sculptor on the Cornell staff, who constructs with “found” objects, the plastic and mechanically stamped out detritus of our culture, comparable to the pot shards, rusted fibulae (safety pins), and the like that archaeologists dig up.

Daly’s own work has thus far not set the world on fire. In fact, at a campus exhibition of his work, someone used one of his sculptures as a hat rack. That set him thinking.

“The fault was my own...my work didn’t exist because I had offered no kind of communication,” he said. “I should have included a placard that might have overcome the original identity of the object and revealed it in a new way.”

The “new way” he decided upon was to pour new wine in old bottles; that is to add the patina of age, and to endow them with a historical pedigree that would obfuscate their 20th-century context.

With the blessing of the understanding director of Cornell’s Andrew D. White Museum, Thomas W. Leavitt, Daly proceeded to create Llhuros. He composed music, wrote poetry, devised musical instruments, votive figures, and ritual paraphernalia, and invented legends, tribal customs, and terminology.

Poetry, he explains, was burned into leather sheaths call “senberiens.” A semberien was worn at time as an amulet or sometimes attached to a votive or placed within if the votive has a hollow interior.

One of the earliest, “dedicated to the joint deities Tal-Hax and Shor-Noo, was found in the excavations at Vanibo from the Lamplo period (Late Archaic), when the Llhuroscian were still gatherers rather than hunters, and has been translated by Sir Hiloin Rupert Bailey of the Royal Paleographic Society.” It goes like this:

*“My food is scarce and has no taste.
My woman is cold and old. Tal-Hax
tell great Shor-Noo, change was is good
for me. Let the berry-bush bow low, the
nets fill. Let my woman loosen her hair
about me. Do this, Tal-Hax, and I will
not fail to plant fish bones in neat
regular mounds over turtle-shells filled
with black and white stones when the
moon comes again.”*

His objects include a 10-cents store orange juicer, labeled as a “trallib” (oil container), with the notation that trallibs were usually in humanoid shape, while this one was of a phallic type used by priests in the Temple of Phallos at Draikum.

A pillbox (?) with “male ohnos in combat” may have contained aphrodisiac powders. Prof. Schilandeder has uncovered evidence leading him to believe the Lokust sect altered both sexes at puberty by the use of “haptphoric implants of hairuhr, the spongiose fat of the sea cow resulting in sexual elephantiasis.” The women rode giant sea turtles because the weight of their breasts prevented ambulation.



ESNONTOS (urn) was found at Uoyab in 1961. They were most commonly used as water containers, although other uses are attested.



This petroglyph accompanies the earliest extent image of a stilt-walker, which is clearly incised in the left section. The axiom on the right offers the insight "It is wiser to fondle a viper than believe a reflection in a troubled pool."

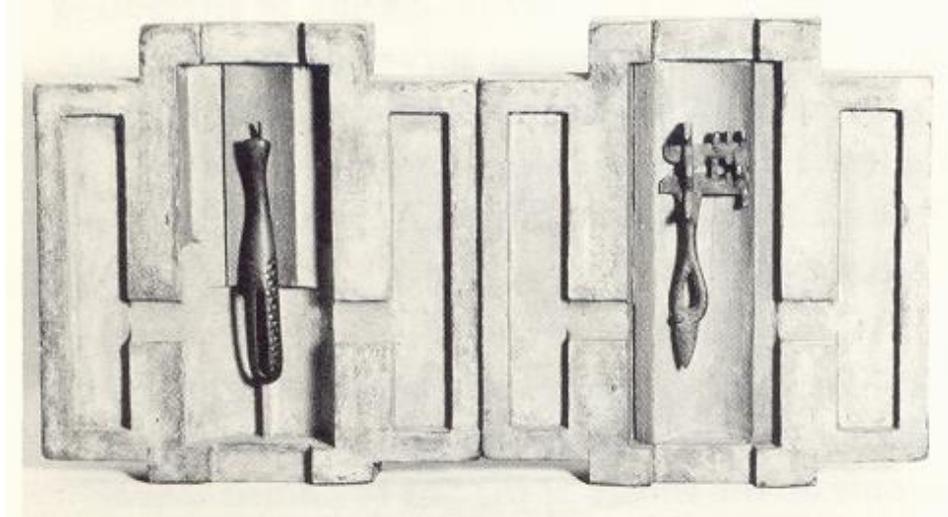
Also on display is a "trollium," (menstrual chart), with pegs and dials to indicate fertile periods by lunar reference. "Most anthropologists do not attribute the decline of the people of Llhuros to this device" Daly explains, "rather it was the direct consequences of their stupefying apathy."

One brief sampling of the text, commenting on a Llhuroscian song:

"Considered in the light of the audible phase latencies, this primitive song demonstrates that absolute normalization of the primary narcissism principle counteracting erotic negativity and illuminating the limits of situational apperception considered by advocates of morphological mimicry to be of no less than rootstock for tertiary identification among the constitutive dynamics of acoustical obsession."

Every art historian will appreciate the bibliography, which refers to such unobtainable sources as the "Local History of Serbian Cities Pazarevac and Uranje," published in 1818 in Zajecar, Serbia by Czerny Karadjorjevic, and

translated by Friedrich Ehrenfried Zajecar; and other obscure journals written in Italian, French, German, and Swedish.



THIS home votive shrine in two parts shows the joint deities, Tal-Hax and Shor-Noo, found in the excavations at Vanibo.

In the Akron museum, taped “Llhuroscian” music (electronic) is piped into the galleries, along with an interview by a BBC reporter with two Llhuroscian archaeologists.

Akron’s curator Alfred Radloff, said the project is far more than a joke, “or we wouldn’t be showing it. We are displaying Daly’s artifacts as the handsome creative constructions they are, with the hope that this good-natured spoofing will awaken people to look and to discover, instead of accepting without question.”

After the close of the Akron engagement, October 22, the exhibition goes to Rochester, Albany, Phoenix, and Santa Barbara. If you can’t see it, buy a catalog for \$3. It’s hilarious, but also accomplishes what many museum exhibitions set out to do but don’t; namely, to make you think.