

The Parallels Pinch: Ersatz Culture May Be Relevant

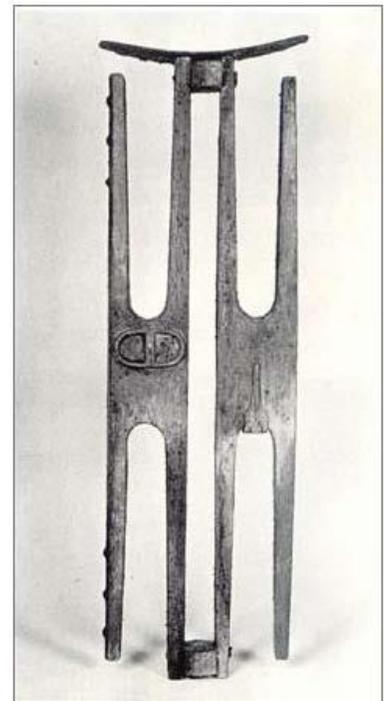
Memorial Art Gallery Exhibit | University of Rochester
Brighton-Pittsford Post | November 9, 1972

Looking a bit like a character out of his own fantasies, the gentle little man with flowing white beard and twinkling eyes had two tricks up his sleeve: to catch and engage the attention of the too-casual observer at the Memorial Art Gallery this month and to create his own soapbox.

The mechanism for the slight-of-hand is a pseudo-archeological collection of artifacts from a privately-imagined civilization called "Llhuros."

Norman Daly, resident painter and sculptor at Cornell University, says he was dismayed at the casual response of most people looking at contemporary art, until he concluded that perhaps there was little intellectual content in the art.

For years, he was content to let his own artistic creations speak for themselves. But, describing himself as "an increasingly querulous old man", he began to want to impose meaning on his representations of found objects, and at the same time to make his own statement about the civilization around us.



Llhuros is his statement; a great, literal spoof on academic pedantry: an impressive accumulation of artifacts of an ancient society constructed from the debris of 20th Century civilization; and the "querulous" statement about a value system in which lobotomized athletes compete by transistorized instructions

from an intellectual-referee and the political process is ritualized sodomy.

It's a tour de force, complete with authoritative cataloging and learned footnotes, academic exegesis, and chronologically delineated periods ranging from "Early Archaic" through "Decline."

There are votive objects, mural fragments, ritual prayers in poem form, effigy chairs, human figures, scientific instruments, even a mathematical computer - straight from Middle Earth, although Daly admits no debt to Tolkien. The artist even composed the ritual music which beats through the fantasy of Llhuros.

All of this is composed of bizarrely familiar materials: Honda packing cases and hardware items, plastic food cartons, and Victorian memorabilia. The acrylic disguise of the bronzed and antiqued objects is superb, until suddenly disbelief takes over. One recognizes the orange juicer, the cobbler's shoe fast, the inside of an old iron.

Great fun! Children dash about, seeing far more quickly than an adult the plastic detergent bottle beneath the rare hermaphrodite trallib (oil container) of the Late Archaic Period.

But those who pause to read the archeological comments and ponder over the "planned interference" of familiar objects may find a more provocative experience. Llhuros was in decline. The parallels to our society are devastating.

Daly has spent more than five years constructing his fantasy but says he accomplished most of what he's done in an intense four and a half month period when he totally immersed himself in the "digs." He intends to add to the collection as he "discovers" more artifacts.

Meanwhile, there's a very good show at the Memorial Art Gallery.

Ersatz Culture May Be Relevant

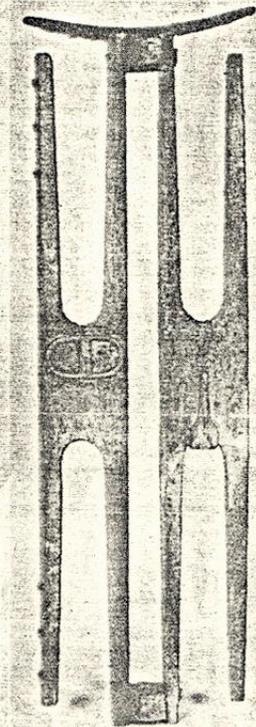
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PAIR OF stilt-walkers, Early archaic Period, an artifact of Llhuros.

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