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## Exhibition Preview: Provo

### The Windows of Dzyan

#### Andrew Kosorok's Theosophical Scrapbook

by Ehren Clark

Peruse the aisles of any home décor shop and you'll find an abundance of glassware -- decorative, lovely objects meant to serve various purposes. Knowing I would be reviewing the work of Andrew Kosorok, glass artist, MFA student and teacher at Brigham Young University, I asked myself, "What is the difference between the objets d'art at the local mall and actual glass fine art?" I found my answer in Kosorok's new series of glass works, on display this month at the Special Collections Library at BYU. The objects found at the local curio shops are meant to liven a décor, hold a flower, or beautify an empty shelf. Kosorok's work may be called beautiful, but they serve a higher purpose. They are visual, physical entities that, through the artist's philosophic, metaphysical and historical explorations of the spiritual essences of cultures spanning thousands of years, enable a contemplative experience.

Kosorok's philosophic inquiries into varying spiritual cultures, manifestations of gods, saints, martyrs, deities, visions of heaven and hell are unraveled by a careful, in-depth look into his work and his approach to the medium of glass. Through excruciatingly complicated symbolism, Kosorok's work probes and unlocks the essence of various cultures. Glass is the medium Kosorok is expert with and the vehicle for his metaphysical metaphors, which take as much time to plan as they do to create-- thousands of years of culture, a thousand hours to render.

Kosorok's creations are as beautiful as they are meaningful. His focus is on Islam, Buddhism, Christianity, aboriginal, Native American and ancient American cultures and their beliefs and ideology. Like objects of devotion, his works aim towards enlightenment and veneration in a contemporary, post-modern sense. His intellectual and metaphysical approach is manifest in the complex symbolism which elicits every facet contained in each of his pieces. There are no arbitrary forms but concentrated meaning, layer upon layer that elucidate the culture and the unique spirituality of each that ignite an informative discourse into such metaphysical realms. His pieces are unique to each doctrine, giving the feeling that an individual sculptor had done each. This alludes to Kosorok's own philosophy and his erudite understanding of his subjects; these and his love of the medium are the driving forces behind his work that enable him to achieve a symbiosis of content and form in his creations.

## Exhibition Review: Ephraim

### A Mirror on Utah

#### CUAC's Annual Utah Juried Art Exhibition

by Geoff Wichert

In the past, the Central Utah Art Center's annual survey has sometimes sent out mixed signals. It seemed that when a venue that regularly imports exciting new art from around the country throws open its doors and invites local artists to respond, they often reply with work that bears, at best, an ambivalent relation to the present day.

It is good to find, then, that CUAC's Jared Latimer found a juror in L.A. who could see virtues in Utah's art that, for whatever reason, have yet to light a fire under resident viewers. Micol Hebron, who lists Performance and Video among her mediums, looked over sixty entrants and found twenty artists -- some well known and some not -- who manage to acquit the Ephraim gallery of charges that its ambitious regular program is out of sync with the homegrown product of Utah's professional (and yet, like the fictional Asher Lev, religiously orthodox) arts community. None is quite a household name yet, even in most artistic households. Still each deserves a look today, and watching for in the future.

The bad news is that those wanting to feel the pulse of Utah's up-and-coming art must now travel further abroad than the Salt Lake Art Center, UMFA, or Park City. Fortunately, the trip itself can be part of the reward, especially on Highway 89, the focus of several recent Salt Lake exhibitions. And for once parking will not be a problem -- even on opening night.

At the opening, juror Hebron addressed a standing room-only crowd and reiterated that the pendulum of the mode is coming back from fifty years of unadulterated formalism. As she wrote in her statement, "The works in this show have strong and intimate relationships to medium as well as concept." She goes on to compare these works to dreams, adding that some "are ciphers, collaged with disparate images to comprise a narrative that, to the dreamer, makes neat and perfect sense" while others "can be shrewdly focused on one element, illuminating the quintessential characteristics of a thing otherwise unnoticed in daily life."

Julie Lucas shows how dreams plunder the waking world, and reminds us that artists in the West have been mining ore from these veins for decades. Her ribald assemblages differ from those of Ed and Nancy Reddin Kienholz primarily in her choice of shiny new materials rather than everyday items worn by use. "Tick Tock," a clock with a fetal face, a doll's head, and an hourglass that has run out in its chubby fist, declines unambiguous comment on the predicament of women whose biology may still be fate. | 1 | "Cold" -- the title could refer to his plumbing or how he leaves a woman feeling -- may contemplate the ideal vs the real in a putative mate. Balancing her three-dimensional allegories perfectly on the razor's edge, Lucas challenges viewers to consider whether sexuality is fact or myth.

Emily Fox, both here and in the Eccles Black and White show, looks more and more like Utah's answer to Daumier. In "Education of the Children," a child's drawing of the school contrasts with the keenly observed faces of the students, whose adult selves are foreshadowed in their self-contained postures and expressions. "Mr. Big Stuff" | 2 | intrigues everyone on the page, while leaving us as puzzled as vegetarians watching a hamburger ad on TV. Moroni filmmaker Joe Puente, like many of today's artists (but also many who are not artists), documents his life in candid photographs he uploads to his website. A passionate man who grew up on his father's stories of Spanish Civil War atrocities, Puente's struggle for disabled veteran's medical rights may have found an objective correlative in "Inferno In the Sky," | 0 | his dramatic photo of cloud formations captured in the blazing-but-brief spectacle of the desert sunset.

Adam Ned Larsen's meticulously crafted, artist's book-influenced assemblages, while they demur from Julie Lucas's satirical humor, recall one of his heroes, H.C. Westermann. "Spit Propulsion," | 3 | its title recalling the child's ability to make things real through imitating their sounds, replaces one kind of irony with the belief that images recollected from childhood icons, including nursery rhymes and toys, offer pathways into adult truths. Tyler Hackett's "According To The Map" and "Things That Have To Be Learned" | 4 | also use symbolic information to augment older codes, arranging evocative images of natural and man-made objects to evoke processes of coming into being, whether intimate and

"Dawn Breaks" | 0 | is a virtual "Dome of the Rock." Highly geometric, each unit alludes to a spiritual symbol of Islam, using numerical systems and symbology exclusive to Islamic art and architecture. An example is the use of the number 113, which not only is apparent in the cutting method of the sacred shrine housed within the edifice, a cubed structure, but references section 113 of the Koran, a prayer against ignorance. Inside this form is imprisoned an almost imperceptible headless demon of ignorance, a metaphor and a testament to knowledge which is awe inspiring in form and content.

Form and content are much a part of Kosorok's work, such as the figure of "Daibutsu in Lotus Blossom" wherein Buddhist philosophy is given life in the open petals of this 16 sectioned flower. | 1 | A portrait cut in glass of the Daibutsu at Nara, Japan, is rendered throughout the composition in major, while each petal either represents one of the eight avatars associated with each compass point or one of the eight celestial orders of beings with allegiance to Buddha, derived from Japanese texts, are represented in the minor. These are celestial guards of Buddha, beautifully crafted in a delicate flower of divinity, simple in grace yet complex in articulation and meaning.

An equally complex figurative segment of the series is a nine piece configuration titled "Four Crowned Martyrs." | 2 | Each of the pieces is an ingeniously constructed medieval-type reliquary, devotional objects relegated to each martyr. In the construction of the "reliquaries," Kosorok etched and colored in glass the individual faces of each martyr, and then spliced each in fifteen squares and then reassembled them into one unit. This unity alludes to their common cause and common suffering. As fitting, each reliquary contains a relic unique to each martyr, a tool of their sanctity as patrons of sculpture.

The most monumental of the works which will be seen in the show is called "Seven Deadly Sins." | 3 | It consists of thirteen panels of glass aligned on a large metal frame, each carved with aboriginal or Native American symbols reflecting the subject of Dante guided by Virgil through the depths of Inferno, a passage from "The Divine Comedy." It is a metaphorical journey into the abyss, a medieval subject told contemporaneously, as might be illuminated in stained glass of medieval cathedrals. Much of the significance of this episode is relevant today: visions of the afterlife, and Kosorok uses glass to create what was once believed literally. However he uses a different semiotic than the medieval through his aboriginal and Native American iconography.

A more small-scale yet in no way less meaningful approach is taken in the work "Codex Vitreum -- Book of Glass," which inquires into Mayan metaphysical culture of deity prior to the Spanish Conversion. | 4 | It is a construction of glass panels placed together in an accordion method. Each panel is a passage from the Mayan Almanac, the four that remained after the arrival of the Spaniards. The almanac dictates the manner by which the god Itzamna is to be worshiped on any given day of the year. Kosorok's "Codex" reveals the story of the original creation and illustrates various iconography of the God as dictated by the four extant books. Kosorok's concern for historical detail and understanding led him to consult an expert in Mayan linguistics to create the title of the book using original Mayan Text, reading "Book of glass/made and built by/a man from the Kosorok family."

Such work as Andrew Kosorok's will never be used to ornate bookshelves or to serve to be used as a table setting, but are studies in metaphysics captured in glass. They are works that serve a specific purpose to be appreciated for what they are -- erudite examinations of metaphysical aspects of numerous cultures unraveled in fine articulation of the medium. Medieval Christian observers learned of their creed through icons, the Moslem worshipper through symbolic architecture, the ancient through sculpture and text. These ideologies, long forgotten, are rendered for today's viewer in an historical documentation in glass. Said Kosorok: "These are different approaches to holy societies to live in harmony with a divine will."

Windows of Dzyan: A Theosophical Scrapbook will be at the L. Tom Perry Special Collections Room 1130 Harold B. Lee Library BYU April 7-May 5

personal, or culture-wide and common property.

Painters Sarah Lewis and Dale Peel show interest in the uses of light to establish mood. Her allegorical "Earth Three" makes a visual argument for hope and positive possibilities. His darker fantasy landscape, "Cyprus," contrasts neatly with Brandon Burton's "Heavy Cloud" to show how shapes can deflect meaning: in this case, inverting a form inverts feeling. Meanwhile, realism challenges the viewer, stylistically and otherwise, in "Susannah At the Table," | 5 | **Chris Thornock's** skewed confrontation with a young woman who skewers with her piercing gaze.

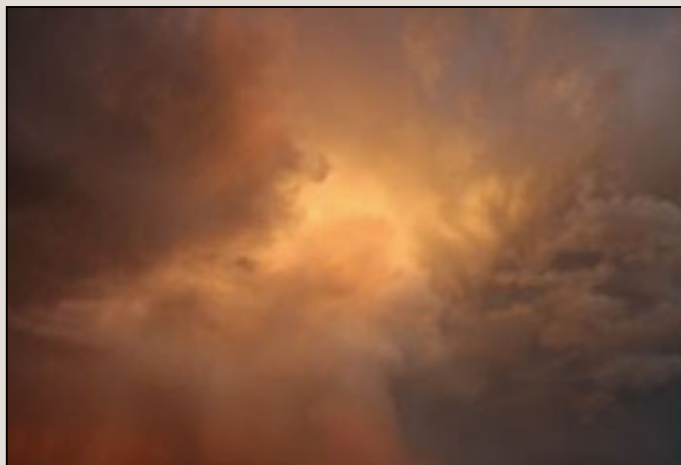
Onetime still life painter Kelly Brooks, resisting the temptation for artists who take teaching jobs to turn timid, has reinvented herself through blind contour drawings -- of her daughter Ash in action -- that forego the medium's comic verisimilitude in favor of capturing the intensely focused energy of an apprentice human being. | 6 |

**Sandra Brunvand's** "Dog Hair Installation" reminds us that the Zeitgeist can sometimes be best approached through the artist's private preoccupations. As Brunvand's art and life have increasingly intertwined over the years, she notes, or anticipates, the directions our deeply rooted interest in memoir and self-expression are taking. With her emphasis on breaking through the walls between her studio and its surrounding ecosphere, and her equivocation between found and created visual matter, Brunvand comes close to capturing who we are and what lies closest to our fundamental experience of life in Utah: not in the wilderness, not in the past, but here -- in our built environment, with its structures and companion animals --and now.

Many of the themes in evidence among these twenty artists are collected in Holly Duong's two elaborate, schematic drawings. Too large and extensive for textbooks, they suggest posters designed to explain and annotate the processes they depict. Thus "Louise Gardens" distills a style of collaborative gardening from a variety of collaborating visual styles. Connected logically like parts of a flow chart on one level, on another the parts are unified by evidence of organic processes. Instead of warring with each other, technology and nature are yoked together by the same mental and material means that make art possible. Fragments of something similar appear in "God's Gift to Man," where analogies between biological and mechanical devices rise to the level of bursting, flame-like, in ecstatic extremes of experience. Yes, we are machines, but nonetheless capable of joyously extending ourselves.

CUAC Director Jared Latimer only recently finished the schedule of shows left behind by the previous administration, and so in a sense this is his first real chance to sum up the strengths of Utah's current art scene. He and juror Micol Hebron have scoured Utah and found proof that today's artists, steeped in traditional skills that were nurtured here while they atrophied elsewhere, have no problem using those skills to hold up a mirror in which we can see ourselves anew.

The Fourth Annual Utah Juried Show is at the Central Utah Art Center through April 23.



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