

# Powers of association play large role in BYU exhibit

by Deborah Perlman

Three stone-faced Roman heads in dire need of rhinoplasty adorn a small-scale lithograph that is hanging in the Donna Beam Fine Art Gallery. Most lithographs don't need nose jobs and most aren't titled, "Evidence in Support of the Hypothesis that Ancient Romans Could not Smell Well."

In spite of the Roman icon and sharp-witted title, this lithograph by Tamarind master printer Wayne Kimball and 35 other works of art all contain an emphasis on the skill required to execute the piece while still containing undertones of that which is metaphysical.

Thus, the title of the exhibition is "Hand & Spirit: Brigham Young University

Art Department Faculty Exhibition."

According to Jerry Schefcik, director of the Donna Beam Gallery, "The imagery in this exhibition demonstrates the diversity, the cohesion and the completeness of a successful faculty." Schefcik explains, "Expressing the spiritual nature of the world is a common or cohesive goal of the BYU faculty though it is approached by diverse means."

On closer inspection of Kimball's five lithographs, there are layers upon layers of disguised symbolism in his exquisitely-detailed prints. His recognizable objects naturally play with the viewer's past associations.

Reminiscent in style and intent of the abstract ex-

pressionists, faculty members Bruce Robertson and Hagen Haltern use powerful, dark, ambiguous color forms to infer subliminal associations. Like abstract expressionist Mark Rothko, they both reduce the subject matter to the essential so that there is no interference between the painter and the idea nor the idea and the viewer.

BYU professor of art and illustrator James Christensen is showing works titled, "Tea for Toucan", "Fernando the Fat Faery" and "Quisquilia". Each of his works in oil possess a whimsical dream-like quality filled with imagery one would and could find in children's literature. The people, creatures and objects depicted also play with the viewer's power of asso-

ciation.

Professor and chairman of the BYU Art Department Robert Marshall, whose work is titled "Giverny XI", named after the place which served as impressionist Monet's greatest source of inspiration, depicts nature in an idealized manner. He uses nature as an allegory of eternal bliss symbolizing its metaphysical source.

Less contrived, highly textured and large in scale are the ceramic/sculptural works by BYU faculty member Von Allen. Her two untitled works interact with one another in silent harmony. Yet, Allen's obscure work is somewhat baffling and seems to invite the viewer to wonder whether there is something spiritual beyond the medium itself.

Other BYU faculty members included in the exhibition are Wulf Barsch, Sabine Carlson, Brent Gehring, Neil Hadlock, Doug Himes, Peter Myer and Bruce Smith.

The BYU faculty artists might be considered provincial by some and cutting

edge by others because of their choice to break from mainstream movements to focus on their alignment with aesthetic and spiritual values and the concern for the process of creating.

But it was abstract expressionist Robert Motherwell who said, "the function of the artist is to make the spiritual so that it is there to be possessed." The BYU faculty exhibition truly serves Motherwell's quote.

Their works also serve to point out that without being didactic, they have created something spiritual in art that people can appreciate regardless of their own past experiences and associations. The BYU artists accomplished this through different mediums, styles and subject matter ranging from the depiction of idealized beauty in nature to ambiguous two and three-dimensional forms and even, stone-faced Romans without nostrils.

The exhibition continues through October 29. There is no charge for admission.

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photo by Rob Weidenfeld

'Tea for Toucan,' an oil painting by James Christensen.

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