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EROS AT PLAY by Kris Kuksi

Paradise Lost: The Prophetic Sculptures of Kris Kuksi



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A Heroic Abduction, 2010, by Kris Kuksi. Mixed media assemblage, 19 1/2"x 31"x 9".

RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE, POLITICAL PROGRESS, RESPECT FOR NATURE, AND THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL AND SOCIAL JUDGMENT — these are just some of the complex subjects addressed in the sculptures of Kris Kuksi. With subtle confrontation, the rural Kansas sculptor presents a chilling vision of modern society's self-assured nature and the potential consequences of indifference. Synthesizing the effects of political, sociological, and psychological constructs, the works incorporate graceful, flowing appropriations of Baroque forms contrasted with rigid, industrially-produced plastic model kits and figurines. Aesthetically unified with layers of paint and patina, the results are intricately polarized narratives of the balance between good and evil, left and right, night and day, past and future.

"The work gets into *possibility* — say, if our current civilization crumbles or there is a decline, how would the survivors repopulate and rebuild? How would their design aesthetic come to be? How would they salvage and make new habitats? What would their architecture be like? It's like a recycled world after this one is gone: How would the survivors rebuild after this civilization is gone?"

Though he never intended to be a messenger of a potential post-apocalyptic future, the classically-trained painter found that making the switch to a three-dimensional technique seven years ago provided him with opportunities to explore more complex concepts. With Bosch-like insight into the human psyche, a hint of dark satire, and a hypersensitivity to political and social conflict, Kuksi creates universally-accessible messages of "loss" that he hopes will become catalysts for change.

"I want everyone to connect to the work, whether they are educated or not. I think art should be its own language. If I can add an amount of humor in there, it can lighten the mood, and I think it adds to the message and the human psychological and sociological aspects ...

"It seems like, with everything in life, it's very comfortable, but once something is missing — when a loved one dies or our civil liberty is stripped away — we realize this sense of loss. We don't have this awareness until it's gone. Liberties are really

gradually slipping away. You have to look at history. There is an interesting historical pattern of how countries rise: There is an abuse of power, then they become fundamentalists, and then dictatorships can happen. There is a great quote by Thomas Jefferson: 'All tyranny needs to gain a foothold is for people of good conscience to remain silent.' If you remain silent, then things just continue to happen."

Silence, or rather a state of quiet oblivion, is clearly evident in the faces of the figures in Kuksi's works.

"Most figures and characters in my works act as though they are completely absorbed in their thoughts, or perhaps daydreaming, oblivious to other characters surrounding them. This is right out of the modern world. You can be on a very busy street in New York City, but you are all alone. There is this dehumanized feeling.

"All tyranny needs to gain a foothold is for people of good conscience to remain silent."

— Thomas Jefferson

It is not encouraged to walk up to a perfect stranger and strike up a conversation. There is a feeling that we are all alone, an encouragement to be self-absorbed, only concerned



A Heroic Abduction (detail), 2010, by Kris Kuksi. Mixed media assemblage, 19 1/2" x 31" x 9".



Eros at Play (detail), 2010, by Kris Kuksi. Mixed media assemblage, 16" x 21" x 8". (Full image featured on the cover.)

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and worried about yourself. We do have to help each other; this is the path toward self-fulfillment. We are social beings; it goes against our nature to think that we can be independent. The modern world has brought that on.”

Kuksi believes a return to a greater respect for nature, in the spirit of Reconstructive Postmodernism, is perhaps the force that can unite modern man and prevent its downfall. He also believes that replacing isolationist tendencies with time for introspection and creative solitude is what will allow society to move closer to enlightenment.

“Having that ability to have creative solitude is a big thing for anyone. It’s not very encouraged, and it is missing for a lot of people. If you asked the average person living in the modern world, they would feel some sense of emptiness or some sense of loss. Today is a big, confusing, restless edifice of how-to and how-not. So many sharp angles of modern architecture that seem to pierce the human body, an over-stimulating abundance of advertising and product placement pollute our eyes ... those places of retreat and solitude become farther and farther away ...

“In the human mind, we find hurt in what we have done as a result of our demons ... It’s easier to wait to address problems tomorrow, I guess; but you still wake up with a bad feeling, remembering what you are avoiding.” **PA**

Kris Kuksi (www.kuksi.com) is represented by the Joshua Liner Gallery in New York, where he will have a solo show in the spring of 2012. His work will also be exhibited at the Pulse Contemporary Art Fair in Los Angeles in late September 2011, and in Miami in December 2011 during Art Basel Miami Beach. His first book of his artwork, Divination and Delusion, is nearly sold out and will be expanded in its second printing in 2012.

An artist and writer, Kim Hall is the Editor of Professional Artist. Kim can be reached at khall@professionalartistmag.com.



Churchtank Type 8, 2010, by Kris Kuksi. Mixed media assemblage, 26"x 18"x 9 1/2".