



JAMPA DORJE'S ZEN ASSEMBLAGE ART: COWBOY FUNK AND PERCEPTION

BY CORY EBERHART

Just as local artist, Jampa Dorje, is a man of considerable parts (Buddhist monk, philosopher, journalist, art promoter, bookstore owner, businessman, community organizer, cowboy, poet, archivist and much more), his collected assemblages of framed sculpted and mounted pieces are part and parcel to the landscapes and times in which Jampa has evolutionarily found himself.

With respect to the spirit of each piece, the viewing experience is best suited by employing a practice and perception of Zen. Whether the viewer encounters an image (archived digitally, print reproduction), or the physical object d'art in person (always best) as occurs here, the full potential for a transformative experience requires an approach that suspends all verbal and logical faculties.

It is not in the nature of Jampa's art to insist upon anything from you, dear viewer. However, to receive what this show offers, you must listen carefully, not to the words flowing from your own inner dialogue, but to the pure thought melded in the form of the framed works. Use your capability to suppress all internal speech. No thinking, "What the holy is this?"

As an art aficionado (I may say this because you are here) who has stepped into the tableau of this gallery show, it is up to you to find the path to a direct perception of Jampa's work. Here are a few basic guideposts. Begin with an uninterrupted, non-distracted focus of mind, body, soul. This is the pathway for your approach to a greater understanding of these pieces, as it was the process Jampa employed in assembling them, filtered through a being-ness without words.

Words have no place in contemplation of Jampa Dorje's Cowboy Funk Assemblages. Funk on display here is not like any other pretty junk, rather it is exquisite when experienced purely in its idea form. A richness emerges as words are suspended and the viewer realizes Jampa's art as pure idea. Which, indeed, is everything. Jampa instructs us to "look for nothing behind the junk."

You need not look there either, just as it would be senseless to look for nothing on either side, or in front of the junk. Jampa has also remarked that he uses disparate objects with the hope of "a most fortunate accident of composition." This modest insight from the artist seems self-evident, and yet is suggestive of a 2

marriage of western sensibility and Zen creativity which becomes bonded in the creative process. Once your mind empties, you may well find a sense of wonder emerging within your consciousness of how Jampa's choice of materials is so clever to coyly lead you, the viewer, into a deep, quite intimate involvement with these art pieces.

Could that tummy butterfly feeling invoked actually be junky love? Yes. Yes, it could, with a generous sprinkling of appreciation for Jampa's cheeky expressive artistry. Like standing on shifting sands, you may not be sure of your footing as you view these works. Is this truly funky junk, or is it actually junky funk? Where is the emphasis? As you are drawn into the work, preconceptions evaporate in deeper contemplation of these conundrums. Do not be too amazed when words to describe the experience do not fail you so much as no longer serve a purpose.

Traditionally Zen art draws the viewer into the work. The value of Jampa's koan-like pieces is similar to what is said of the head of a dead cat as the most valuable thing in the world. Any possible posted purchase dollar amount is not reflective of the real worth of junk art as a catalyst for change. Jampa's assemblages arise from a natural aesthetic that most importantly does not leave the viewer out of its scope.

In effect, each finished piece allows room for the viewer to be incorporated within the frame of reference. Not through any trickery or manipulation on the artist's part either. You will see that this is so. A truer title of Jampa's inclusive collective work might be: Junk-R-Us.

In that moment when you, the viewer as perceiver, quite suddenly become intensely aware of something big beyond the seemingly random arrangement of objects before you, which superficially flirtatiously beckoned, the result is unveiled truth, beauty and the universal. Difficult to believe that an individual will walk away from this local monk's retrospective without a changed view of the human and natural world bond.

Do not dismiss the impact of this show. Once moved, who will ever again be able to walk past a lost piece of junk in the wild without wordless pause.