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J. Roman Andrus: Extending the Senses

D. R. Dant

“In subject matter, from the human head to mountain peaks there is a philosophic penetration, a revelation of the inner character, a certain genre, an acquaintance with the reality hidden beneath the surface. The form and style range from the solidly monumental to the sensuously lyric, accomplished consistently with the abstract and aesthetic elements. The line, color, and order of form communicate the work’s purpose and meaning.”

—Arts Council of Central Utah, 1 November 1969

A St. George native, J. Roman Andrus took his first art lessons from the “masses and spaces, [the] rhythms and breaks,”¹ of the buttes and canyons of southern Utah. Later he received formal training at Brigham Young University, the Otis Art Institute in Los Angeles, the Art League of New York, Columbia University, and the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center. By the time he joined the Brigham Young University faculty in 1940, he was as interested in print making as in drawing and painting; with a press obtained from Rocky Mountain Banknote, Andrus taught the first university class in block printing offered in the intermountain area.

As Alex B. Darais stated in a tribute, Andrus is “a man / who loves the sensuous ooze of paint / the quiver of linen under his brush / the fragrance of turpentine / the cool face of a lithograph stone.”² Certainly the lithograph print which appears on the cover of this issue reveals the quality of that love. *Don’t Speak* is symbolic of a time of realization, an experience too sacred to discuss. The covered heads emphasize the sacredness of the event, and its encompassing nature is indicated by the encircling robes. The strongest light falls on the central figure, who experiences the full force of the truth. The side figures share in this realization to lesser degrees, one catching some but not all of the light, the other partially turning away.

In another sense, *Don’t Speak*—the central figure in particular—expresses Andrus’s view of art: “Art is a precious way of life, wanting to see, to extend the senses, to include the unusual and the beautiful.”

NOTES

¹ Karl E. Young, manuscript in possession of J. Roman Andrus.

² Alex B. Darais, Tribute, Springville, Utah, 1 November 1969; in possession of J. Roman Andrus.