



**IN HIS ELEMENT:** Artist Myron Conan Dyal in his studio. Dyal's work is on display in "Primordial Images of a Modern Mystic," a one-man show at the CSUF Grand Central Art Center in Santa Ana.

## VISIONS MADE REAL

Myron Conan Dyal, who has quietly pursued his singular art form, unveils his works to the world.

BY DANIELLA WALSH  
 SPECIAL TO THE REGISTER

**S**culptures of mermaids with webbed hands, a huge spider transporting a load of human skulls on its back, flowers sprouting eyes and an assortment of humanoid beings with faces that could easily be used in films like "Night of the Living Dead." Then there are paintings of masks and mysterious, paint-

ed manifestations of the artist's vision and invention, including an assemblage featuring a viola growing a melancholy human face.

All have their origins in the mind of Myron Conan Dyal, 63, a self-taught artist who, after toiling for 35 years as a telecommunications executive, is about to chuck the corporate world and devote himself to making art full time.

Art became his true calling in the late 1970s, he said, and



"Grandmother"

since then he has created a body of work comprising more than 6,000 drawings, illustrated journals, paintings and sculptures. Now, with Dyal ready at last to unveil it to the greater public, the CSUF Grand Central Art Center in Santa Ana is staging "Primordial Images of a Modern Mystic," a one-man show spotlighting sculptures, paintings, drawings and a small selection of sketchbooks filled from 1986 through 2000. Alas, one can only see two pages of each book since they are, understandably, displayed under glass.



"The Domination of Religion"

Drawings range from a delicate image of a woman merging into the body of a serpent ("She Surrounded Me with Love," 1984) to a detailed pencil drawing that makes one wonder if his visions included visits from Picasso.

At opening night, the show drew appreciative crowds, even if some viewers appeared a bit mystified by his darker works such as "The Underworld," 2007, an installation featuring roughly 40 otherworldly-looking sculptures of "people" and animals in the black-lit back gallery. (The overall effect is a bit like "Star



"Family"

Wars" meets creatures of the bayou.) The artist is prolific: The majority of pieces have been done in less than a year, which is something Dyal attributes to feeling like a manic depressive, without the depressive, when he is on a roll. "When I am in a creative space and my visions start, I am so driven that my energy levels go off the scale. I work 17 hours a day and do not go to the office," he said. It's not surprising for him to work on three or more paintings at a given time.

Yet, one never gets a feeling that any of the pieces have

### 'Primordial Images of a Modern Mystic'

- **Where:** The CSUF Grand Central Art Center, 125 N. Broadway, Santa Ana
- **When:** Through May 20. Center hours: Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Sunday 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.; Friday and Saturday 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. Closed Monday
- **How much:** Free
- **Call:** 714-567-7233 or 714-567-7234

been rushed - on the contrary, the entire ghostly back gallery crew, including a keyboard-wielding "man" who alludes to Dyal's past as a professional musician and singular sculptures such as "The Goddess of Autumn," 2007, or several beautiful mermaids are carefully executed in great detail.

Dyal creates his sculptures, with the exception of one lovely assemblage titled "The Spirit Goddess in the World," 2004, from papier-mâché applied over metal armatures. Faces are first sculpted in clay and then covered in papier-mâché and painted along with the rest of the bodies in a palette of greens, yellows, reds, blues and blacks. The result is truly otherworldly, magical and yes, somewhat disturbing even if

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the palette becomes somewhat repetitious after a time.

"I create from visions that I have had since age 4, after I woke up from a four-month coma during which my mind was erased," he said. He added that these visions, accompanied by physical seizures, defined his childhood memories and caused his strict fundamentalist Christian parents to have him exorcised for demonic possession twice and to severely punish him for his "tantrums." However, Dyal emphasized that they never sought medical help for their younger son. "I learned to recognize the oncoming of seizures and just hid in a closet until they were over," he revealed. A 2004 painting titled "I Saw a Heat that Spoke to Me of Love" and "The Domination of Religion," 2005, will resonate with viewers familiar with his story.

Accepting his seizures and ensuing mental time lapses as spiritual manifestations, he said that he was still able to obtain a bachelor's degree in music from Cal State Long Beach (1971) and build a successful professional life. He said he was not diagnosed as an epileptic until his late 50s when divorce proceedings forced him



**ODD MUSIC:** "Viola" by Myron Conan Dyal is part of "Primordial Images of a Modern Mystic," a show at the CSUF Grand Central Art Center in Santa Ana.

to undergo psychiatric and medical evaluations. (Dyal tells his story in an online book titled "The Boy Nobody Wanted: Visionary Experiences Behind the Art" on

MORE ONLINE  
[www.grandcentralartcenter.com](http://www.grandcentralartcenter.com)

his Web site [www.myrondyal.com](http://www.myrondyal.com) which also offers a link to [MySpace.com](http://MySpace.com), where the artist is building a notable fan base.)

Dyal says that after decades of keeping his work and its sources secret, he outed himself through the Web site - to the amazement of his colleagues at Digital Communications Corp., where he is vice-president. "No one had been aware of my other life until then," Dyal said.

He also mentioned that he "dances" out each work in special ceremonies that involve communing with nature in the San Bernardino Mountains. He lives and works in Chatsworth.

When the Grand Central, under the curatorial leadership of Mike McGee and Andrea Harris, first conceived this show, those involved could not have possibly imagined how timely it would become. It is said that the role of art and museums nowadays is to provide, besides education and enlightenment, entertainment and escape. Dyal's art offers, if nothing else, an escape into a different reality. And, given the current state of the universe, escape is good.