

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

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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

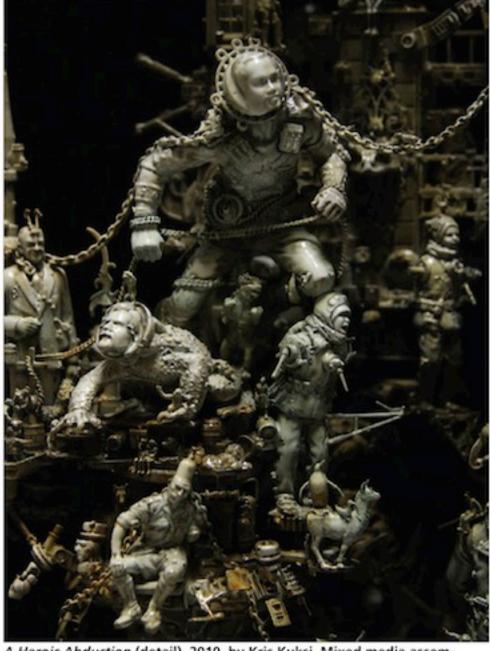
is missing — when a loved one dies or our civil liberty is stripped away - we realize this sense of loss. We don't have this awareness until it's gone. Liberties are really gradually slipping away. You have to look at history. There is an interesting historical pattern of how countries rise: There is 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 thought 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.

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.)

