

# Bulbs by Binion

Eastern Reflections at BAM 28 December 23 - 29, 1999 • BW

A contemporary Buddhist monk has noted that, "When our mindfulness embraces those we love, they bloom like flowers." This idea from Eastern thought and philosophy is understandable but a little outside of our traditional Western way of thinking.

Some say that Modern Art is dead, but visitors to current exhibits at the Boise Art Museum will notice that the ideas and practice of "modern" art are still vital aspects of current art trends.

One reason why the general public was typically not enjoyed the abstractions prevalent in American art of this century is that they have not always understood the huge influence of Eastern religious thought on the process of the artwork. This knowledge is almost key to the enjoyment of such abstract works.

Chris Binion's "Garden" installation in the sculpture court is the first work revealing this debt to Eastern thought. This millennial installation is comprised of 1,000 potted amaryllis bulbs in a large rectangular grid. The grid quietly stands alone in the court, a room quieted by the soft glow of light coming from the windows, each draped with crimson silk. The slight billowing of the silk, caused by the disturbance of air currents by the invasive movements of visitors, allows one to recognize the spiritual quality of this work.

The artist invites visitors to meditate on cycles and contrasts represented through this installation, within this contemporary basilica. The visitors are also challenged to come back, over and over, to watch the progress of the plants. Binion has created a Garden Journal that tracks the installation from its conception to final completion, with sketches, photos and notes. The visitor is encouraged to flip through this journal. Each returning visit will offer new contrasts: black pots of soil and white walls, green and red, death and life.

For those who would like to see more traditional works by Binion, he currently has some pieces on display at the J. Crist Gallery. These watercolors follow similar themes. The paintings have stark contrasts, many with a flat white or black field of color around floral images. These pieces also employ the vibrance of color seen in the BAM installation.

The other BAM exhibit that complements the Eastern tendencies of Binion's work is by Anne Appleby. The intimacy of the Nelson gallery creates a similar mood for meditation. The minimal canvases and panels are imbued



Artist Chris Binion is seated near his work, "Garden." With its grid of live, growing amaryllis bulbs, it intends to mirror a millennium-appropriate cycle of birth and death.

with neutral and natural tones for a Zen-like quality. The colors reveal the source of inspiration as the natural world.

It would be wrong to pass these off as mere reincarnations of '60s minimalism. Close inspection shows subtle differences in tone made through 20 to 40 layers of the wax, oil and pigment mix-

tures. The wax also causes a pearlescent shimmer. These are not flatly painted rectangles done to mimic the color swatches of a Dutch Boy paint display. Both exhibits force the viewer to spend time to investigate the deeper, richer meanings—to be mindful of the blossoming of life.

—Tyrus Clutter

