

# Alchemy spirals - power and mystery

by John Vilks

Now showing at the Dalhousie Art Gallery is a group of five sculptures by Louis Stokes entitled **Alchemy Spirals**. The pieces, which at first glance appear rather impressive due to their size, are based on the spiral theme and its supposed allusion to nature, growth, life, death, time, infinity and all the other mysteries which philosophers and adolescents like to ponder. In a pamphlet which accompanies the show, Stokes presents selected quotations which are meant to enhance and explain his work. However, the lofty nature of these quotes makes them sound more like intellectual embellishments; the sculptures do not live up to the grandeur of the ideas expressed.

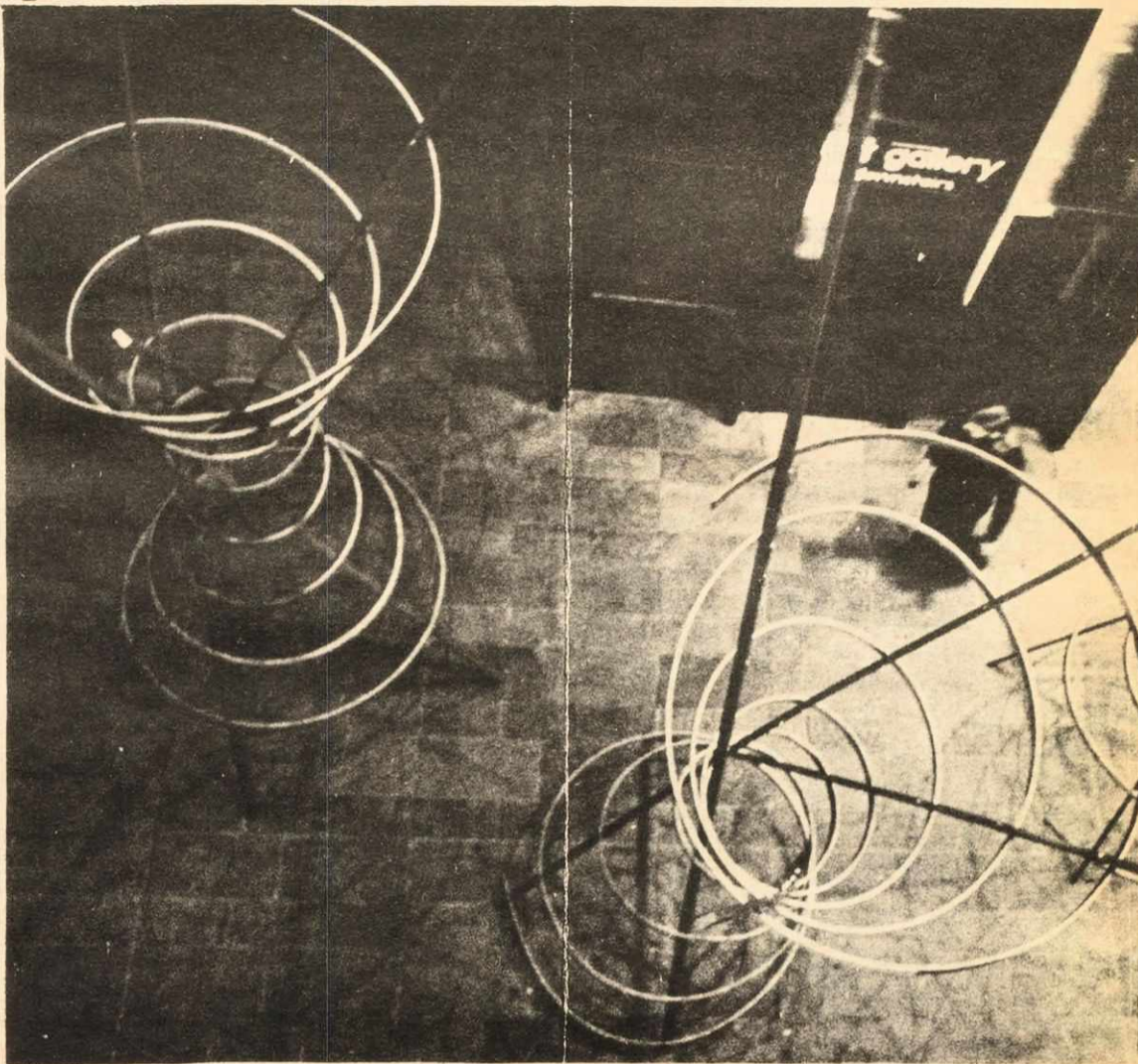
**Cosmic Journey**, which can be found in the foyer of the Dal Arts Center, consists of three eighteen foot spirals of red and yellow stained wood.

The colors used on this work are curiously synthetic when compared with Stokes' choice of quotations which continually refer to nature and the organic quality of eternity. The fact that the sculptures are made of treated wood and covered with artificial colors seems to refer to man's influence and dominance over nature; an idea which is inconsistent with the theories laid out in Stokes' pamphlet.

**Whale's Jonah** can first be

seen from the stairs which lead down to the gallery. The sculpture can best be appreciated from this point of view. The distance, angle and the fact that there is a sheet of glass separating the viewer from the work, all serve to give it a sense of power and mystery which dissolves upon closer inspection. The sculptures are made of thin pieces of wood which act as lines forming an image so that when the viewer is close to the work, its design disappears in a confusion of angles and conflicting directions. The structures seem to have been conceived on a small scale and then enlarged to match the grandiose ideas which inspired their construction.

One of the more interesting sculptures is **Sea Spumes on Ocean Grids** which consists of four grid segments with accompanying swirls. This work successfully integrates one of the gallery's concrete columns; a device which lends the piece a solidity and stability missing in the other structures. Stokes chooses to accompany this work by a quotation from J. Masefield's **Sea-Fever** which alludes to the call of the sea and the love of nature. By not referring to philosophical and mystical ideas, Stokes gives the work a simplicity and integrity which can be appreciated by the viewer.



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*Gerald Regan*

## Apocalypse Then

by Don Markham

I thoroughly expected to hate **Aquire, The Wrath of God** when it played at the Cohn last Sunday night; it was one of those strange and incomprehensible foreign films and in German, no less (with English subtitles). This usually means that one has to squint all evening to find out what is going on.

Instead, I really enjoyed it. I had been told by three different people on three different occasions that it was a worthwhile picture and despite my doubts, I attended and discovered that they were quite correct in their analysis.

The surprisingly large crowd was my first realization that I had not been totally bamboozled into seeing a grade Z movie picture. Although the show was in German, the sub-titles were very large and even sitting three-quarters of the way back I had no difficulty reading them. And my eyes were not tired at the end; mind you, there really wasn't all that much dialogue and it was a short film.

The movie itself reminded me of a scaled-down **Apocalypse Now**. The resemblance is uncanny; it was as if the budget had been reduced to one million dollars and Francis Ford Coppola was told to remake the film.

Yet the film was made way before **Apocalypse**, in 1973, by a man named Werner Herzog.

And instead of sending a boat of soldiers up-river in Vietnam, he sent a boat of sixteenth century conquistadors up-river in the Amazon jungle. The parallels, however, are remarkable. Both groups are fighting an unknown enemy, with no respect for the country or her people. Both groups are power hungry and misguided; in Vietnam the soldiers were looking for an illusive battle for democracy; on the Amazon the soldiers are looking for the illusive city of gold.

The soldiers do not find their illusive city. All that is revealed is the greed of man. Drifting on their rafts, the men have no certainties. Yet they decide to issue a declaration of ownership for all the land they float by. Their absolute arrogance and disrespect is unmitigated. This is imperialism that leads crazed people to shout "Make the Rich Pay!"

The crew is self-destructive when the enemy isn't around. They look like the character from *The Lord of the Flies* all grown up.

The lead in the movie is Klaus Kinski. He seems like he is a good actor, but it's pretty hard to tell seeing that he spoke German.

In any case, be sure and see **Aquire, the Wrath of God** if you ever have a chance. Guaranteed powerful and appalling.



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