

# POUSTINIA

The Art of Gendron Jensen

## POUSTINIA

Directed by Kristian Berg

A short documentary on the life and work of artist Gendron Jensen

*One of the best documentaries about an artist in a long while.  
Touching and radiant.* -Ann Landi, ARTnews

*The skill with which Jensen renders the uneven fissures and concentric rings of these amplified bones gives them a striking majesty... they mediate between past and present, functioning as repositories of both natural and mythic histories.*

- Rob Silberman, Art in America

## Synopsis

*Poustinia: The Art of Gendron Jensen* tells of a man passionately devoted to his artistic calling- the creation of detailed, precise images of bones. Though bones traditionally represent sterility and death, Gendron Jensen saw them as “portals, thresholded estuaries unto exaltation” representing the very foundation of being. Jensen developed and steadfastly maintained this vision his entire life. He wrote, “There is a majesty inherent in bones... a humbling geography that summons me to map its glories.”

Kicked out of a monastery in his 20’s, Jensen spent 17 years finding and drawing bones and other “mortal leavings” on his family’s rented farm in the north woods of Minnesota. In 1987 he moved to the mountains of New Mexico to embrace new life and love. This move marked Jensen's introduction and immersion at age 50 into the arcane art of stone lithography.

Filmmaker Kristian Berg recreates Jensen's artistic journey in *Poustinia* - a sincere portrait of a technical virtuoso, romantic visionary, and original human being. SEP15EP

For more than 40 years this largely self-taught artist obsessively, lovingly transformed found relics into wakeful images of uncommon beauty. His meticulously rendered, often monumental graphite drawings and stone lithographs compel the viewer to see anew -to journey beyond ordinary context to a deeper, more spiritual realm.

## Director Statement

I met Gendron Jensen in 1967 when I was nine years old. He and my dad - an Episcopal priest - were great friends. Entering his bone-filled studio at the Jensen farm was a strange and memorable experience. His first art exhibition was in the fellowship hall of our church- a series of graphite drawings of old milk pails he found around the farm titled "I Thirst". I began shooting video of Gendron for a high school project in 1977, recording on reel-to-reel black and white videotape. Though the tapes were lost I never lost the desire to make a documentary. Eventually I became a public television writer and producer and, decades later, was able to complete this film, an intimate portrait into the life of a dedicated and gifted artist with a deeply felt view of the world and our place in it.

## Production Notes

Minnesota composer/musicians contributed mightily to *Poustinia: The Art of Gendron Jensen*. Steve Kaul of the Brass Kings wrote and performed the National Steel blues slide guitar that bookends and accents Gendron's artistic and physical journey from the North Woods of Minnesota to the Sangre de Cristo Mountains of New Mexico. Grand Rapids Minnesota native Anthony Miltich composed and performed several folk guitar tracks. And Anthony's nephew, gypsy jazz guitar savant Sam Miltich and his Clearwater Hot Club contributed "La Bossa du Grand Marais" with its romantic flair and gypsy fiddle by Tim Kliphuis. Sam is also Gendron Jensen's godson.

## The Filmmaker

Kristian Berg's first independent film experience was as associate producer on *Foreclosure* (1982) a short community-made rural Minnesota narrative film produced as a statement on the farm crisis. As a producer for Twin Cities Public Television he wrote, produced and directed the PBS documentaries *The Dakota Conflict* (1993) and *Dakota Exile* (1996) on the story of the 1862 U.S.-Dakota War and the resulting diaspora of the Dakota people. For Court TV he produced hour-length episodes on the Scottsboro Boys civil rights trials and the capture and trial of Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann. He has also created stories for various PBS series including Newton's Apple, *ZOOM!*, *NOVA: ScienceNOW*, *History Detectives*, and *Finding Your Roots: The Seedlings*. Kristian was awarded fellowships from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting to attend the Sundance Film Festival (2002) and the CPB/PBS Producers Academy WGBH workshop (2003). He is currently a senior producer at Penn State Public Media.



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## **Festival Awards**

Diane Seligman Award for Best Short Documentary  
14th Woodstock Film Festival 2013  
Woodstock NY

Best Short Documentary - Audience Award  
33rd Minneapolis St Paul International Film Festival 2014  
Minneapolis MN

Grand Prize & Best Documentary  
7th Lancaster International Short Film Festival 2014  
Lancaster PA

## **Screenings**

7th Taos Shortz Film Fest 2014  
Taos NM

7th Sebastopol Documentary Film Festival 2014  
Sebastopol CA

5th Duluth Superior Film Festival 2014  
Duluth MN

4th Green Bay Film Festival 2014  
Green Bay WI

2nd Grand Junction Film Fest 2014  
Grand Junction CO

Harwood Museum of Art  
Arthur Bell Auditorium  
Taos NM June 7, 2014

3<sup>rd</sup> College Town Film Festival 2015  
State College, PA

Casket Cinema  
Art-A-Whirl 2015 Short Film Showcase  
Minneapolis, MN May 16, 2015

Best of MSPIFF at Creative City Market  
Presented by the Film Society of Minneapolis St. Paul  
Minneapolis, MN August 13, 2015

## POUSTINIA praise & comments

A verité romp through the woods and Jensen's creative process. -Yvonne Pesquera, Taos News Tempo Magazine

A fine piece of work. I found myself sympathizing with the challenge of how to capture the spirit of an artist on film -- you did it admirably well -- his vision, his passion, his quirks -- dare I say it? His soul. - Marilyn Mellowes, producer and writer, FRONTLINE, AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

It is wonderful to see such an intimate portrait of one of Minnesota's truly visionary artists, so lovingly captured at work in the field and in the studio. Viewers who appreciate a glimpse into the creative process will see it revealed through this program's insight into Jensen's life and art and way of seeing. - Tom Holter, Program Director, Twin Cities Public Television

Lovely, lyrical, moving. Excellently conceived, shot and edited. A poem to a great artist and his understanding of life and passion. - Beth Harrington director, THE WINDING STREAM

POUSTINIA: THE ART OF GENDRON JENSEN is one of the best documentaries about an artist I've seen in a long while. The art and career of Gendron Jensen, a true American original, are explored in a touching and radiant manner." -Ann Landi, contributing editor, ARTnews

I found POUSTINIA both visually and conceptually compelling. What I particularly appreciated was your introduction of Mr. Jensen's early history as a monk and its correspondences with what is commonly known as the lonely "monastic life" of studio artists. Just as the combination-bone drawings emerged from his immersive research and practice, so did his "Transfiguration" as an artist. -Charles Garoian, Professor of Art Education

This is a masterly film about an amazing artist. You have portrayed Gendron Jensen's spirit and life's work with great artistry and depth. All art students (and students!) should watch this. -Larkin McPhee, director DEPRESSION: OUT OF THE SHADOWS

A lovely, low-key film, artfully constructed with an eye for fine detail that matches/mirrors your subject's. It's both humbling and inspiring. You've done for the artist what he does for his beloved bones. -Noel Holston, Peabody Awards

The film is not just a profile of an artist at a capstone of a career--it is that, but it is more. It's a quiet place to invite reflection. a larger invitation to curl up and start a letter. Or a drawing. -Ian McCluskey, Director, NW Documentary, Portland, OR

It's a beautiful film. - Godfrey Reggio, director, KOYAANISQATSI

## STAGE &amp; ARTS

# 'Bone man' artist Gendron Jensen dies at age 79

By Alicia Eler (<http://www.startribune.com/alicia-eler/424327523/>) Star Tribune |

AUGUST 10, 2019 — 11:33AM

For North Woods artist Gendron Jensen, a bone was never just a bone. Throughout his life, he trekked through the woods looking for animal bones, which he took home to his studio and deftly rendered with pencil on paper.

“The bones are not static to me (<https://vimeo.com/321264027>). Even though the creature is dead, it’s not static. It is animate, active, vibrant, vital, animate beings,” he said in a 2013 documentary about his life titled “Poustinia,” ([https://www.imdb.com/title/tt3016636/?ref=nm\\_flmg\\_prd\\_3](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt3016636/?ref=nm_flmg_prd_3)) directed by his friend, filmmaker Kristian Berg (<http://bonemanfilm.com/>).

Jensen had five exhibitions at Groveland Gallery in Minneapolis over the years. His drawings are in museum collections across the country, including New York’s Whitney Museum of American Art, the Smithsonian in Washington, D.C., the Art Institute of Chicago, Minneapolis’ Weisman Art Museum and Duluth’s Tweed Museum. He also collaborated with poet Robert Bly by making drawings for his 1977 book, “This Body Is Made of Camphor and Gopherwood.” He received a Minnesota State Arts Board grant in 1986 and a McKnight Visual Artist Fellowship in 1987, and he was an artist-in-residence at Isle Royale National Park in 1994 (<https://whitney.org/collection/works/44874>).

Jensen died July 23 at home in Vadito, N.M., after a battle with a rare bone cancer. He was 79.

“The irony of that diagnosis was not lost on him,” said Berg. “He said, ‘All we can do is laugh, Kristian.’”

Born in River Falls, Wis., Jensen grew up in Grand Rapids, Minn. Throughout his life he took only two formal art classes, both during two years at the University of Minnesota Duluth. He also spent four years at a Benedictine monastery. From there he moved back to his family’s farmhouse and began his “forest eccentric” wanderings, collecting bones and then meticulously drawing them from what he called “the sacred angle,” which helped him connect to the animal’s soul.

Longtime friend and art historian Robert Silberman recalled how Jensen explained an egret drawing. Rather than drawing the bird head on, he looked through the back of the skull, into where the brain would have been.

“He said something like, ‘This is the sanctuary of the spirit,’” Silberman said. “He obviously had this intense religious background, but he still believed in spiritual matters — he was shaped by the Bible, by the church fathers, by other religious writers and thinkers, but he wasn’t part of religious institutions.”

Jensen’s eccentric “North Woods weirdo” bachelor life, as he referred to it, changed dramatically in 1986, when he was introduced to New Mexico-based artist Christine Taylor Patten. Within months, at age 48, Jensen moved to Taos, where the two lived and worked as full-time artists.

They developed a creative ritual they called “wordfast.” “We would wake up and wouldn’t speak until we finished work,” Patten said. “That worked out really well. It really was partially because Gendron is a wonderful storyteller — he speaks well and a lot — and we realized that we were just going to sit and talk every day.”

In New Mexico, Jensen also discovered lithography at the Tamarind Institute of Lithography (<https://tamarind.unm.edu/>), where he did more than 30 different projects. But he never veered from his life’s commitment to interpreting bones.



File photo by Joey McLeister:  
Gendron Jensen in 1987



Artist Gendron Jensen captured the tight whorls of Bel Clare snails in this extraordinarily detailed lithograph.

“He really had a connection with the animals and nature,” said Patten. “He didn’t just see the surface. He could feel [them] — and that was one of the things that really impressed me about him as a human — he was constantly going deeper into everything.”

In addition to his wife, Jensen is survived by stepsons Robert, Jonathan, Matthew and Michael Powell; siblings Roberta Baker, Mary Tobey, Steve Jensen, Patricia Jensen, Victoria Madson and Michael Jensen, and three grandchildren. Memorial services will be at Tamarind Institute of Lithography in Albuquerque in mid-October.

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**Alicia Eler** is the Star Tribune's visual art critic/arts reporter. She is the author of the book “The Selfie Generation” (Skyhorse Publishing), which has been reviewed in the New York Times, WIRED Magazine and the Chicago Tribune.

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## Woodstock Film Festival honors film about Minnesota artist

Posted by: Lee Svitak Dean under [Art](#), [Awards](#), [Behind the scenes](#), [Movies](#)  
October 10, 2013 - 9:18 AM

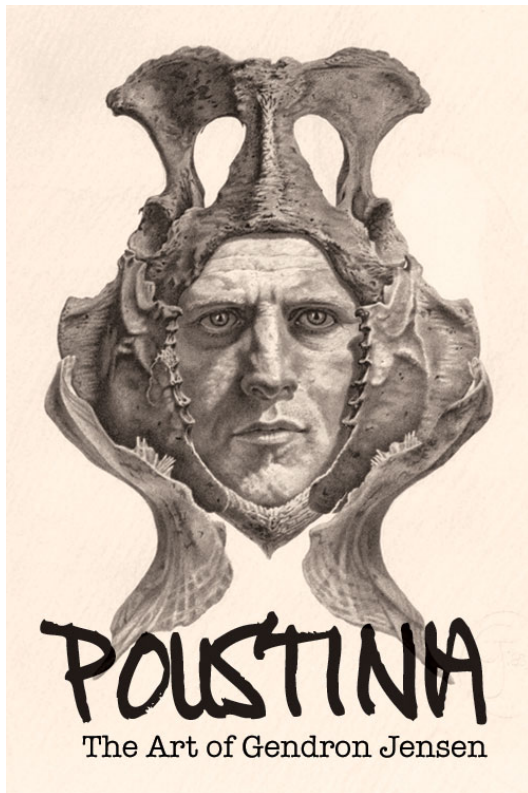


Gendron Jensen in 2010. Photo by Lee Svitak Dean

Among the winners at last weekend's [Woodstock Film Festival](#), in New York, was a film about artist [Gendron Jensen](#), 73, who for many years lived in Grand Rapids, Minn. Gendron has been drawing meticulously detailed images of bones for more than 45 years, in pencil and in stone lithography.

Filmmaker [Kristian Berg](#), who grew up in Grand Rapids, won Best Short Documentary for the 28-minute film, "[Poustinia/ The Art of Gendron Jensen](#)." Its title references a place where one retreats to meditate and pray.

The documentary focuses on Gendron's artistic passion and his search for what he calls "the bony relics of wild creatures." The film taps into a remarkable archive of film footage and photos from the past, as we watch Gendron first as a young man and later, white-haired and slightly stooped, in his 70s, still tramping through the forests and at work in his studio, which is now outside Taos, N.M., where he lives with his wife, artist Christine Taylor Patten. "For me, it's always been the bones," Gendron says in the film.



The promotional image from the movie is a self-portrait that Gendron did in 1983. In the drawing, his profile is surrounded by the bones of four creatures: the pelvic girdle of a black bear, freshwater fish bones, the sternum of an eagle and the jaw bone of a snapping turtle.

Largely self-funded, the documentary has been in the works for more than a decade, though Kristian's effort to capture Gendron on film began much earlier. While in high school, Kristian shot a black-and-white film of the artist, who was a close friend of his father. "I've known him since I was 8 years old. All the kids in the neighborhood knew Gendron," Kristian said. "He had his first art show in our church." That early footage, however, did not survive. Music in the film is from local composers.

The documentary has been entered into other film contests, and Kristian, a longtime filmmaker who once worked at Twin Cities Public Television, hopes to see it air locally at some point. "It's a natural that it should be in Minnesota. It should be all over the nation, really," he said. "My ultimate wish for the film is to inspire gallery owners to put together screenings where Gendron could lecture on his work."

Find the film trailer below.



Nov. 14-20, 2013

Arts & Entertainment Magazine of The Taos News

Inside: ♦ Television listings ♦ Movies ♦ Nightlife

# Tempo

A man with a mustache is smiling and holding a large animal skull in front of his face. The skull is held up by his hands, framing his eyes and nose. The skull's teeth are prominent. The background is a workshop or studio with various items on shelves.

## RESONANT MYSTERY

A Vadito artist is profiled in new documentary

Mario Romero's dream comes true ■ Chris Maher stars in 'The Lilac Minyan'  
Get down, get funky with Yo Mama's Big Fat Booty Band



'Bidden V' by Gendron Jensen

Courtesy: Stage

# Resonant mystery

A Vadito artist who looks into bones  
and beyond is profiled in new documentary

By Yvonne Pesquera

**A**rtist Gendron Jensen has lived in Vadito with his wife Christine Taylor Patten for 26 years. An accomplished artist, Jensen is most notable for his drawings and lithography prints of found animal bones.

Over a four-day period in July 2011, a Minnesota filmmaker named Kristian Berg ventured into the Carson National Forest around Vadito to shoot a documentary about Jensen.

Berg's 28-minute film, titled "Poustinia," recently won the award for Best Short Documentary at the 2013 Woodstock Film Festival.

Artist biographies abound, both in print and film, but in keeping with Jensen's highly spirited approach to art and nature, "Poustinia" is a romp verité through the woods and Jensen's creative process.

Nevertheless, making art is mostly a solitary pursuit. When asked how he could tolerate having someone follow him around with a camera, Jensen first points out that "artists can't live in a vacuum. We find out who we are through others. In the context of relationship, there is more to be experienced and discovered versus us being alone."

When the question persisted, he explains, "Kristina and cameraman Benjamin Webb vanished in the doing of their craft. In the act of recording, there was no sense of intrusion or invasion; it was like a dance."

Jensen's list of accomplishments is substantial. He has several decades worth of exhibitions, lectures, articles, prizes and fellowships to his credit, according to his website. Some of his drawings appear in public, academic, and corporate collections across the country.

"Jensen's painstakingly meticulous pencil renditions automatically silence a viewer into a meditative state," Taos County Arts Commissioner David Hinke says. "The respect he clearly has for his subject matter, bones, is the opposite of clinical."

In a statement on his website ([gendronjensen.com](http://gendronjensen.com)), Jensen says "For me, beyond the physical fact of death, bones are portals, thresholden estuaries unto exaltation. The bones seem to verily sing, they hum with resonant mystery."

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In the film, 'Poustinia,' we see Vadito artist Gendron Jensen as he begins his artistic quest.

"For me, **beyond** the physical fact of death, bones are portals, thresholden estuaries unto exaltation. The bones seem to verily sing, they hum with resonant mystery."

“There is **no other artist** that I know who **has the patience** that Gendron has to **draw the way he does**. He has been true to his vision for all these years and **never wavers from it.**”

*Bill Lagattuta*



Courtesy image

Gendron Jensen as he is today, as depicted in a frame capture from the film.

When a cineaste chooses the subject of their film, a lot of preliminary research goes into identifying who will be the main focus of the film. That wasn't the case with Berg's process; because he had an existing relationship with Jensen.

“I knew Gendron as a child,” Berg said. “My dad was the Episcopal priest in Grand Rapids, Minn., and he and Gendron were great friends. In fact, Gendron calls dad his ‘chosen brother.’”

The personal affection between the filmmaker and the artist is evident. Jensen says about Berg, “I felt I was in good hands. I once told his father: ‘My soul is in your hands.’ Now during the filming, I was in his son's hands.”

Berg had started work on the documentary in 2001, filming Jensen during visits to Minnesota. Then, a decade later, Berg got the chance to film Jensen at home in Vadito. “I shot interviews with Gendron and Christine, and on one of Gendron's ‘bone hunts’ in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains,” he says.

The film crew also shot footage at the University of New Mexico Tamarind Institute in Albuquerque, where Jensen was finishing a big stone lithography project.

Bill Lagattuta, a master printmaker at Tamarind, says, “Lithography is a print-making process that really lends itself to drawing and there is no other artist who I know that has the patience that Gendron has to draw the way he does. He has been true to his vision for all these years and never wavers from it.”



‘Bidden II’ by Jensen

Courtesy image

The “Documentary Filmmakers Handbook” notes that ultimately, a film's “story” is found in the editing room. Indeed, when asked about the short running time (28 minutes) of “Poustinia,” Berg concurs, “The film found its own length. Our film editor, Gregory Feinberg, found wonderful connections and circular patterns within the story — cutting back and forth from 73-year-old Gendron to footage we had of him at 43 years old.”

Documentaries are a way of experiencing the world. And we all know a good documentary when we see it; not only is information conveyed, but our higher desire for artistic storytelling is satisfied. Clearly, the prestigious juror panel at the Woodstock Film Festival felt “Poustinia” fit this bill. By way of the film, it is simply terrific that a Taos County resident has received this honor.

Jensen's longtime residence in Vadito reflects his deep affection for the area. He loves the area for its multiculturalism and points out that the Spanish word for artist is *artista*, in the feminine.

“That's because we are the birthers of more than our kind. It takes more than our self to create art,” Jensen says. “It's the community that creates the artist.”

To purchase a DVD copy of “Poustinia,” visit [createspace.com/375893](http://createspace.com/375893).

Friday, December 22, 2006

## The Brilliant and Intensely Personal Works by Gendron Jensen Bring An Inner Life to Animal Remains

By Tom Collins

*For the Journal*

ABOUT ART: Talk about giving you ice in the winter— Gendron Jensen's blown-up, bravura, realist drawings and lithographs of mammal bones must be the coldest shows in Albuquerque and Taos. His ballpoint-pen-on-paper drawings of assorted mammal bone structures, such as the "auditory bulla of *Balaenoptera mysticetus* (bowhead whale)," at the UNM Art Museum, until Feb. 4, and at Parks Gallery in Taos— a heroically-sized drawing and a number of extraordinary stone lithographs of assorted moose, wolf and deer remains, made at Tamarind Institute— reveal a master draftsman who can work a print and a pencil to the point of glassy, mystical magic.

These are not O'Keefe's bones, all warm and fuzzy, curvy and abstracted as bones can get. Jensen's bones are cold and clinical, and infused with a warm "inner life." His intently accurate renderings and lithographs are part anthropological document and part intensely personal contemplation through the activity of drawing that make the works both technical and poetic tours de force.

I note the root of "mystic" in the Latin name of the bowhead whale above, and there is a great sense of the unseen mystery and power of nature and life in these images of relics. As Jensen notes of his ballpoint pen drawing of the auditory bulla of the bowhead whale, "The Inuits of this region believe the very soul of the leviathan dwells in its earbones." And as he was quoted in an article in the February 1998 issue of the Smithsonian Magazine, "There is a vital resonance in every bone. The spirits of the animals are there. They speak of life and the creatures they once were."

Jensen was born in 1939, the second of nine children in River Falls, Wis., and was first captivated by skeletal structure when, at age 6, he found a rodent skull. (Indeed, there is something chilling about that little autobiographical factoid. Can you remember the first time you saw an actual skeleton?) When he was 20, the artist entered a Benedictine monastery in Wisconsin, which he left after two years. He returned to the monastery after a four-year break and began making drawings— he is an entirely self-taught artist— and working in the abbey's print shop while living a life of virtual seclusion. A couple of years later, he left the monastery for good and moved to the woods of northern Minnesota, where he continued a life of monkish solitude and to work in earnest on his drawing— always, obsessively, of the bones of creatures he found in the woods where he lived— inspired and reassured by a 1967 Andrew Wyeth retrospective at the Art Institute of Chicago.

Today Jensen's drawings and lithographs are in major private and public collections from the Los Angeles County Museum of Art to Harvard's Fogg Art Museum. The artist, who is as open and warm a man, you might say, as his bones are iconic and cool, lives a hermit-like life in the Sangre de Cristos with his wife, Christine Taylor Patten, herself an extraordinary artist whose drawings are currently being exhibited at the Drawing Center in New York City.

Jensen has that rare gift— and it is a gift, like sex appeal, or a live fastball— of being able to attach the eyeball to the end of a pencil and accurately copy an object onto paper in detail. This in itself carries a great deal of aesthetic weight, to which is always added that extra-visual element, both literary and spiritual. (Indeed, there are chilling homages paid to Shakespeare and even Flannery O'Connor by way of a couple of Jensen's drawings.)

In a sense, Jensen's exquisite drawings and prints of animal remains are in the classic tradition of vanitas still-life work (referring to the opening of Ecclesiastes, "Vanity of vanities ..."), which is filled with the moralizing and quasi-religious reminder of the transience and uncertainty of mortal life— or rather the certainty of it, accent grave on "mortal."

Along with all of the poetic, mythic, romantic fusion of the powers of nature and culture in these works, Gendron Jensen's bones can't help remind us of the ossified creatures we are to become, as well— the suggestion that none of us will be getting out of here alive. "Alas, poor Yorick," indeed!

Cheery thoughts for the onset of winter— oh, and happy holidays.

### **If You Go**

WHAT: **Gendron Jensen:** "Winter Bones," drawings and stone lithographs

WHEN: Through Jan. 8

WHERE: Parks Gallery, 127 A Bent St., Taos

CONTACT: 751-0343; parksgallery.com

WHAT: "Look Into," drawings

WHEN: Through Feb. 4. Closed Dec. 22-Jan. 2

WHERE: University of New Mexico Art Museum, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque

CONTACT: 277-4001; UNMartmuseum.unm.edu

# Intricate artist focuses on nature's small miracles

An essentially simple and direct style is pursued with such scrupulous care and single-minded intensity of vision as to make the drawings of Gendron Jensen very nearly amount to a whole new art form.

That is admitted overstatement, but it seems forgivable when one is standing before the amazingly pure, yet mystic, pencil creations of this relatively unknown 38-year-old artist, who lives almost reclusively in Grand Rapids, Minn., and who lives quite exclusively in the service of meaningful beauties that he extracts from tiny fragments of nature's leftovers.

An understated exhibition (through Oct. 12) of about two dozen Jensen works has a stunning impact at the Art Lending Gallery, 25 Groveland Ter.

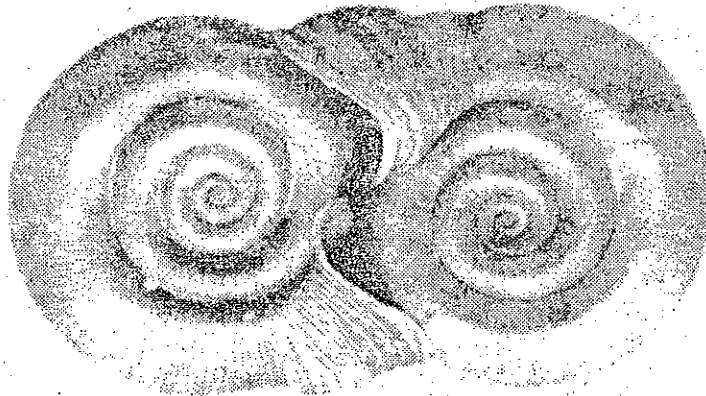
The drawings are somewhat larger than usual for the medium, but don't raise their voices above the muted grayish tones of pencil on paper. Still, their powerful designs grapple your eye from across the room and the intricacy of their close-up detail draws you into unsuspected worlds of natural wonder and private imagination.

I feel uncomfortable describing the source materials of Jensen's art because a bald description invites wrong connotations that, I feel, can be offset only by seeing the remarkable uses to which this artist puts them.

About eight years ago, Jensen started looking carefully at the small scraps and refuse of natural living-and-dying he chanced upon in the woods and streams near his rural studio. They were little bits of animal and fish bones, fragments of turtle skeletons, minuscule cast-off snail shells smaller than a pea: In other words, the relics of minor animal beings abandoned and ignored on nature's midden-heap.

Close scrutiny of the fragments revealed to him not only elegant shapes in their overall design, but a wealth, an infinitude, of fine-grain variations in detail. Apparently identical segments of vertebrae or of shell specimens were separately different in these minute ways.

Don  
Morrison



## Gendron Jensen's meticulous approach to art

What this has to do with art is that he converted both the never-ending richness of nature's functional design and the even more prodigal variations that happen within similar design forms into carefully structured compositions that are based on an absolute factuality (their elements drawn precisely from life) but which create a whole new design of consciously abstract beauty.

These works could be called "real" surrealism or surrealistic reality. The complex shapes are recognizable as authentic anatomical structures but, of course, we've never looked at them this closely before. Drawn to a magnified scale, the tiny specimens become imposing pieces of fantastic architecture, and when several are juxtaposed into a larger composition, it is a trip into wide-open realms of imagination.

Many of the drawings pair off similar shapes in symmetrical opposition—a pair of crayfish claw-segments or a mirror-imaged pattern of fish vertebrae and bone-

plates—with an effect like Rorschach ink-blots. The staff at the Art Lending Gallery says this provokes lively response from visitors, who find wonderfully fanciful images and stories in wholly abstract designs. One drawing has acquired an affectionate gallery nickname: "The Duelling Dinosaur Pickles."

But, they all go far beyond mere whimsy or contrivance. Jensen's draftsmanship and the almost obsessive precision of his pencil is awesome. Close examination reveals that he has recorded the most infinitesimal variations of detail in the textures of snail shells or the lacy porosities of bone: his paired specimens are *not* identical; his series of helmet-like crayfish heads or shell spirals are each an exact portrait of a separate, tiny, distinctive entity.

This helps impart the mystic qualities of the work (a spiritual devotedness, if you will). The pains the artist takes in recording the distinctiveness of each obscure creature's material remnant argues the importance he sees in the life it once had. The value, by extension, that all life has if only we would stop to recognize the special uniqueness of every living thing, however great or pitifully small.