



**OLIVE M. AYHENS
JUDITH LINHARES
DONNA MOSSHOLDER-HERRESHOFF
ANN L. SHAPIRO**

SAN FRANCISCO ART INSTITUTE



Judith Linhares, Untitled
Gouache on paper, 30" x 30"



Olive M. Ayhens, "Goodbye"
Watercolor, 22" x 30"

A recent article in *Art Week* describes New York critic Max Kozloff as one who credits feminism in part for the revisions in his changing viewpoint on the current state of the art of the 20th Century. Feminism in the visual arts is as firmly grounded in San Francisco as anywhere; while receiving minimal critical attention due perhaps to a generally introspective and non-militant nature, the work of Bay Area women artists has played an important role in the national feminist movement through the sensibilities expressed in the work itself. The work of Olive M. Ayhens, Judith Linhares, Donna Mossholder-Herreshoff and Ann L. Shapiro demonstrate the strength of conviction and sense of open self-expression encouraged and nurtured by the Feminist movement.

The work in each case is at once deeply personal and universal in nature; its sources begin within the artist and are nourished by a development of consciousness of body, emotion, feeling and spirit. Organized groups of women artists, meeting weekly for some years, have succeeded in inspiring and encouraging one another to pursue an art that deals with emotional, social, political and moral content as well as formal and intellectual concerns. This exhibition provides four distinctly different approaches to this all-encompassing, personally expressive art.

Judith Linhares has lived and worked in the San Francisco

Bay Area for over fifteen years; throughout this period, her work has consisted of an ongoing process of development of personal symbols through the use of universal themes — themes which include the relationship of men and women, the mystique of the "feminine" or female-associated objects and rituals, and a combining and reworking of such symbols as moonlight, skulls and crossbones, jewels, feathers, fur and lace. These subjects are treated in beautifully painted watercolors and gouaches, and in pragmatically assembled constructions of wood, glass, wire, hair, mirrors and gauze. Their resultant effect is one of haunting clarity, like dream symbols or images from a Tarot deck.

Olive M. Ayhens combines both thematic and personal concerns in her watercolors to create bright, active works of a narrative or anecdotal sensibility. Her paintings portray self-images, friends, animals, fish, birds, landscape and interior elements, entwined in various specific and ambiguous relationships which have personal significance to her and impart an archetypal meaning to the viewer. The visual sources of her work encompass every culture and art form; the elements are combined in an intuitive and feeling way to arrive at an art that is an energetically expressive mirror-image of the artist herself.

The paintings of Donna Mossholder-Herreshoff often con-



Donna Mossholder-Herreshoff, "Our Christmas Presents, Jan. 6, 1974"
Watercolor, 21"x 28.5"

tain self portraits, images of friends, animals and birds and, like Ayhens', pertain closely to events and relationships in her life. They are, however, handled in a more formal pictorial manner, often with situations compositionally and thematically related to Renaissance paintings. Her paintings are densely structured and carefully painted to produce a *trompe d'oeil* effect using the images of delicately colored German paper seals. The tightly patterned paintings result in a combination of energy and tensions which often belie the mood introduced by their pictorial images.

The paintings of Ann L. Shapiro exude a quality of rawness and power which cause them to be the most confrontive and demanding works in this exhibition. They are a record of growth through deeply personal confrontation and deal with personal narrative and formal, pictorial ideas on one level and with feeling, emotion and the subconscious at other levels. The rectangular paintings depict self-images, androgynous figures and figure / symbols of people, spirits and demons. Some of the paintings are expressive of disorientation, fear, disappointment, yearning, and rage; other paintings investigate the unknown or unconscious sides of the artist and can often be joyful, light, humorous, meditative or sinister and awesome.

Ann Shapiro's newest series of paintings utilize shaped for-



Ann L. Shapiro, "The Zebra Killer"
Gouache and watercolor

mats which suggest masks, and deal with the expressive qualities of their complexly-shaped edges as well as the emotional content of the dominant image. "The Zebra Killer", first of the series, expresses the paranoia recently felt throughout the city, heightened by personal experiences which, as many women can testify, are common occurrences on public streets of any city today. A recurrent theme in her work is the intuitive relationship of symbols, approached in a questioning sense and without pre-conceived notions of the end result.

In addition to the continual development of their art, these women and many of their friends have been instrumental in building a national network of communication and mutual support with women artists. The increase in visiting artist positions and new exhibition opportunities testify to the success of this communication, and all of these opportunities compound the chances for more women to be encouraged to make art with everything they feel.

Phil Linhares
Director of Exhibitions