

Judith Linhares at Paule Anglim

An exhibition which caught my eye, in the past few weeks, was Judith Linhares show at the Paule Anglim Gallery in San Francisco. Ms Linhares is a competent painter with a great color sense, and she works in a style that combines a very personal imagery with handsome paint surfaces.

One of the trends--or elements--common to many Bay Area art forms is an exploration of the piling together of disparate elements into one work that pushes various aspects of association to the limits. Ms Linhares is one of the artists whose exploration of diverse elements leads to works which combine an air of surrealism mixed with painterly qualities that the Surrealists would not employ.

Her drawing is masterly, though at first glance it may well appear naive or unschooled. A feature of the exhibition were a number of opaque watercolor works done on paper in which the subject -- or largest element of the piece -- would be naively scaled to be the largest visual item in the work -- a natural human way of indicating importance in societies not tainted by Renaissance sophistications.

I was particularly taken by a marvelous monkey done in a linear technique, smiling as he (or she) clung to an idealized plant form done in shades of red and green, while a large dark blue bird flew by.

Turkey, 1977 (illustrated) is a good example of the artist's personal imagery. The large turkey is gloriously colored, and the reproduction makes the darks too dark. The effect of the whole work is of brilliant light colors, the background being composed of intense greens, the turkey of rich reds and browns, the bottom plane in differing yellows and greens, the chair in yellow, while the Infanta figure (who no doubt strayed into the work out of the same dark, dreary Spanish school painting) is resplendent in glorious pale colors of all hues. Anchoring the composition are three lusciously painted peppers in deep reds in the upper parts of the work -- two crossed on the upper left corner, one just hanging in there in the upper right.

All sorts of possibilities as to meanings arise. I found myself not responding to the works on

a level of mystic communication, but found great enjoyment in the sheer technical competence, the wit of the artist, and her mastery of color.

--H.J. Weeks