

IT'S A WOMAN'S WORLD

Hannelore Baron, Judith Linhares, Cherie Benner Davis

Intimate, idiosyncratic art symptomizes its era. Is it sexist, or otherwise presumptuous, to see such art as particularly sensitive to the tribulations of the Zeitgeist when it's made by women artists? Certainly, the delicate, irresistibly poignant collages and box assemblages of the late Hannelore Baron speak of their times, or at least their maker's. Fleeing Nazi Germany to New York as a child, Baron turned her well-earned anxieties into an art of deep pathos, fragility and haunting introspection. Imagine Joseph Cornell's magical worlds-in-a-box gone to seed, overgrown, attacked by miniature graffiti writers who are in fact trying to tell the world that it is consuming itself. A child of political catastrophe, Baron was a harbinger of ecological disaster as well.

Judith Linhares' coarse, exuberant figuration may seem to take sheer delight in the world and in how it transforms in the human imagination. But Linhares' luminous expressionism proffers no overt critique. Rather, its ecstasy contrasts so sharply with mundane reality that life becomes a little more unbearable the moment Linhares' reverie wears off us. Paintings this radiant are like sex: At some point, the fact that such delight cannot endure reminds us of our mortality.

Employing an even sweeter (if even more acidic) palette, Cherie Benner Davis charts a fine line between the personal and the social in paintings that elegantly stylize the intersection of her life with life itself. These mapstractions calibrate constantly between Benner Davis' experience and the "given" conditions of the human body, the urban grid, natural cycles and other diagrammable leitmotifs of existence. The irony infusing these hot-cool distillations is not as agonizing as in Linhares' visions; but it's strange to feel from Benner Davis' deceptively cheery work something of the same oppressive threat from the outside world as that pervading Baron's. *Hannelore Baron at Manny Silverman, 619 N. Almont Dr., W. Hlywd.; Tues.-Sat. 10 a.m.-5 p.m.; (310) 659-8256. Judith Linhares at Jancar, 3875 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 1308, L.A.; Thurs.-Sat. noon-5 p.m.; (213) 384-8077. Cherie Benner Davis at SolwayJones, 5377 Wilshire Blvd., Tues.-Sat. 11 a.m.-6 p.m.; (323) 937-7354. All thru Dec. 22.*

—Peter Frank