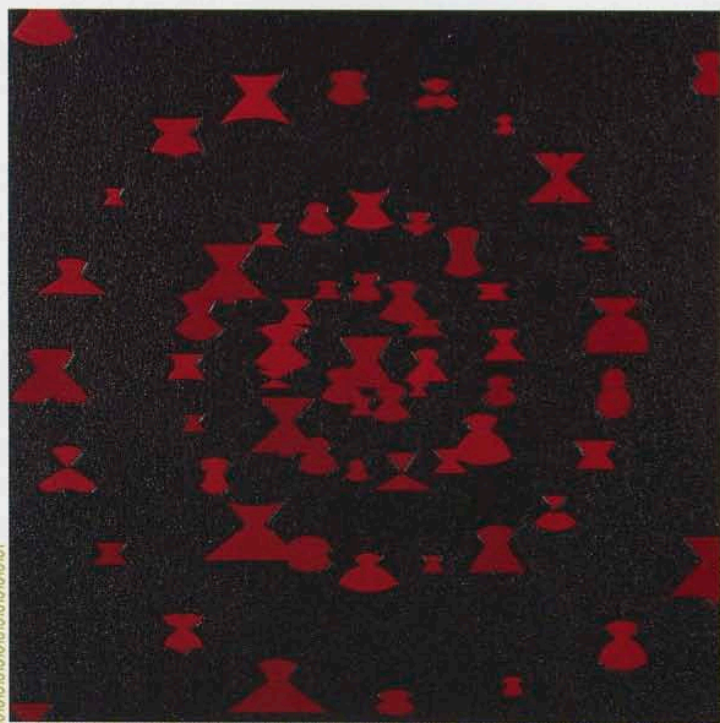
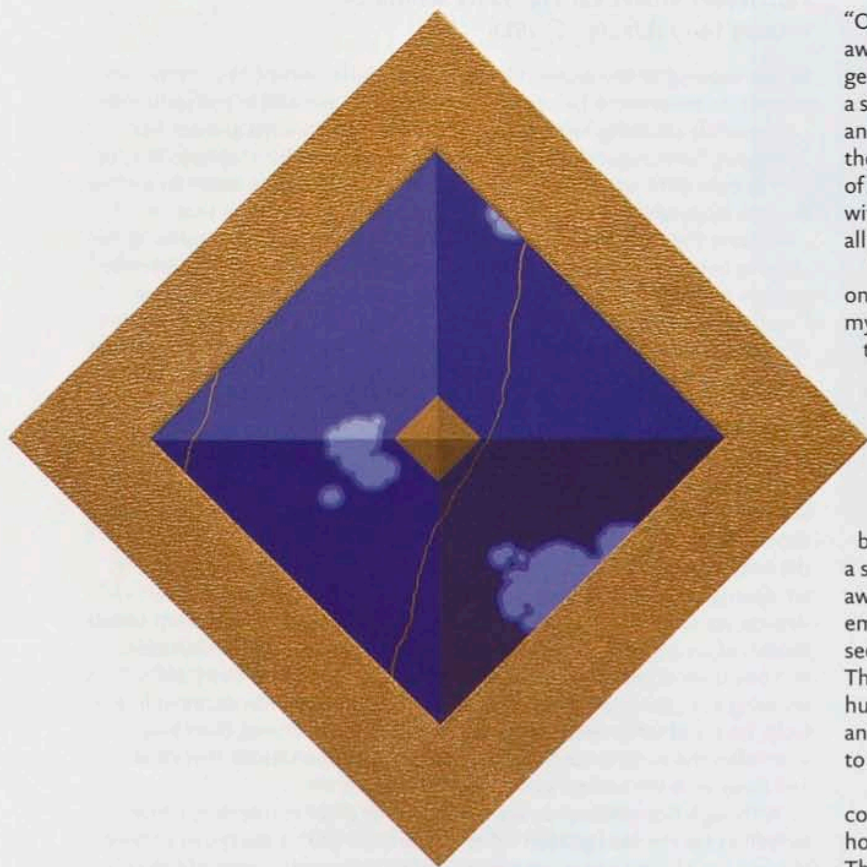


Linda Stark BY EVE WOOD

Angles Gallery, Santa Monica CA January 13 - February 18, 2006

Linda Stark



"Oracles, Pyramids and Rotations," Linda Stark's long-awaited new body of work, mimics the methodology of a geologist or paleontologist in that her creative process takes a significant amount of time and involves much introspection and personal sacrifice. But the comparison doesn't end there. Like every systematic endeavor to peel back the layers of nature and myth, these three series of paintings bear witness to the general relativity of time and space—as well as all fetishized (or fossilized) objects.

The paintings in this show are diverse, many picking up on themes from Revelations or heralding the feminine mystique as embodied in the animal kingdom, but all speak to Stark's unceasing fascination with folklore, geologic time, and the often illusionistic qualities of reality. The five large impasto *Oracle* paintings comprise the heart of Stark's inquiry, each one addressing certain natural oddities in highly stylized terms, including the various physical shapes whereby human perceptions of the divine "reveal" themselves. Take the hooded backside of a cobra headdress in *Spectacled Cobra* (2005), a somewhat ironic gesture since the snake's face is turned away from us, eliminating the element of danger and emphasizing instead the strange incongruity of this reptile seemingly emblazoned with a smile on the back of its head. The work indicates that nature at least has a sense of humor, albeit a cruel or awe-inspiring one, whose odd and sometimes discordant associations Stark continues to explore throughout this exhibition.

Black Widow Society (2005) is less obviously mythical, comprising a near-galactic spiral wherein small red hourglass figures float through the immensity of space. These symbols, which refer directly to the iconic markings to be found on the underside of a black widow spider, proliferate and disband the menacing edge of the painting's title. Yet the symbolism floating around her also represents the ancient pagan hourglass, which stands for balance and the equinox. What Stark is most concerned to communicate here are the black widow's numerous meanings and associations, suggesting that this widely perceived "femme fatale" can also represent transformation and the tenuous equilibrium of all life.

The exhibition also includes a quartet of diamond-shaped *Pyramids*, individually set against backgrounds of lapis lazuli, fluorite, rose quartz, and amber. These illusionistic aerial views of pyramids were inspired by the celebrated Egyptian tombs as well as Mariner 9's depictions of Mars. Finally, Stark has made several translucent amber *Rotations* that testify to the process of fossilization. Indeed, in many of these pieces you can find the mummified remains of small insects seemingly waylaid in the name of art. The sense that time has somehow been stopped—or more accurately, eviscerated—is palpable in these smallish paintings. In *Amber Rotation (Hornet)* (2005) Stark has built up layers of flora and fauna within a very restricted space, as if vastly different species have unwittingly crossed paths, creating a provocative disruption in the cosmic continuum. Perhaps in the future someone will eventually unearth this work, proving not only the prior existence of a desire to make art but also the successful forging of a channel between the natural and artificial worlds.

LINDA STARK, (TOP TO BOTTOM) LAPIS LAZULI PYRAMID, 2004, OIL ON CANVAS OVER PAPER, 28.5 X 28.5 IN.; BLACK WIDOW SOCIETY, 2005, OIL ON CANVAS OVER PANEL, 36 X 36 IN. COURTESY ANGLES GALLERY, SANTA MONICA.