

ART PAPERS

Until the recent works, Stark's paintings have been mostly small. Although the scale of these works is fairly consistent, her technique of painting has significantly developed, making her style and paintings distinct. In the early nineties, she began to layer oil paint to create an often-delicate relief that sometimes drips off the edges of the canvas. This technique requires allowing each layer to set before applying the next. The paintings dry from the exterior to the interior layers: it may take five years for a painting to dry. Because of this laborious process, Stark works on up to twenty paintings at one time.

The gem of the exhibition, *Sunshine Diamond Weave* (1998), consists of alternating gradation of orange and yellow lines of paint that Stark applied with a brush. Stark's layering technique creates relief elements and a pattern suggesting a woven basket. Stark created *Pink Rotation* and *White Rotation* (1992) from a similar layering process but she applied the paint and then rotated the canvases to cover them. In the center of each composition is a knob of paint in relief. The layers of oil paint create an iridescence that is inherent to Stark's technique and cause these works to almost glow.

By the late nineties, Stark had integrated motifs reminiscent of earlier work with her painting technique. *Flower Nipples* (1997) is a pink textured surface with flowers as symbolic nipples. This work and those like it enhance the exhibition with their humorous and playful qualities that aesthetically engage a viewer while also suggesting feminist politics. *Coat of Arms* (1991) depicts a golden uterus, fallopian tubes and ovulating ovaries against a vibrant red background suggestive of menstrual blood. This work less successfully engages the viewer aesthetically and politically.

The larger-scale paintings from 1999 and 2000 suggest that Stark is creating a new body of work. She seems to be further exploring provocative imagery and developing more intriguing compositions. *Ophelia Forever* (1999) with its centralized figure eight image that reads as breasts



Linda Stark, *Black Widow Portrait III*, 1999, oil on canvas on panel, 24 by 24 by 2 inches (Collection Dallas Price, Santa Monica, California).

SANTA BARBARA, CALIFORNIA

By Jennifer Vanderpool

LINDA STARK's exhibition "Runaway Love" (Santa Barbara Contemporary Arts Forum, September 7—October 27, 2002) showcases thirty-seven works from 1988—2000, documenting her maturation as a painter. It begins with early post-graduate school paintings and concludes with ones that suggest a new direction for Stark's work.

In Memory (1988) is a small-scale oil painting on canvas. A stylized Egyptian eye in the center of the composition stares out at the viewer. The concentric circles that radiate outward from the eye enhance this sense of engaging the viewer. With *Todos Los Días* (1988) Stark furthers her circular motif by employing images of teardrops in a concentric pattern. The significance of the scale, materials and motifs in these early works only becomes relevant when viewed with the later paintings in mind.

with nipples contemporizes Sir John Everett Millais' painting of the distraught maiden. *Black Widow Portrait III* (1999) is a black background with a centrally located red abstract image of a spider that evokes the myths of its namesake.

"Runaway Love" is a delightful exhibition of Stark's work. Exhibiting twelve years of paintings enhances the viewer's visual experience and understanding of Stark's well-crafted and enjoyable paintings.