

# Flash Art

# R E V I E W S

## SANTA MONICA

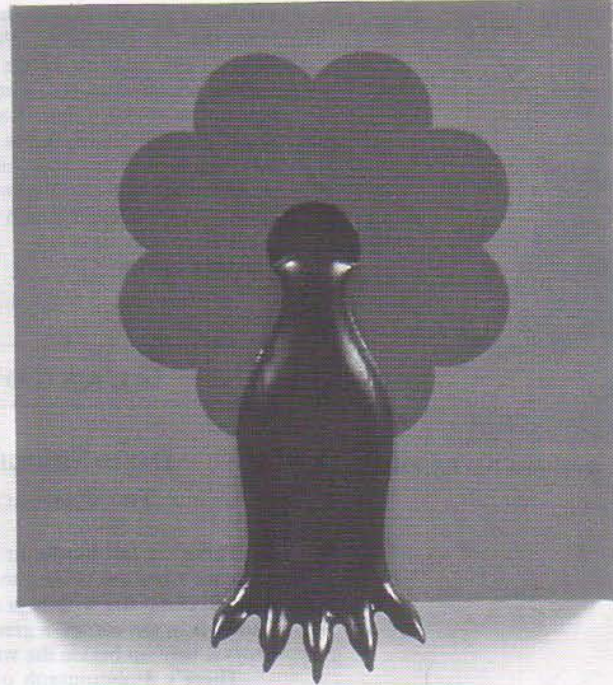
LINDA STARK  
MARC FOXX

Notes on condensation and excess: Linda Stark's theatrical little canvasses are produced through the obsessive application of thousands of layers of oil paint. These blankets of pigment accumulate into bas-reliefs — orifices, tendrils, crusty wave-like strata, frozen drips, interwoven strips, waves, spirals, and perhaps most tellingly, nipples. Each work shows an eye-popping luminescent color; displayed one after the other, they suggest a neon rainbow. In *Five Finger Flame* (1995) red plastic-toy-colored flames shoot out of a small burning-crimson canvas. Despite its accretional process, the flame is instantly readable. However this sensation quickly dissolves into juxtaposed theatrical scenarios (burning, passion, hell, fire, etc.) which push towards non-recuperability, while at the same time remaining most pleasurable within the painting's immediate optical availability.

The best of Stark's work also superimposes a lush layer of sensuality. Her *Blue Ribbon* (1994-5) implies a textured dark blue flower form from which an anthropomorphic shape — a claw or a banana? — spills out. With a second look, this prize becomes fluid pouring out of an orifice, a sensational orgasm slowed to a crawl in time. As psychic condensation allows unconscious feelings to accumulate into an unrelated but acceptable metaphor, so Stark's paintings provide a structure where her deepest and lightest feelings can emerge in dissociated "natural" forms. Releasing a deeply held excess which is conversely (perhaps frustratingly) frozen forever in these little painted jewels.

A second opposition emerges in Stark's odd pairing of free pleasure and masochistic chill; a hippyish whiff of nature that is completely synthetic. Whether coming or going, the postmodern body needs an environment and Stark's mechanistic glimpse of heaven may just be it.

Michael Cohen



Linda Stark, *Blue Ribbon*, 1994/5. Oil on canvas on panel, 16 x 19".