

JUDITH LINHARES

EDWARD THORP GALLERY
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In her first exhibition at Edward Thorp Gallery, Judith Linhares presented paintings with circus and nature motifs. The works are



JUDITH LINHARES
Cage, 1996. Oil on linen, 42" x 56". Courtesy of Edward Thorp Gallery.

characterized by heavy brush strokes, often offset by fast marks and a slow, controlled line. While the paintings recall the bravura of Bay Area painters such as David Park and early Richard Diebenkorn, Linhares's quirky imagery includes smiley faces and bulbous

feet, depicted from a distinctly feminine point of view that subverts their traditionally masculine, expressionist treatment.

Bold stripes, delineating fabric or bars, visually link the circus paintings. Animals and acrobats perform on the canvas, creating a spectacle with participants and onlookers. In *Cage*, my favorite of the circus paintings, a lion-like animal's oversized head rests on the floor, as if its weight could no longer be supported by its angular body. Like a jack-o'-lantern, its grimacing eyes and mouth display a burning orange light from within, indicating a desperation apparently unnoticed by the surrounding crowd. This burning light emerges as a window or sun within each of Linhares's paintings; the shift from light to shadow is a consistent force in her work.

Cat, a companion to *Cage*, depicts a soft, elongated form with large, yellow, inquisitive eyes. The fiery head of *Cage* is here a brightly colored ball, though it is ignored in the mysterious moment. The paint, fluid and loose, evinces a world of reverie and peaceful solitude.

The magical space *Cat* inhabits, where the laws of gravity are flexible and flowers grow in the sky, reappears throughout Linhares's paintings. It is the space of memory, which evokes rather than describes. Linhares joins elements that are recognizable in the world—flowers, a fence, a horizon line—to give shape to a condition or feeling, and her subjective reality possesses the weight of objective representation. In *Sirens*, a young woman is literally carved out of paint, her stomach an "O" encased by two straight lines, the jewel-like light from her crown the substance of mud. Alone, her companions swimming nearby, she possesses an ethereal privacy and peace. She represents our desire to exist in the world, and for that to be enough.

ELISABETH CONDON