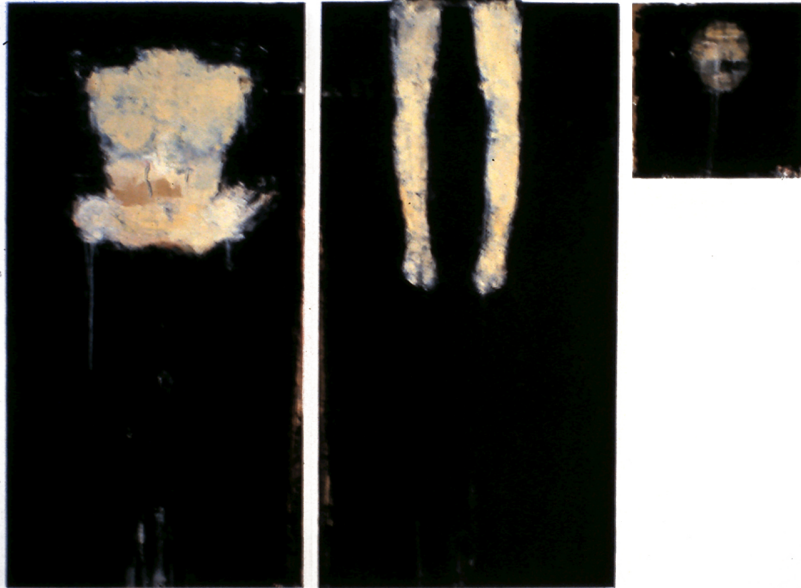


Art in America

Linda Stojak at Stephen Haller



Linda Stojak *Untitled (Figure 115)*, 1995
Oil and Mixed Mediums on Canvas
61h x 81w inches

In a dozen untitled new paintings, Linda Stojak has continued her investigation of the human form suspended halfway between realism and abstraction. Her faceless and variously truncated subjects, helped in limbo, evoke modern- i.e., spiritually destitute—birth, illness, sexuality and death. Having shown since 1991, the 40-year-old artist now brings a maturely restrained handling (and a hint of stern hope) to these potentially volatile themes. Stojak's figures, intentionally flattened but too richly worked to be purely

two-dimensional, float against subtly modulated monochrome backgrounds. Virtually none of the bodies is complete. In their placeless solitude, they convey an almost religious intensity of longing—perhaps for a human community, perhaps for transcendence. Many of the figures, lacking in natural suppleness and “grace,” extend off the picture plane, suggesting that wholeness may lie elsewhere. Even in group scenes, where connectedness might be most expected, a pall of silence and frustration prevails. One image is composed of three black torsos-with-legs against a creamy white field. The figures walk—or do they hang?—shoulder to shoulder, seemingly in mute solidarity. Yet they have symbolically charged shape of a cross, adheres to many works—as thought stability the suffering figures. Two or three canvases are sometimes abutted, and “add-ons”—small blocks of wood that slightly extended the picture surface—are routinely attached, reinforcing the impression that Stojak's characters (and their spiritual needs) cannot be contained within a conventional frame.

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