

Art in America

Linda Stojak at Stephen Haller



Linda Stojak *Untitled (Figure 23)*, 2005
Oil on Canvas
72h x 60w inches

Continuing Linda Stojak's expressive depiction of isolated figures of women whose principle affect reads as sorrow, her recent oils and mixed mediums canvas are as formally compelling as they are moving. (Those described here are dated 2005.) The faces of the figures are for the most part hidden from view as they kneel or squat, turned forward or in profile, their identities concealed. These solitary, centrally deployed figures activate a picture plane that in each instance is made up of monochromatic fields methodically laid down with a palette knife, stroke on stroke, a kind of burnishing activity that causes the surfaces to glow with a luminosity resembling



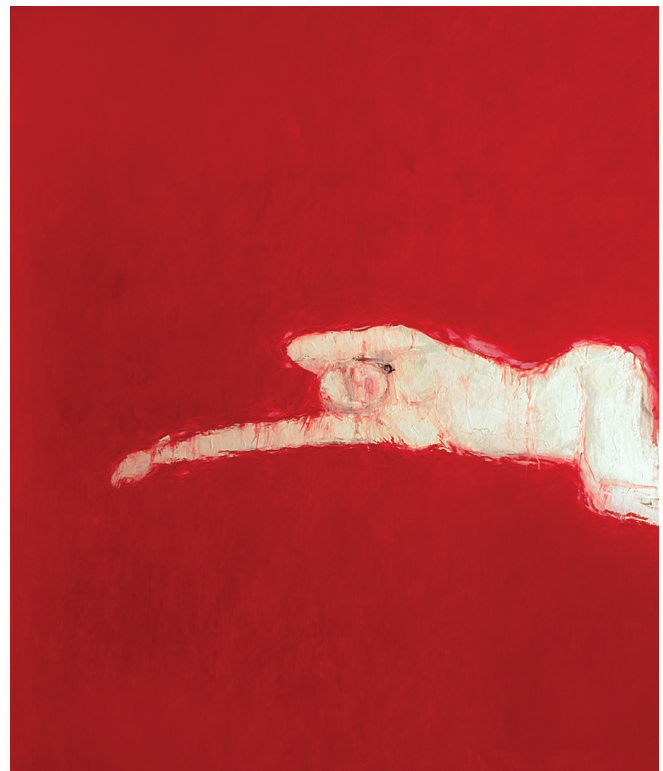
Linda Stojak *Untitled (Figure 20)*, 2005
Oil on Canvas
50h x 50w inches

fields of a number of paintings in this series. Closely associated by subject, the pale blue 4-foot-square *Figure 30* echoes *Figure 20*, of a similar blue, presents its subject in profile, seated, leaning forwards and facing right, floating just above the center of the picture plane. Her hair falls like rain or tears obscuring her face completely. Stojak's 5-by-6-foot *Figure 22*, a vibrant yellow, depicts a similar model seated on what may be a chaise or bench, elbows on knees, hair cascading, torso pressed against thigh.

Three paintings deviate from this program of anonymous, sorrowing figures. The largest and oldest, *Figure 27*, is as reductive and significant as a heraldic emblem, a pale, expressive, even voluptuous figure of color of alabaster reclining on her side through a 6-by-5 foot field of blood red. The knees are bent at the painting's edge; one arm is outstretched, the other cradles her head.

that of encaustic. The women are sketched into that surface with the edge of the blade.

There is something hard-won about these anxiously drawn oddly romantic figures in their tense grace that recall the drawings of Alberto Giacometti and Susan Rothenberg. The attenuated individual at the center of the 6-by-5-foot *Figure 23* kneels on a glowing pink ground. The curved arc of her knees is reiterated by that of elbows and shoulders, the face obscured by the hands. A cursory examination along the unpainted sides of the stretcher suggests the presences of a substrata of yellow, red and pale blue that appear in the



Linda Stojak *Untitled (Figure 27)*, 2005
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72h x 60w inches



Linda Stojak *Untitled (Figure 22)*, 2005
Oil on Canvas
60h x 72w inches

Two feet square, the diminutive canvas that contains *Figure 28* offers the disembodied head of a woman or child in repose or death. The emphatic verticality of *Figure 26* lightens its central feature, a child facing forwards in a manner that suggests a quiet moment in a dance. Only a trace of pathos remains, as though Stojak has worked her way through to an unexpected redemption.

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