

# LOS ANGELES DOWNTOWN NEWS

Volume 23, Number 48

November 28, 1994

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## I Am Woman, Watch Me Soar

*Linda Vallejo Canvasses the  
Feminist Spirit in 'Sola!'*

by Victoria Looseleaf

"If people remember me as a good dealer and a mediocre artist, I'll slit my throat."

This is Linda Vallejo—gallery owner, painter, wife, mother and force in the Downtown arts community—talk-

### ART REVIEW

ing about her role as businesswoman-versus-artist.

Her gallery, Galeria Las Americas (a terrific space with a commanding view of the skyline), has been presenting works of Chicano and Latin American contemporary artists for the past five years, her own works included.

On this occasion, she is speaking to me about the large body of work she has done for her appropriately titled current show, "Sola!" (Spanish for woman alone), where 50 of her most recent paintings are on view.

She admits to me that she is tired and is, in fact, taking a much-needed three-month hiatus from painting.

"Just thinking about a paint brush now gives me a headache," she exclaims.

Fortunately, her work continues to speak for itself.



*This piece (gouache on masonite) by Linda Vallejo entitled "I Love My Spirit" is one of more than 50 by the artist/gallery owner of Galeria Las Americas through Dec. 16.*

Consisting of gouaches on paper and masonite and acrylic on canvas, the exhibition includes four suites of related work.

"The Death of Urban Humanity" depicts a city without art, which, for the artist, means a city without a soul. Where brightly colored, disembodied hands reach up through rubble, grimacing skulls depict horror, pain and emotional entrenchment and half-faces challenge the viewer to a life bereft of art. Here, one is confronted with the hard core facts of a beauty-stripped life in the '90s.

On the more uplifting side, "The Spirits of Our Ancestors" pays homage to the indigenous spirit of the Americas. Here, Ms. Vallejo's canvases consist of muted grays and mauves as if calling up the dead, where images stand firm from dreams and mythology and are now recognized as healing forces.

Ms. Vallejo has also created her own symbology, a glossary, if you will, that accompanies the works. In "The Symbol of Inner Knowing," eyes are the inward self, blood is faith in our hearts, and the butterfly and the flower, which play a prominent role in many of the works, stand for spiritual transformation and the beauty of womanhood, respectively. Also in evidence are the earth, the sun, the moon and hands, the latter a symbol for creativity.

Some of the strongest works fall under the suite "She Gave Birth to Herself." Two particularly effective and complementary canvases entitled "Fulfillment" depict standing female nudes topped by a woman's face as it appears to be leaping through a butterfly in one work and a flower in the other. Subtlety is not a hallmark of a Linda Vallejo painting, but issues of the feminine unconscious are.

In "Woman of the Midnight Sky" the profound psyche of woman is brought to fruition with the accompanying themes of the elements (earth, fire, water and air). Here, "Ceremony" an ancient way of looking at the world through dance, healing and ritual, is prominent.

"Sola!" is the baring of one woman's soul, a probing of the depths of a highly creative, obsessed and driven woman. We are the richer for it.

"Sola!" is at Galeria Las Americas until December 16. The gallery is at 912 E. Third Street, Suite 402 and is open Thursdays through Saturdays from 11-6. Call (213) 613-1347.

***I Am Woman, Watch Me Soar: Linda Vallejo Canvasses the Feminist Spirit in 'Sola!'***

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