

Painted Weather

Where to Find The Skyscape

By Thomas Albright

Skyscape has been a big theme among Bay Region artists in recent years, and one of its most persistent explorers has been Salvatore Pecoraro, whose paintings now hang at the William Sawyer Gallery, 3045 Clay street.

In the past, Pecoraro's paintings have largely alternated between very small canvases that seemed desultory and incomplete, and very large canvases that seemed too big to hold their wispy sprays of cloud and color. In the present show, however, there are at least two works in which he has hit upon a formula for combining these two scales to the great advantage of each, and with very beautiful results.

This formula involves the use of tiny squares of vacuum formed plastic, each of them bearing a painting of the sky as it appeared on a particular day in late fall or early winter; the squares are grouped into a pair of large, rectangular, checker-board compositions that resemble pages from a calendar.

Pecoraro has refined his air brush technique a great deal in these new works, probably with some help from the slick plastic backing; at any rate, his imagery now has a crystalline lucidity, and his colors a luster, radiance and sheen that at times resembles fine color photography.

These two "calendars" are arranged to make visual, rather than chronological sense, with various "days" juggled around or dropped altogether, so that varying colors and moods can most effectively be juxtaposed: The gray of gathering storm clouds next to fair-weather patches of softly nuanced blues, airplane jets touched with sunset golds next to faint rainbows.

At the same time, one suspects those self-contained sky modules could be grouped in any number of other, equally effective, arrangements and, in fact, they form only a portion of 365 squares which Pecoraro has completed, one for each day of the year. This whole calendar was recently exhibited at the La Jolla Art Museum, and one can hope that it will eventually get a similar display here.

Pecoraro's paintings could almost serve as climates for the plastic slices of topography created by Sam Richardson, but they also form a harmonious partnership with the sculpture of David Ogle; which looks somewhat like Richardson in bronze. While the latter's landscapes have only a coincidental relationship to the human figure, however, Ogle's sculpture is very much the other way around. Ogle's forms all take their basic shape from fragments of torsos, generally with the buttocks as a focal point, and he creates dramatic contrasts between their richly textured, darkly patinated, mountainous volumes and sharply chiselled, cuts that abruptly break his shapes into sheer, shiny gold "cliffs."

Focus Gallery

Michael Bishop and Linda Conner, who divide space at the Focus Gallery, 2146 Union Street, share a collage approach to photography, which sometimes takes the form of actual photo-collage techniques, and is sometimes accomplished by more subtle means of composition and arrangement. They also share a weakness for contrivance. Bishop's most effective things, to me, are photographs that deal with astronaut's gear, white, waxen