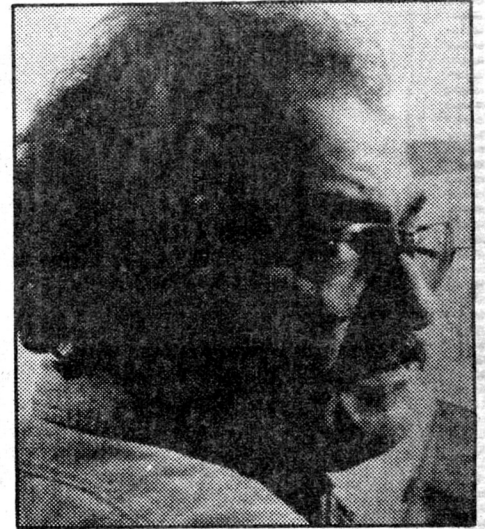


Artist Salvatore Pecoraro uses tough plastic and soft colors in painting-sculpture, 'Liberty 3-1139'



## Tilted clutter of Plexiglas and styrene allows the viewer's eye no resting place

By' Dorothy Burkhardt  
Art Writer

**D**E ANZA College instructor Salvatore Pecoraro is an artist whose work I've watched mature over the four years that he has been exhibiting at Rubicon Gallery, Los Altos. His new work turns out to be variations on

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the same theme: prismatic constructions that function both as painting and as sculpture.

What we see is assertive and beautiful; there's a cold excitement to his work. Indeed, he's an artist willing to take risks, not afraid of change. Yet, though he has introduced new elements into his work since his previous exhibition at Rubicon, he hasn't journeyed a long distance.

His constructions are charged with opposites, elements that play against each other: the tough, hard industrial products — plastic, for instance — opposing soft, modulated colors of mauves, rosy pinks, warm grays; rough textures set against satiny-smooth ones. With these constructions Pecoraro builds a world of evanescent light and shadow, yet every unit has a clear and distinct edge and obeys a strict geometrical order.

The 15 complex styrene and Plexiglas constructions that Rubicon Gallery is now showing range in size from 25 by 29

inches to 4 feet by 5 feet. To form them, Pecoraro airbrushes sheets of styrene, then places them, like paintings, against the wall. He then incorporates a horizontal Plexiglas shelf onto this surface. Each work has a separate visual identity dependent on the cut, arrangement and interaction of Pecoraro's plastic elements and on colors that change and bounce around, as a result of reflected and refracted light.

However, it's on the shelf that most of the action centers. The shelf becomes a base for free-standing, geometric, tinted or clear Plexiglas shapes that could be rearranged. With this new series, Pecoraro tilts the plexi forms that in the past rested comfortably on the shelf; now, they're precariously angled, putting themselves and us on edge.

Pecoraro has also added details — bolts, highly textured and patterned painted areas — and has affixed diagonal elements that stretch from the center of interest (the shelf), parallel to the surface, toward the edge.

The result of all of this activity is a cluttered surface on many pieces, allowing the eye no resting place.

Like many other sculptures constructed of parts, these owe their tensions and meaning to that buildup. In this way they recall constructivism, that art of strain, balance, asymmetry. Pecoraro, once exclusively a painter, brings to mind that most zealous painter, brings to mind that most zealous constructivist, the Hungari-

an-born Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, who also started his career as a painter. Indeed, Pecoraro works with the same elements that challenged Moholy-Nagy from the 1920s through the 1940s: light, space, movement and plastic.

What Pecoraro was doing well two years ago, he's doing better now — his craftsmanship is impeccable. He's also taking a more aggressive, dispassionate and formal stance.

Yet in previous work — though I was conscious to some degree of the materials — the shifting, slight modulations of light, color and shadow translated to pure poetry. Now, even though the color is softer than before, my eye holds to the active surface embellishments. I prefer the larger constructions with fewer elements, which permit me to drift about, less nervously.

Clearly, the material is the same. The aesthetic is the same. It is the details that have changed. Pecoraro has added more when less was doing nicely. He comes back to a set of formal elements without seeming to do anything new, nor — as yet anyway — to further enhance them.

I went to Rubicon looking for romance and found, instead, technology.

**SALVATORE PECORARO NEW CONSTRUCTIONS**, Rubicon Gallery, 398 Main St., Los Altos, through April 10. Hours: 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Tue-Wed, Fri-Sat; 3-8 p.m. Thu. (415) 948-4848.