

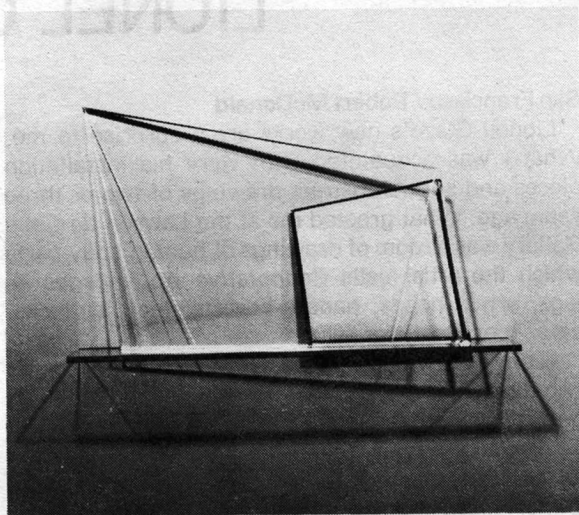
# PRISMATIC INVESTIGATIONS

San Jose / Erin Goodwin

Sal Pecoraro's series of painting/constructions, *Prismatic Constructions*, at the San Jose Museum of Art, has a consistent format of a square color field, airbrushed on acrylic or styrene, as background and a narrow clear acrylic shelf protruding at approximately one-third the height of each piece. The shelf supports several loose, variously angled, small acrylic panels that overlap each other and lean against the back panel. Some of the small panels are airbrushed with a color field that plays against the background. Others are clear or transparent gray or blue-green with scribed lines that are colored and angled to augment further the color relationships and geometry at work.

Pecoraro's colors effectively suggest prismatic breakdown of light as a source of the horizontal color bands that he blends delicately one into another. An immediate impression of these works is simply one of intense and beautiful colors. Yet they rapidly become complex as one examines all the interrelationships created by painted surface and transparency, light angle and shadow, line and shape. One is subtly drawn into unending color variations and geometric subdivision of space where light passes through transparent intersecting planes, hits edges and scribed lines, creates shadow lines and shapes, and alters the tangible forms and surface colors.

Among the smaller works in the show, I particularly liked *Construction #32*. Both the background and smaller colored panel deal with a bright pink moving upward into a pale gray. Pecoraro contrasts the relative simplicity of color activity in this piece with the high angularity of shape and line in the transparent panel and smaller painted panel behind it. The effect is a bittersweet tension. *Construction #54*, Pecoraro's most recent work, is nearly six feet square. Again the rather delicate pinks and violet through blue-grays of the background play against something more aggressive. In this piece it is not only the dimensional activity in the center, where pink vertical rectangles are viewed through a larger, blue-green panel. An additional background square introduced behind the styrene square is of canvas textured with low relief horizontal and vertical lines combed into modeling paste on the canvas surface. The result is subtle and controlled, yet contributes a painterly quality through the unique nature of canvas and the visible touch of the artist's hand.



SALVATORE PECORARO: PRISMATIC CONSTRUCTION NO. 32, mixed media, at the San Jose Museum of Art. Photo: Bruce Conquest.

The *Prismatic Constructions* draw extensively on elements developed in several of Pecoraro's earlier series of paintings. The blues, grays and reds which the artist has used through many years of painting appeared originally in the *365 Skies* of 1971, but have been influenced recently by his extensive slide documentation of the prismatic breakdown of light into color. The horizontal support shelf as a visual element grew out of the fluorescent or neon light lines that appeared in many of the early sky paintings on canvas. The smaller squares, rectangles and geometrically shaped panels evolved out of the last sky paintings, in which part of the sky was seen reflected in a mirror or through a transparent gridded inset against a larger sky.

In spite of all this, the step from two-dimensional paintings to three-dimensional constructions is a major one. The works no longer refer to the sky or light phenomena; they are nonreferential. It is not necessary to know or understand Pecoraro's formal intrigues or history as an artist to become involved in the vitality of these pieces. They have an exciting presence and immediacy and surely form a mature and successful body of work. □