

LOVE LETTERS FROM SAN JOSE
JUDITH LINHARES
November 12–December 22, 2023

Parker Gallery is proud to present *Love Letters from San Jose*, a solo exhibition of historical works from the 1970s by Los Angeles-native Judith Linhares. Comprising rarely seen ink drawings and gouache works on paper—many of which are being presented for the first time in nearly 50 years—this exhibition highlights works made in the San Francisco Bay Area, before the artist’s permanent move to New York City in 1980.

A graduate of the California College of Arts and Crafts (BFA 1964, MFA 1970), Linhares’s formal training occurred in tandem with her burgeoning education in and advocacy for feminist art practices. The 1960s and 70s were also marked by a period of broader sociopolitical upheaval. Made against the backdrop of ongoing protests against the Vietnam War and women’s rights advocacy in the United States, a suite of black ink drawings from the titular *Love Letters from San Jose* series depict uncanny skeletons engaged in everyday domestic routines, rituals and play, influenced by Mexican political cartoonist José Guadalupe Posada (1845-1923). A group of related nocturnal scenes in high contrast black, blue and red gouache reveal the artist’s bold embrace of appropriation, autobiography, decoration and narrative.

Several important themes emerge during this seminal decade, including those of female strength and resilience, the confrontation between humans and nature, and the world of dreams and unconscious thought, the latter of which holds particular significance for the artist, who has been recording her dreams since the early 1970s. Linhares notes, “The process of painting is for me an ongoing investigation parallel to a dream state. My concerns while working are to remaining open to an unfolding process over time. I trust my intuitive state as it has proven to be my better guide in assisting me in integrating the physical act of painting with my emotional self, that promises renewal.”

Several works in the exhibition nod to art historical figures and tropes, often through a feminist revisionist perspective. *Self portrait as Van Gogh* boldly re-imagines Linhares as the lauded 19th century Dutch painter, whose personal struggles bolstered his legacy of greatness. In this work, Linhares depicts herself elegantly attired in a ruffled dress and three-stranded pearl necklace, holding a bloodied knife in one neatly manicured hand, and a freshly mutilated ear in the other. By tackling this famed painting head-on, Linhares calls into question how differently madness might be interpreted had Van Gogh been a woman.

A pioneering figure of Bay Area figuration, this exhibition offers a rare glimpse into Linhares's early work, in which she is developing the hallmark subjects and structure of her vivid paintings, guided by an intuitive, introspective process that challenges accepted notions of "good taste."

Judith Linhares (b. 1940 in Pasadena, CA) lives and works in Brooklyn, NY. Her work has been included in major group exhibitions worldwide, including the influential 1978 *Bad Painting* exhibition at the New Museum, organized by legendary curator Marcia Tucker, and the 1984 Venice Biennale. She is the recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship and multiple grants from the National Endowments for the Arts. Recent solo exhibitions include those held at Massimo de Carlo, London, UK (2023); P·P·O·W, New York, NY (2022) and the Sarasota Art Museum, Ringling College of Art + Design, Sarasota, FL (2021). Her work is held in the permanent collections of the Berkeley Art Museum, CA; the Crocker Art Museum, Sacramento, CA; the de Young Museum, San Francisco, CA; the Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego, CA; the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, PA; the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, CA; the San Jose Museum of Art, CA; the Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, NY, among others.