

SHIRLEY
GORELICK

Shirley Gorelick, *The Bensons I*, 1978. Acrylic on canvas, 80 x 80". Courtesy SoHo 20.

Strong compositions, vigorous paint surfaces, and rich characterizations are the material substance of Shirley Gorelick's recent paintings at SoHo 20. A series of silver-point drawings on canvas is also included in the exhibit. They are rectangles and tondos that support and extend a persistent theme of Gorelick's past and present work: confrontation through intense portrait studies achieved by

skillful rendering and color organization. Gorelick shows a wife and husband in bold frontal compositions that emphasize dominant facial characteristics and body gestures. A sense of private discovery is but one of the ideas that these portraits provoke. Primary is the notion of confrontation as Gunny and Lee are shown in intimate shared moments presented directly to the spectator. Here the figures are physically related by touch or proximity, but it is the psychological relationship that Gorelick presents as meaning and mystery of these provocative portraits.

In *Bensons I* she reveals the couple's sense of intimacy, as well as the privacy that each has in this shared relationship. Gunny and Lee sit side by side, she in a great rattan chair and he on the arm of the couch. In *Bensons II* he is in a simple wooden chair and she is in her wheelchair. They hold hands and glance, not at each other, but beyond the picture

plane to engage the spectator in frank, silent confrontation. In *Lee and Taffy*, Lee dozes on the couch in a strongly foreshortened composition while the family dog nestles close and struggles to keep eyes open. The room, filled with homely objects—books, paintings, a stenciled chest—seems to be an extension of the personalities of the people that live here. Faces are painted with sharp definition of features, while other forms have less precise specification, thus forcing the viewer to a closer examination of these faces and to wonder very privately about the man and woman and their lives. Personal qualities and relationships are some of the intangibles suggested by Gorelick's views of the Bensons and their environment.

The dominant hue in this series is blue, shown in infinite variety and modulated by browns and ochers. Brushwork is bold and confident; broad strokes of light and shade intensify the drama of

these domestic scenes and succeed in making the ordinary appear extraordinary. Space is dramatically limited to foreground areas where figures fill the picture plane and engage the viewer in persistent eye contact. Through Gorelick's paintings we are introduced to real people who are strong, proud, and appear at peace with their world. Though much is revealed here, more is kept private, inviolate, and mysterious as Gorelick's paintings simultaneously show, tell, and tantalize. (SoHo 20, March 24-April 18)

Yvette Jayson Sencer