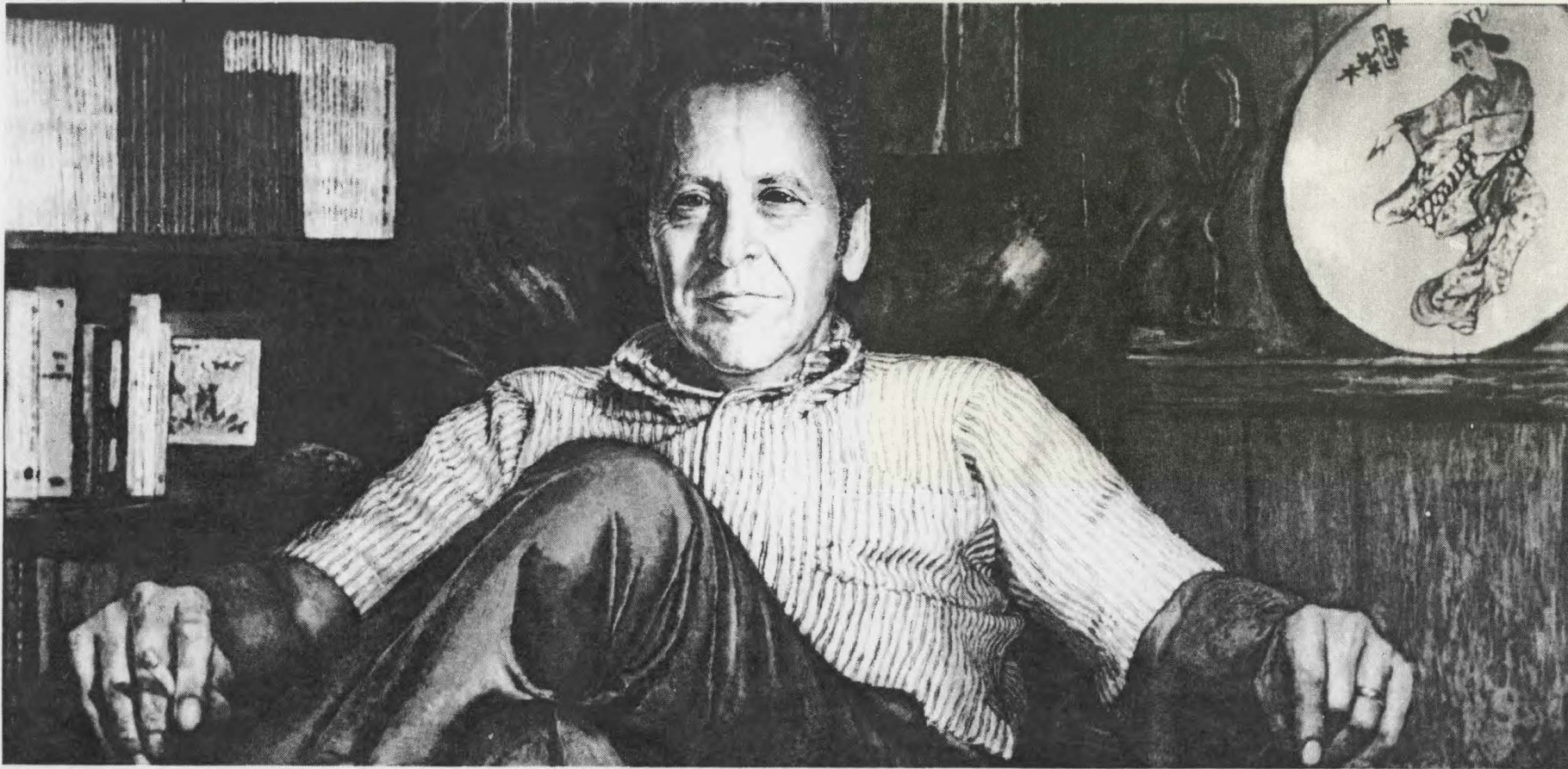


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By BARBARA FLUG COLIN

For twenty-two years, Shirley Gorelick's painstakingly realistic portraits have explored different hues of the human character spectrum, showing it bodied in youth, age, black, white, male, female, nudity or clothing. They were people shown in a range of relationships which would create tension and reflectivity: men among women, women among sisters, sister with brother, sisters among sisters, whole families. Sometimes the relationships gave visible clues to what might otherwise be implicit. For exam-

ple, there was a portrait of interdependency between two partners where one was seated in a wheelchair

At Sono 20 her present paintings have earned entrance into her psychiatrist-friends inner room, a close-up view of a married couple she knows well. There are the overt clues: the things they have filled their rooms with, from grain of wood to choice of books. And then what we recognize reconditely in facial features and body positions: the ambivalence within expressions—wry smiles which are at the same time impish and serious; fixed eyes which are focused yet vulnerable; age lines and softened flesh well-integrated by the

face shapes, open armed openness above self-containing crossed legs

They are the kind of portraits you might want to pass by. The subjects are so conventional. But they stare you in. And within the surfaces they reveal depth: the changing tonalities of hues and strokes that contour the visible body shapes as they imply the shape of character.

The show takes a risk. Among the five canvases (there are also beautiful silverpoint drawings), four are portraits of Dr. Tess Forrest and Dr. Joseph Barnett in the style the artist has achieved through the years. But one portrait, a seven foot triptych of Dr. Tess, is a monochro-

matic pink-based painting in which there are no objects. There are no color conflicts. Past clues are forsaken. The three Tesses seated up closed require us to focus on three aspects of her face. There was awkwardness in scale when I saw the painting, unfinished. But the experiment deserves respect as an authentic next step.

The artist having achieved a full vocabulary and grammar for her self-reflexive technique and imagery forays further into the inner axis of self below overt patterns of speech.