

SHUDDERINGLY SURREAL



"Descanso Inútil"

By MYRNA RODRIGUEZ
STAR Art Critic

A surrealist conception of human life is being presented by 26-year-old artist Ada Carmona in the Francisco Oller Gallery at the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras Campus. The drawings in pencil on paper show the artist's exploration of various ways of working in this medium and demonstrate not only her domination over the materials but also her vivid imagination.

The 20 works on display have been worked in series, with an idea developed through different presentations of the same topic. As might be expected some works are more outstanding than others and some appear to be just steps in the concretization of an idea.

Usually when an artist works in series, the result is some transitional works and some that fully project the artist's intention, the latter of course demonstrating a higher degree of artistic quality. In the case of the present exhibit, I agree with Prof. Antonio García Gutiérrez, chairman of the UPR Fine Arts Department (which administers the gallery), that there are some outstanding works and one in which the artist fully achieved a purpose and a symbolic meaning.

Refugio de Conciencia is indeed the best of the exhibit. It is a work which challenges the spectator with its double image of a seated female figure and a cave-like foreground-background relationship which makes the figure almost disappear. The drawing is perfectly structured in a well rendered technique.

It was surprising to find the best works, such as this one and others at the end of the room, while the not-so-successful drawings were placed at the front. Nonetheless, this particular drawing became more of a mystery observed in its placement on a dividing panel that afforded less visual space and, in a sense, became even more intimate.

Works like *Piel dormida*, and *Descanso inútil* are also successful but some drawings like *Vigia de un pensamiento*, *Me convierto en vertical espejo* and *Distancia entre nada y ello* present the female face in a style too much like illustration and in some instances tending towards the comic strip. This style of female representation, somewhere between naturalistic and the schematic associated with popular illustration, takes away from whatever symbolic meaning the artist may have intended to project.

The semi-naturalistic figures are worked in what appears to be layers of skin and flesh in a process of disintegration. The spectator shudders before what appears to be a peeling of the skin and the appearance of holes in other parts of the body. The works evoke feelings of anguish, curiosity and dislike. The technique employed by the artist fully contributes to the realism. However it is precisely those achievements along with the artist's particular depiction of the female face, that are lost in a way.

In *Reflejo de un sentir*, a hand drawn naturalistically is holding an eye worked schematically in which a crouched female figure can be seen inside the iris, while the flesh looks like a cavern in the earth. Such associations of the open flesh with the earth contribute to the general meaning.

Ada Carmona has participated in various shows and contests for young artists, and this apparently is her first individual exhibit at a professional level. She holds a bachelor's degree in art education from the UPR where she initiated her artistic development with the faculty of the Fine Arts Department.