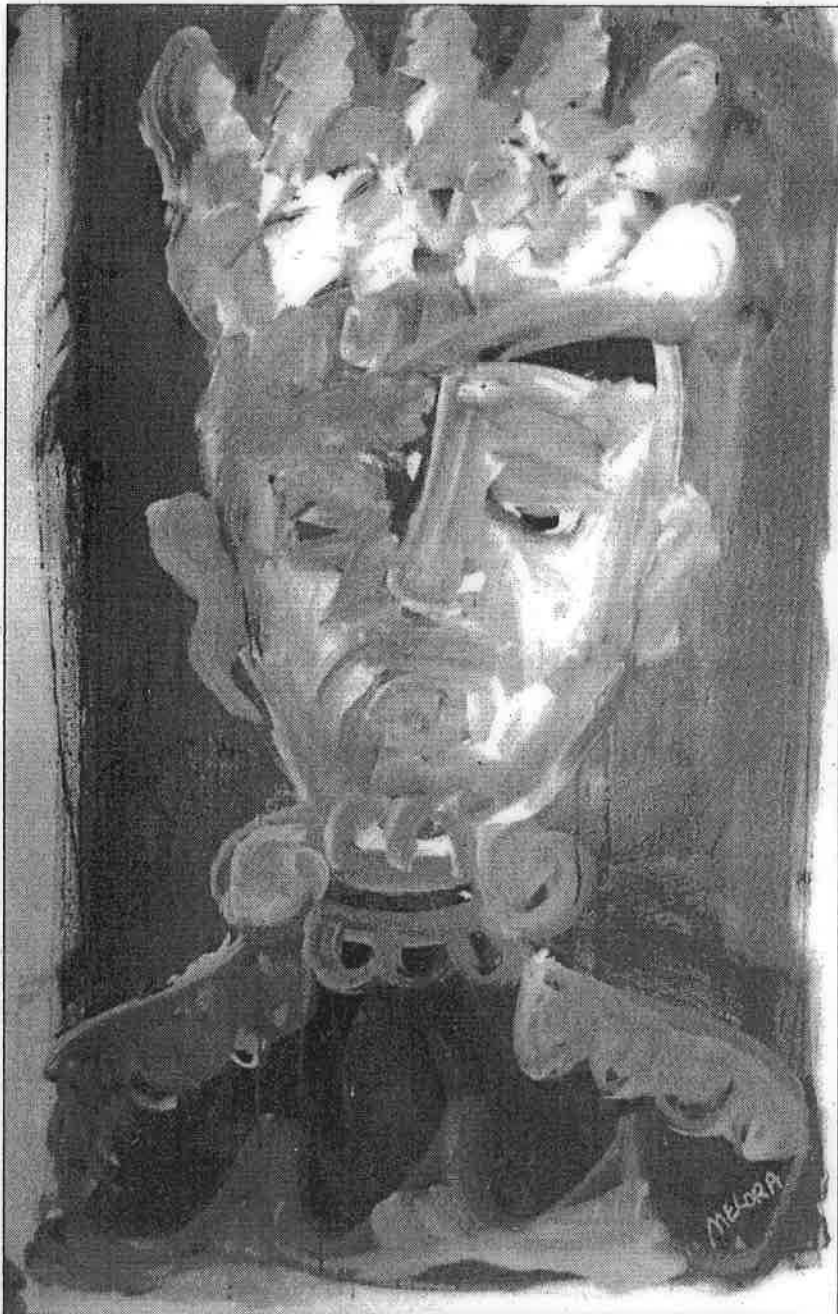


Opinion

New On Sag Harbor's Art Scene

By ROBERT LONG



"HOW WONDERFUL to find paintings in a restaurant that are so good you actually find yourself looking at them," says our reviewer of Melora Griffis's work at Estia.

Melora Griffis's funny, sometimes spooky, roughly beautiful portraits in acrylic, oil, and charcoal on canvas, ranging in size from about 6 by 8 inches to 3 feet square, have moved to the Estia restaurant on Main Street in Amagansett following a too-brief showing at the AE Gallery in East Hampton, so in order to see them I suppose you should at least buy a cup of coffee there between now and Sept. 25. You will be grateful you did, believe me.

Ms. Griffis's heads look spontaneously made, their features laid on with sure swipes. Noses are boomerangs of paint, mouths are chromatic smears. Expressionist in spirit, they manage to capture the personalities of both the sitter and the painter in a way a realist painting can't.

Colors vary from zippy to subdued — a hot pink beret on an electric green ground, the modulated grays of "Five Stockbrokers." The pinks and yellows of de Kooning are here, too. In the creepy and funny "Too Much T.V.," a man with blue hair, a purple jacket, and a red tie holds his stomach with one blurred white hand; his ghostly, sunken face comes out of Ensor or Munch.

Some people look like cats; maybe they are cats. One woman wears a hat that makes her look like the haloed Jesus Christ in a Renaissance painting. Many faces have a blurred Baconesque transience, like those of the couple who constitute "Italian Royalty." There are little whiffs of Dubuffet and the later George McNeil, but Ms. Griffis has her own style.

How wonderful it is to find paintings in a restaurant that are so good that you actually find yourself looking at them. And it's all the more satisfying that they're portraits — just think of the third-rate caricatures that deface the walls of more pretentious venues.