



## German Gargano at CDS

The most recent works of the Argentine painter German Gargano are disturbingly destabilized. In what first appear to be abstracted landscapes built of broad, passionately applied brushstrokes, nothing is obvious. Patches of paint rawly suggest what one would expect lines to indicate, and bright hues establish an upbeat mood even as the uncertain imagery introduces a note of anxiety.

In his 1991 show at CDS, Gargano contrived haunting scenes focusing on political repression in Argentina in the late '70s, cast in somber tones and relatively clear images. His recent show, which included 10 large works painted during the last two years, addressed the theme of sexual perversity. A casual glance may discern only a patchwork of bold reds, oranges, yellows, greens and blues, but careful scrutiny discloses frag-

mentary figures in scenes populated with both perpetrators and victims of depravity.

These new works emerge from the profound impact upon the artist of Pier Paolo Pasolini's 1975 film *120 Days of Sodom*, a consequence of Pasolini's poetic rendering in technicolor of the de Sade tale. "I transferred the film's supercharged climate of perversity to my paintings," Gargano has said, "partially by reflecting the play of color—the pinks, the greens—that Pasolini utilized, and partially by adapting the aura of sex and violence that pervades the film."

In the 2-meter-wide *Descención* (Descent), 1991-92, the artist depicts a detention center where torture and sexual abuse are integral parts of the regimen. A dark figure hovers across the center of the painting, suggesting either Jesus on the cross or the descent into Hell. Gargano hints at connections between religion and perversity. Blues and greens dominate the fore-

ground in *Abismo* (Abyss), 1992, a work filled with tight patterns and violent colors. Fragments of female bodies flash before the eye, as if one were watching the flickering images of a film gone awry. Here the artist returns to his earlier theme of repression, but he reaches beyond crimes of wars and dictatorships to treat it as the chaotic condition of life itself.

Gargano's experience as a psychoanalyst has led him to the core of man's often-violent nature; on the other hand, the energy in his works seems to celebrate the life force. Gargano, 40, paints from personal experience: he was a prisoner during Argentina's "dirty war," but he is recently married and the father of a daughter; perhaps his present circumstances inspire the mood his bright colors suggest. In the canvases, the two situations mesh, and although the darkness persists, it is somehow surmounted.

—Edward Shaw

German Gargano: *Ceremonia*, 1989, oil on canvas, 49 by 71 1/2 inches; at CDS.

