

Desert Life

SATURDAY, JUNE 11, 1988

SPOTLIGHT



"Portrait of Robert Medici, in black" by Ming C. Lowe (oil on canvas from "New Work")

Lowe's 'New Work' opens at studio-gallery

"New Work," a collection of 16 oil-on-canvas paintings by avant-garde artist Ming Lowe, opened May 28 at the Ming C. Lowe Studio/Gallery in Palm Desert.

The collection can be seen by appointment through the end of June.

Consisting of mostly large-scale works executed in black and illuminated by glowing color, much of "New Work" evokes the finality and mystery of death.

In "Guatemalan Prayer," ambiguous figures stand before phosphorescent candles in a solemn, mystical tableau. "Mass Burial," a small work in black and gray, features a group of people standing in darkness before an open grave, the cadavers strewn with shimmering lime powder.

In "Double Burn," which was inspired by the funeral of Lowe's long-time friend Paul Butterfield, a photograph of the deceased is held over his body and burned in symbolic cremation.

The death theme continues with "Portrait of Gary Gilmore" and "Final Moments." In "Portrait," the head and shoulders of a hooded man face the spectator, while a white opening over the face reveals only darkness. "Final Moments," also inspired by the Gilmore execution, features the same hooded figure seated in a mysterious stone room, his feet shackled.

A photograph illegally shot inside the tomb of St. Francis of Assisi, was used as background research for the large "St. Francis of Assisi's Tomb," in which an altar laden with candles continually rekindled by monks since St. Francis' death in 1226 glows in the darkness.

In "Robert," New York multimedia artist and designer Robert Medici is pictured bare-chested and painted black, his mouth covered with gauze, reaching upward in oblique perspective through yellow bands of light.

The jarring, electric yellow-and-black "Headlights" depicts a man's agonizingly contorted face with a glowing contraption or "headlights" over his wild eyes, his mouth open as if in a final scream or gasp.

Lowe's deliberately disquieting personal view of death, "New Work" reflects 20 years of introspection and self-imposed isolation in the desert. She has had one-woman shows consistently since 1978, and her work is in private collections in London, San Francisco, New York, Los Angeles and Spain.

The Ming C. Lowe Studio/Gallery can be reached by telephoning (619) 346-9565.