

# In These Startling Paintings,

## Art Reviews

By HOLLY MYERS  
SPECIAL TO THE TIMES

All the paintings in Megan McManus' second show at Post have the same subject, which is also, incidentally, the same subject of all the paintings in her first show a year and a half ago: her lap, as seen from her own perspective, looking down. Each work is about life-size and rectangular in format, with the same roughly triangular composition (knees at the top, hips at the bottom). Her thighs are bare in each (although the more private areas are covered) and often draped in loose cloth.

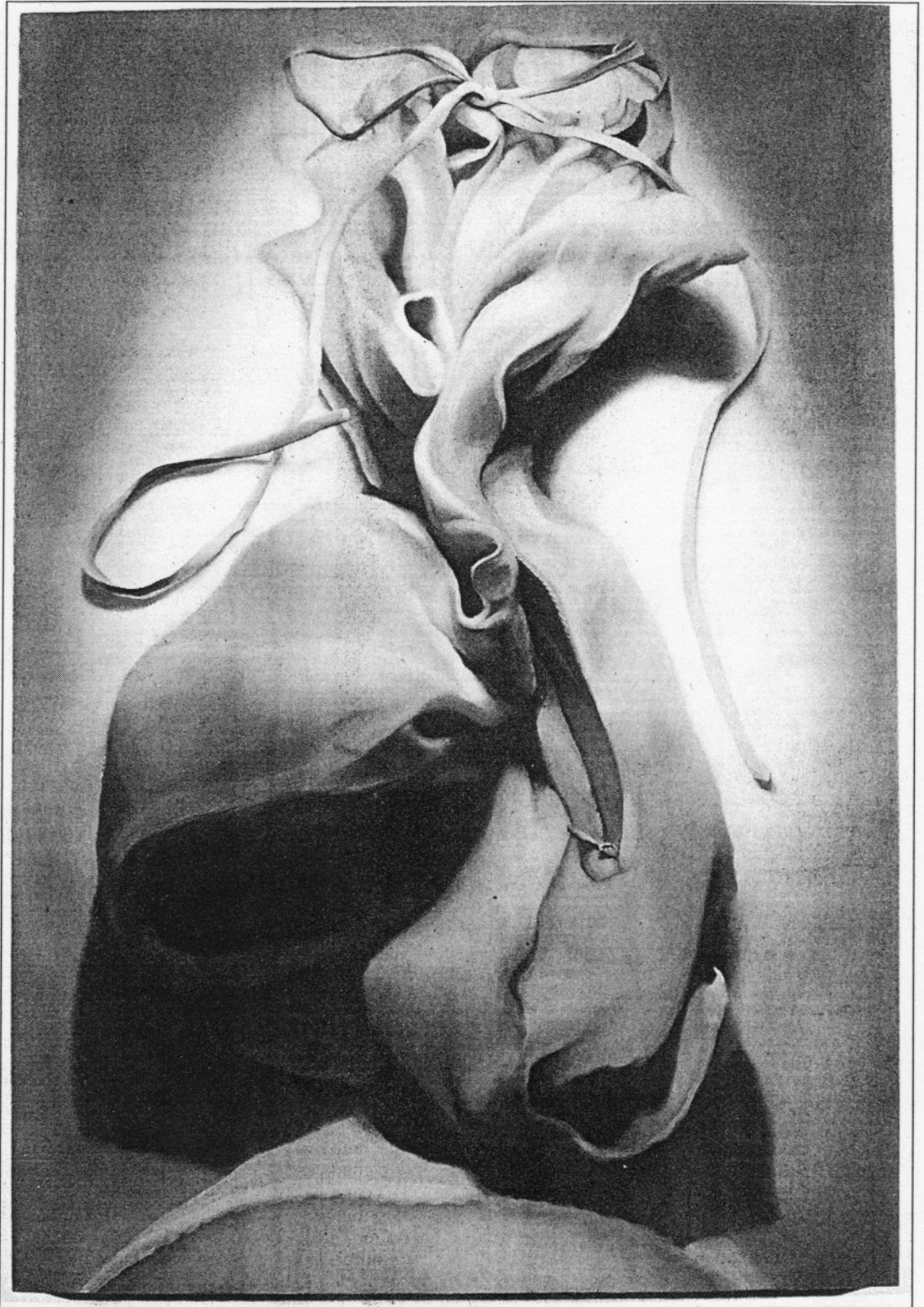
Such repetition would probably come off as tiresome, gimmicky or self-indulgent if the paintings were not so profoundly beautiful. If McManus did come to her subject, as seems likely, in a moment of low inspiration, she embraced the state courageously and mined its depths with a steady eye. What could very well have begun as an exercise to keep herself painting has become, with a period of refinement, a startlingly vivid series of emotional portraits.

In one, an emerald green dress rests on the thighs in a twisted pile, its snake pit-like tangle of strings and zippers spelling out the promise of female beauty and flirtatious adventure. In another, a white linen cloth drapes across the knees, illuminated with a clear, gorgeous light that brings to mind the comforts of a sunny kitchen and a longing for a mother's protection. Two strips of fiery red satin, stunningly ablaze against a solid black background, cover all but the inner reaches of the thighs in another piece, revealing a startling streak of sexual prowess.

Technically, the paintings are nearly flawless. McManus' style is lucid and clear, photographically precise yet sensual. Her flesh tones glow from within and her fabrics ripple effortlessly, absorbing and reflecting light at a perfect pitch.

Past comparisons to Georgia O'Keeffe were not off the mark. The parallels, both stylistic and thematic, are undeniable, and perhaps even more apt in her current show than in her last. But one wouldn't want to see her penned into the role of tribute painter; the sensibility is personal and independent and deserves to be approached on its own terms.

It is probably no accident that



Courtesy of Post

In Megan McManus' "Untitled No. 3," a tangled green dress spells out the promise of flirtatious adventure.

adopts in these paintings bears a strong resemblance to the postures used in yoga and Buddhism to facilitate meditation and the pursuit of enlightenment; it seems employed here toward similar ends. Indeed, as one moves through the seven works in the

to seem less like a figural motif than a mandala of sorts—a point of mental, emotional and artistic focus. Considering the breadth and depth of inner experience expressed in the intimate detail of these paintings, it's been a valuable tool. It will be interesting to

if she decides to direct that focus outward.

Post, 1904 E. 7th Place, Los Angeles, (213) 622-8580, through Saturday.