

## Judith Linhares

**Edward Thorp**

Judith Linhares's work is full of Neo-Expressionist brio, but her big gestures carry intimate narratives. In this show, "Raving in Eden," recent, meaty paintings, particularly those of nude women in the great outdoors, walked the line between pretty and raw, and between affecting and kitschy.

A painting like *Wild Nights* (2005), in which three women in the buff roast marshmallows around a campfire, is thrilling precisely because it threatens to descend into mawkishness. On the face of it, the subject matter could easily have the same numbing banality of books on self-empowerment like *Women Who Run With the Wolves*. But Linhares's bulky, extravagant brushstrokes and rich, almost edible colors, while conveying plenty of emotion, are supremely unsentimental.

In *Fools for Love* (2006), three nude women perched in a tree and a fourth sitting beneath it look wistfully into the distance—or perhaps into the recent past. The sky behind them is a mosaic of Easter-egg lavenders, yellows, pinks, and blues. The painting's dippy Fauvism and the women's nonchalantly athletic poses turn broken hearts into a rueful joke. This lightheartedness is extended to animal pictures like the totemic *Rabbit* (2005)—more Dürer than Hallmark—in which sweetness does not become



Judith Linhares, *Fools for Love*, 2006, oil on linen, 58" x 88". Edward Thorp.

saccharine thanks to blocky, assured brushstrokes.

Linhares's technique and colors have been compared with those in the work of younger painter Dana Schutz. Both artists start with the particular—as in Schutz's *Myopic* (2004), of a woman with an enormous single eye, and Linhares's *Fools for Love*, for example—and transmute it into a quirky reflection on the universal. But Linhares got there first. Her work filters a lifetime of mistakes and passions through some demented and wonderful painting.

—Carly Berwick