

People Pack Gallery Despite Bad Weather

ART MARKET

By DAVID L. BELL

Weather and art were at odds last weekend, and art won out. Friday and Saturday and Sunday events were well attended, snow and ice notwithstanding.

Why do people brave the elements for some openings and concerts and pass up others even in fair weather? It must have something to do with quality, or with catering to the taste of those who are inclined to go out in the first place.

And, as far as last weekend's schedule is concerned, it certainly challenges the allegation that Santa Feans won't support serious art.

Several hundred people packed C.G. Rein Gallery Friday evening for a combined exhibit and performance that involved

painters Inger Jirby and Don Fabricant, video artists Woody and Steina Vasulka, and artist/performer Frank Joseph Rolla.

The hot colors of Jirby canvases such as "Picuris Pueblo" added to the warmth of the occasion, which at its height became the classic opening, where you can't see the art for the people. One participant suggested that the attendance represented a breakout from post-holiday cabin fever, but the art made it evident that there were other reasons for being there as well.

Fabricant's abstractions in oil and gouache, most of which were in fact large enough to be seen over the crowd, held their own nicely, their strong and architectonic compositions helping to resolve the social confusion.

Fabricant handles paints sensitively. The results, in a piece such as "Pictures and Windows," show abstract painting at its best. There is no need to verbalize or intellectualize the work, for



Journal Photo by Mariynn Foss

Santa Feans Flock to Combined Exhibit-Performance at C.G. Rein Galleries

the visual/emotional effect is complete as it stands.

The Vasulka video installation, "The West," is best seen on a quiet day in the gallery, from the single chair that has been placed at the center of a circle formed by 10 receivers. Images of Chaco Canyon and Southwestern landscape move horizontally, as though seen from a moving car, or in pursuit of a stalking figure that always just eludes the camera. The work has a strong mood, and can be recommended on that count.

Frank Joseph Rolla's contribution to the C.G. Rein show consists of work installed in the gallery window, and of a performance that followed the opening Friday. In both, a strong component of obsession became apparent, prompting the audience to what might be described as nervous laughter.

Whether in response to stuffed canvas dummies bearing red crosses, their targeting by blow-gun darts, or accompanying track music and spoken commentary, observers took the part a child might take in watching a game of marbles from the sideline: They showed tense interest, a restrained desire to join in, and amused uncertainty about what would happen next. On those counts, the performance could be

deemed a success.

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At the St. John's College Art Gallery, a well-attended Saturday afternoon opening introduced prints and drawings by Carl Johansen and Jane Abrams. The second of an ongoing series of St. John's exhibitions featuring artists chosen by the gallery director and by artists themselves, the show demonstrated the potential of a gallery that is able to operate without political or commercial dictates.

Johansen's work, which sponsoring artist Bruce Lowney describes in the catalog as "unflinchingly personal," included pieces made from 1979 to 1984, and confirms his status as a talented, eccentric and enigmatic

artist.

Though much of Johansen's output is "art about art," it is always fresh in its references to the great works of art history. Johansen seems to be running one step ahead of something, and the viewer cannot resist being caught up by his energy.

The prints of Jane Abrams deal in archetypal imagery, arranging lines, circles and crescents in inexhaustible combinations that always achieve visual resolution. Such resolution is sometimes internal, sometimes outside the graphic rectangle, and often tenuous, so that the viewer's concern is engaged.

A vortex is the common denominator of much of this work, whether the large Miro-like colored prints or the small engravings of improbably

hairy orifices. Like most abstraction, the Abrams work is finally enigmatic on the conscious level. You either get it at another level, or you don't get it.

■ ■ ■

At the Museum of International Folk Art, Saturday evening's showings of ethnographic films sold out, and with good reason. "First Contact," which deals with the unexpected encounters between Europeans and New Guinea Highlanders in 1930, was as "entertaining and remarkable" as its billing claimed.

Sponsored by the Museum and the Center for Contemporary Arts, "Ethnofilmfest '84," will continue on Friday and Saturday through Feb. 4.

Riot Observance To Be Feb. 4

SANTA FE — The fourth anniversary observance of the 1980 prison riot, an annual event sponsored by a coalition of prison-activist organizations, will be held this year on Feb. 4.

The day's activities will "call attention to the continuing brutal, degrading conditions under which prisoners live and show that we are united in our determination to change the penal system that affects us all," according

to the College of Santa Fe's Alumni Hall and a 7 p.m. program of talks and music, also at Alumni Hall.

Local participants in the day's events are to include Bruce Rolstad, of the statewide Committee to Stop Executions; Reba Sanchez, a former prisoner and a member of the Coalition for Prisoners Rights; and Johnna Lopez, of the Services to Offend-

ers Programs, in Albuquerque.

Out-of-state participants will include Walter Collins of Atlanta and Naneen Karraker of San Francisco. Both are representatives of the national Unitarian-Universalist Service Committee's National Moratorium on Prison Construction.

For more information, call 982-9520.

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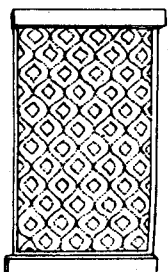
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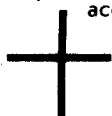
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