People Pack Gallery Despite Bad Weather

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/performance 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 break 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 paintings 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 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 walking 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 stuffied 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.

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

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 ‘refuses 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 Offenders Programs, in Albuquerque.

Out-of-state participants will include Walter Collins of Atlanta and Nann E. Harraker 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.

Widow Faces Three Lawsuits

Journal Photo by Marty Fox