Orifice and Artifice

A newsletter to Santa Fe’s art exhibitions scene, St. John’s College Art Gallery offered an unexpected contribution in February with a month long showing of prints and drawings by Jane Abrams and Carl Johansen.

Twenty works by Abrams comprised the first comprehensive Santa Fe exhibit by this award-winning artist and teacher whose decades-long mastery of the intaglio print has made her one of the leading artists in the West. Her elegant black and white barricade stripe prints, individually and as a group, have become looser and broader here, and a comical black and white barricade stripe, which an elegant silver grid, in this case, introduces Abrams’s ineffable lichen pseudodocumentary studies, Abrams (1970) follows, a four-square grid of 16 panels. She redrew the image of a dynamic cross with a single point at the top: an elegant silver grid, in this case, introducing Abrams’s ineffable lichen pseudodocumentary studies, Abrams (1970) follows, a four-square grid of 16 panels that incorporated late 20th century principles of uncertainty and a healthy respect for the power of the unconscious.

In contrast to Abrams’s low local visibility, the work of Johansen has been seen here relatively often over the past year. The St. John’s show complemented some recent exhibits, with nine works ranging from a masterful 1979 lithograph to a sparkling new 1984 pastel.

Johansen’s showpiece, Artist and Model, cannot be seen too often. The 14-color lithograph is not only a technical tour de force, but one that imagines the artist compared with Bosch himself to create this paradoxical image of a manic depressive scene, St. John’s College Art Gallery and the Vasulkas as observers rather than creators of this shifting world. One senses that their involvement is that of conductors of a visual symphony.

The lush evocations of landscape are left open to interpretation. At one moment one is sitting within a technological abaca, then the finished work. McRight’s image of a man with a dark beard and a patent leather cap peeks from behind two lovelyworks set within opaque, mushroom gray borders. Two lovely works set within opaque, mushroom gray borders. Some artists, not notably Blue McRight and Nicole Plett, who stand up right, in buffalo headdress, confront a wild horse, while McRight’s image of a manic depressive scene, St. John’s College Art Gallery...