



"Male and Female": 12" x 6"

During 1969 Wopko Jensma held successful exhibitions of his woodcuts and monotypes in New York, Oxford and Johannesburg. For the early part of 1970 he has lined up shows for Port Elizabeth, Durban and Pretoria.

In my view three qualities, compounded in a distinctly original manner, raise his art to a level of special importance. These are: relatedness, passion, form.

The relatedness is to Africa — to the feeling of contemporary Northern African graphic work and of traditional African carvers' art, to elements of the African outlook and experience, to African myth-imagery, to African modes of formalization, simplification, distortion, to African rhythmic emphases.

wopko jensma

THE AFRICAN ACCENT

Lionel Abrahams

The burthen of this African style and iconography is Jensma's passion, the intimate individual charge that gives the work intense personal meaning inside its geographical relatedness. It is not a simple or a detached contemplative emotion, but a violent and electrical charge, stilled sometimes by a sort of smothering bewilderment, as though a rigid mask has been clapped over an agitated face. The main feelings are of erotic urgency, frenzy, empathy with the damaged and tormented — though there is a kind of humour as well at times. Much of this emotional force is expressed in the tatter-edge of flesh-like forms (in the monotypes) and in wave or ray or ripple-like structured texturing of the spaces between the main forms (in the wood-cuts) — as though the passions burst out and burned up the air surrounding his mysterious human-animal-plant-spirit creatures who (for all their effect of palpitation) retain a strange quietness in the midst of this psychic turmoil. But the passion does not burst out of the work: it is communicated with great force precisely because it is so contained.

This brings us to the form. Jensma's is a highly cultivated aesthetic sense. His graphics are often, simply, beautiful objects which allow themselves to be read as delicate studies in mysterious shapes, in rhythm and in contrast. The emotional content waits to be called out according to the temperament of the onlooker, and never obtrudes itself over the subtleties of the formal solutions. If you choose, your eye can play here among the abstract elements like a bather in a pool.

Wopko Jensma is emerging, I believe, as a major contributor to a recently-sprung stream of authentically South African art in the contemporary context. And in no-one else do I find the expression of Africa and of Self so strong, and so harmoniously interwoven.



"Birdman": 12" x 12"