
Pro Rege

Volume 27
Number 2 Arts Issue 1998

Article 16

December 1998

Sabine

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Recommended Citation

Van Wyk, Jake (1998) "Sabine," *Pro Rege*: Vol. 27: No. 2, 18 - 19.

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"Sabine" Oil Pastel, Pencil 1998
Jacob Van Wyk

Sources . . .



Sabatine is the result of research done during a Dordt Studies Institute Assignment in the fall of 1996. The ideas and observations were generated by a massive tree stump standing along the western perimeter of the Oak Grove State Park near the Big Sioux river. I was struck by the fact that though alone and severely decayed, the form dominated the landscape and presented a powerful metaphor of life and death. This anthropomorphic form appeared sage-like; it likely had witnessed nearly a century of passing seasons. I didn't identify the species, but its surface was a sunbleached silver that undulated and danced, but was punctuated with dark and rotting angular patches. After multiple drawings and details, a figure, both angelic and graceful began to crystallize with arms reaching, limbs and leaves flowing like long hair in the wind. The treatment of the figure and the background strikes me as almost apocryphal, but neither malevolent, nor judgmental. It is difficult to suggest historical and spiritual context while making an image so specific in character and place, yet both the subject and the process of discovery remain mysterious. Today the stump is gone, just a memory; but it is one that I was pleased to act on.