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Some Refuse Ain't Refuse: AS220's Salon des Refuses

by Steve Silverstein

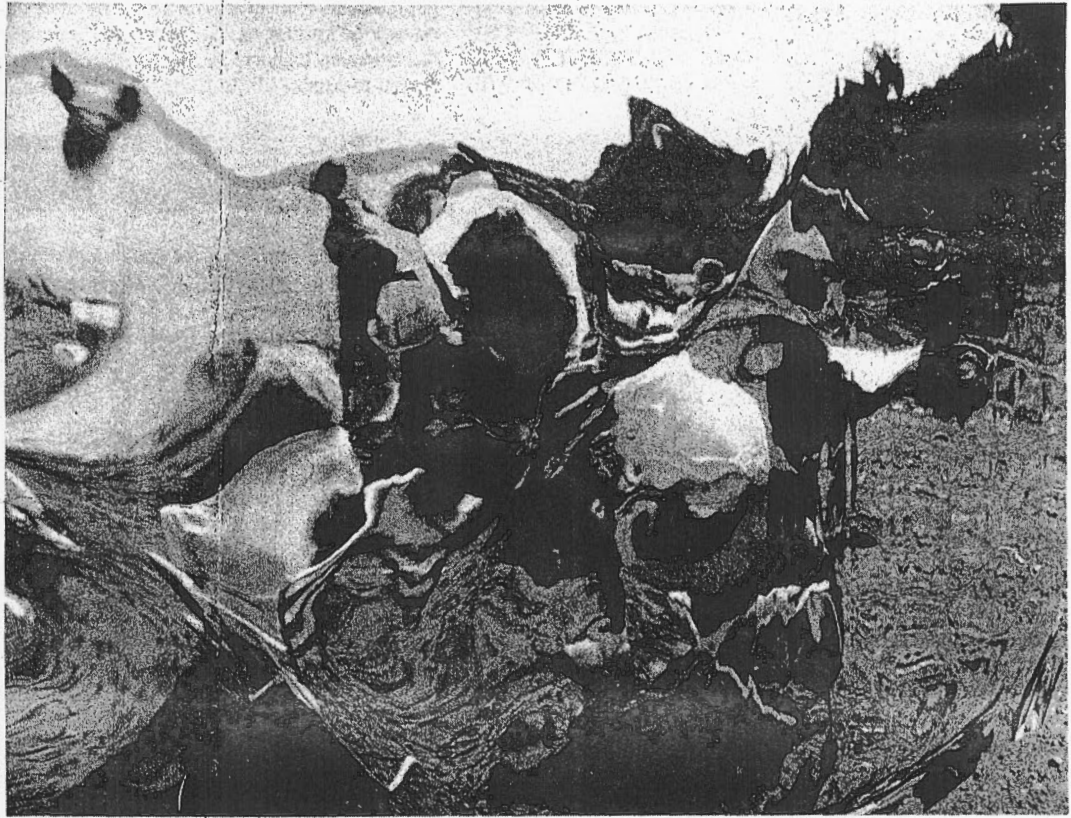
To display the diversity and quality of art in the state of Rhode Island, the RISD Museum established the Contemporary Art in Rhode Island exhibition. This year is the first time the museum is ever hosting such a collection. Opening Thursday, February 10th, the exhibit includes the work of 48 artists. The museum selected a panel of six established jurors from out-of-state to help choose the artists whose work would be a part of this exhibition. Museum curators then selected works from among the artists' studios to be a part of the show; many of the works were even created especially for this display. Pieces chosen from among the works submitted by over 500 artists include both fine art, such as painting, sculpture, and prints, and more practical pieces, such as jewelry and furniture.

To celebrate the huge response to RISD's show, AS220 Project Manager Lucie Searle conceived the Overflow Show, to include works by artists rejected for the RISD show. The Salon des Refuses Committee organized to set up and promote this exhibition. Following a great tradition in Western art, the committee took its name from the original Salon des Refuses in Paris in 1863. The original Salon involved the work of the original impressionists, whose paintings were rejected by the jury of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. The exhibition included the works of Courbet, Pissaro, Whistler, Cezanne, and Manet. As Salon des Refuses Committee member Denny Moers explains, "an ironic and ultimately fatal flaw still existed in the Refuses' rebellion against the official academie; they still retained the jury system of selection and elimination."

Thus, the Overflow Show at AS220 maintains the basic character of the space itself as an

uninjured exhibition. It follows the philosophy that art should be judged subjectively, rather than compared by some objective standards. Applications for the show were made available at art supply stores and art councils. The sole requirement for a work by a rejected artist to be included in the Overflow Show was that it had to meet a maximum-size limitation. Without this restriction, AS220 could not have fit the works of approximately 135 artists, even using the building's halls in addition to the gallery and performance space. Each artist in the Overflow Show has only one piece of work displayed.

Like the original Salon des Refuses exhibition which Emperor Napoleon III sanctioned, the RISD Museum has warmly welcomed the Overflow Show. Exhibit curator Daniel Rosenfeld explained that "The museum initiated Contemporary Art in Rhode Island in the hope that others would also celebrate the richness of our states arts community." Thus, the two exhibitions are having concurrent opening ceremonies, which a shuttle bus is linking. The RISD display opens on Thursday the 10th from 7 to 9 P. M., while the AS220 display opens from 7 to 10 P. M. the same night. Shuttle buses will stop at both museums plus at the Citizens Bank parking lot. Both parking and the shuttle buses are free, and the



buses will also include tour guides providing information on the Rhode Island art community. The AS220 opening also features performance by the Smoking Jackets, a New Orleans-style blues ensemble. The Contemporary Art in Rhode Island show is accessible during regular museum hours at no extra fee. The AS220 show is free, and can be viewed between 12

and 4 Tuesday through Sunday. Of special note is the grand opening of the AS220 complex on Sunday the 13th, with the reception starting at 1 P. M. and the open house ending at 6 P. M.

Don't miss this chance in joining both the RISD Museum and AS220 in celebrating the works produced in the state with the most artists per capita of any in this country.