



Salon des Refusés 2005

At DIVA through Oct. 14

Diversity, one of the two criteria for selection into the Mayor's Art Show, is always characteristic of its companion exhibit, the Salon des Refusés, hosted within DIVA's multiple galleries.

Quality, the other criterion, varies greatly, but this is almost beside the point. This is a celebration of the creative impulse in all its forms, genres and abilities. You'll find it all there, un-segregated, whether idiosyncratic or banal, subtle or obvious, matter-of-fact or sentimental, simple or overwrought, professional or amateurish.

Standing out among paintings is Salon founder **Jerry Ross**' oil portrait of his wife, entitled *Arrivo a Bologna*. Ross is a master of portraiture, and this is one of his best: subtle, tender, suggestive, spare in composition and palette (limited to reds, ochres and blacks). Yet look at the richness, for instance, of the

blacks. The delicacy with which Ross captures his sitter's expression and mood is crucial, but the artist also plays here with cultural symbols. Initially, Bologna the Red owed its nickname to the coloring of its façades: orange ("Bologna red") and ochre (Modena yellow) stucco, red brick of medieval buildings. All these colors are cleverly echoed in the painting. Later, starting with its partisan resistance in World War II, Bologna, now one of the richest cities in Italy, became "red" for its socialism and communism. Hence the Soviet-style coat and hat worn by the subject.

Hoa-Lan Tran's watercolor, *Seated Woman with Berries*, is a more purely decorative work. It displays Tran's usual lovely sense of pattern, rhythm and color.

In terms of landscapes, **Annie Saville**'s pastel, *Coastal Landscape*, caught my attention for its elegant simplicity of composition

and color scheme; its contemplative, slightly melancholy, autumnal mood. The elongated horizontal format is judicious.

Still lifes abound, many of them conventional. **LaVonne Tarbox-Crone**'s watercolor-and-pastel, *Artichoke Ledge*, is to be admired for its technical proficiency, though as all too often befalls still lifes, there is little life to it. **Dorothy Dunn**'s less polished oil pastel, *Clematis*, in contrast, appeals for the vigor of its free-hand treatment.

Worthy of mention for its gentle humor and folksy, upbeat treatment is **Judith Tamarah**'s *Tea Reading*, a small narrative watercolor, the style of which would be delightful for children's books. **Eric Petersen**'s gouache, *Dr. Razor-Clam*, is in a darker, absurdist vein. **Carly Bodnar**'s *Synesthesia* is a large acrylic expertly executed in an exaggerated, cartoon style. Bodnar constructs a clever juxtaposition of lips and eye to characterize the merging of sound and sight into a single organ.

There are no anti-war statements this year (unless **Jan Sjostrom**'s untitled tempera can be construed as a military spoof), but patriotic flags show up in a few paintings. Religious content is in, and in all manners of style and inspiration.

Three printmakers bring their art to the fore of the show. **Susan Lowdermilk**'s exquisite wood engraving gives us a fresh take on *Passion* to which **Connie Huston**'s very wry intaglio, *Gravida*, provides a perfect counterpart, and the two ought to be paired. **Germaine Bennett**'s witty etching *Egyptian Nora*, demands a leisurely viewing of its rich details.

Sculpture is under-represented. All the more reason why **A.J. Fisher**'s stainless steel abstraction of a *Breakdancer*, should be more prominently displayed. It is fun, dynamic, and structurally felicitous — one of my favorites in the show.

With *Did Reason Sleep?* **Robert Schofield** creates another of his intriguing color photographs of female nudes underwater, partially revealed through diffuse greenish-yellow light. It is a pity that the chosen matting and framing detract from the work rather than enhance it.

Under the label photography, snapshots abound, some of them poor inkjet prints, others digitally enhanced to look like paintings, a trend I fear will only grow. Sometimes the word photograph refers to a digital collage of found images — a definite misnomer. Painters, sculptors and professional photographers provide us with a precise indication of the media and methods they use. To be taken seriously, providers of digital images need to follow suit.

Giclée prints of original works are becoming popular, but I feel cheated where I expect an original, as with **Annette Gurdjian**'s *Two Women Kissing*, which is a reproduction of a very strong painting over a photograph. Gurdjian says the original was sold, but she likes the painting so much she made a copy,

which is also more affordable for many people.

Some of the decorative arts make strong statements in this show. I particularly enjoyed the play of light, color and texture in **Karen Hustwaite**'s *Luminosity*, an abstract yet sensuous study in enamel on copper. Don't miss **Faith Rahill**'s ceramic *Regal Rooster*, **Jae McDonald**'s *Trillium 3*, an art quilt, or **Adam Wendt**'s musical water fountain, *Kahlil's Eye*, to mention a few.

Jamie Burress's original work for this year's Salon poster is for sale through a silent auction.

"Opening night this year didn't coincide with the kick-off for the Eugene Celebration," said Steve LaRicca, the Salon's energetic exhibit coordinator. "It was crowded, but it had a different feel."

If only for symbolic reasons, I would prefer the excitement of the opening to occur during the Celebration to emphasize that a celebration of our city is also a celebration of the arts.

This 15th Salon includes 292 of the 383 works unselected for the Mayor's Art Show. Although ideally, all artists would choose to participate in the Salon, the show benefits from not being overcrowded. As always, the Salon is a must for its joyous profusion.

Fast forward: The Mayor's Show of Teen Art is showing at the Maude Kerns Art Center until Oct. 7.

EW



Clockwise from top left:
Arrivo a Bologna, oil portrait by Jerry Ross
Regal Rooster, ceramics by Faith Rahill
Gravida, intaglio by Connie Huston