

Salon de Refuses Review

By Aviva Van Den Heever



The idea of hierarchy in art has been ingrained into society for much of its history. Salon des Refusés explores the rejection of local artists work by institutions, galleries and the art market. The variety of styles and mediums, holds testament to the gruelling nature of being a practising artist in today's political, social and economic climate. From the realistic watercolours and pencil drawings of Jane Zimmerman's Tui and Flax Flower, to the highly-textural sculpture titled Grapple, by Katrina Iosia Sipeli. Salon des Refusés celebrates the process of rejection, in all its diversity.



The history of the Salon des Refusés runs parallel to the success of countless of iconic artists such as Courbet, Manet, Pissarro and Whistler. It is difficult to believe that these now prolific artists were once part of the first Salon des Refusés in 1863. Viewed as being revolutionist or too avant-garde, it was the rejection of their views and art that led to their success. Fast-forward to less than a century, and the concept of rejection was still part of the struggles of being an artist. The exhibition of Entartete Kunst or 'degenerate' art by the Nazi's in 1937, ironically led to the increase popularity of modernism with over a million people visiting the exhibition within six weeks.

While art has always been a topic of debate there is no doubt that the rejection of artists, movements, and mediums has resulted in close knit artist communities. The Comet Project Space's hosting of Salon des Refusés creates a sense of safety and community for artists, who have not been appreciated for their artistic and conceptual abilities. The exhibition captures the artists personal stories and narratives, as they try and navigate their personal lives alongside the art world. Shelley Ashford's photobook titled *I don't know your last name*, sets the tone and gives a very personal insight into a friendship that came to an end too soon, signalling art's ability to be an emotional escape for sorrow and grief. Salon des Refusés allows for personality, seen in Karen Sewell's *Paradise Life*, to be front and centre and the increasing emphasis on conceptual art to take a back seat. It comes as no surprise that the space celebrates rejection, and acts as a stepping stone towards success.

