THE SALON DES REFUSÉS AND THE EVOLUTION OF MODERN ART

By Albert Boime

The Salon des Refusés may very well represent the most decisive institutional development in the progress of modern art. But while this assertion appears to be accepted on all sides, no one has attempted seriously to isolate the special course of its history, both with respect to its official origins and its relationship to later independent exhibitions. At best, writers observe that it provided an opportunity for the public exposure of the avant-garde. My own investigations, however, have brought to light new information demonstrating that it was the single most invigorating stimulus to the formation of the Impressionist group shows, and subsequently of the Salon des Indépendants of 1884.

Although the institutional history of the Salon des Refusés was erratic—such exhibitions were held officially only in 1863, 1864 and 1873—its program persisted as a viable encouragement to independent artists for the rest of the century. It marked the official sanction of the artist’s right to demonstrate freely the fruits of his labor without regard to stylistic classification. The Salon des Refusés further implied that freedom of exhibition was inextricably linked to freedom of pictorial expression. The refusés celebrated qualities of spontaneity and originality in painting—qualities manifested in sketchy and incomplete surfaces. The Academicians, having rejected the sketch as a complete manifestation of the creative process when heralded by earlier adventures, applied the full force of an institutional refusal when such a notion finally achieved collective expression. The Salon des Refusés furthermore innovated a subversive adjudicative principle; jury members were to be held accountable for their selections to the general public. Henceforth the jury would be considered more as a body of parliamentary representatives responsible to their constituents than as members of a monolithic institution cherishing its narrow sectarian goals. The Salon des Refusés introduced the democratic concept of a multi-style system (much like a multi-party system) subject to the review of the general jury of the public. By so doing, it linked the official Salon and the independent group shows of the subsequent decades.
Wildenstein has shown that the Salon des Refusés had precedents dating back to the period of the Restoration. These early cases of counter-exhibitions, however, were for the most part established by private individuals. Although financial difficulties forced him to abandon the idea, Louis-Philippe stands as the first French ruler of the nineteenth century to contemplate an official Salon des Refusés. But the individual counter-exhibitions kept the idea alive through mid-century; Théodore Rousseau, Courbet and a host of lesser-known artists arranged such shows in an effort to expose the bias of the academic juries. Indeed, by the early 1860’s the notion of a separate exhibition for official rejectees was popularly entertained by the wider community of artists.

Among the chief advocates of such a show at this time was the artist-critic Théodore Véron. Véron, who later published his ideas in systematic form, opted for group solidarity among artists and the participation of the public in the reviewing of Salon selections. On April 8, 1861 he complained to the Administration of Beaux-Arts that the jury’s rejection of his work for the current Salon demonstrated the flagrant injustice of the Salon system. He requested that the public be permitted to adjudge submissions, all of which should be accepted for hanging. The jury itself would arrange the works for the public by order of merit in the following categories:


Véron freely admitted that his work was less than a masterpiece, but added: “Loin de me laisser mesurer mes forces, on les énerve et on fait tort à mon existence.” He thus insisted that the hierarchy of merit be established to help him better assess his talent—that is, only through exhibition can the creative individual fulfill himself.

Three days later, Véron wrote a second letter reiterating his request, and this time in the name of a group of rejected artists:

Pour éclairer notre inexpérience, comme rien n’est plus efficace que la comparaison de nos œuvres avec celles de nos habiles concurrents, nous implorons, Sire, votre haute sollicitude pour nous accorder la faveur de voir nos œuvres placées dans une salle… dans le palais de l’exposition.

While Véron’s tone may appear slightly sarcastic, the substance of his request was sincere. He felt that such a classification would not impugn the jury’s
verdict, and would permit public review and discussion to clarify the defects of works adjudged inferior. What was crucial was to show and be seen.

In 1863, just prior to the Salon opening, the sculptor Antoine Etex published a polemical brochure recommending several reforms of the Salon organization. The most significant of his proposals was the abandonment of the standard classification of works by genre; he suggested instead “classer par salles de catégories de mérite.” Etex proposed further that all entries should be admitted as a matter of course and that a jury chosen independently of the Academy make the preliminary grading. The Academy itself would attend to the final ordering. But Etex insisted that the public be ultimately sovereign in such an organization. In addition to its approbation, the public would be permitted to vent its disapproval in the rooms containing the worst examples. There, spectators should “hausser les épaules, de siffler et de rire”—thus discouraging painters represented in the last rooms from exhibiting again. While advancing the principle of an open Salon, Etex proposed a degrading arrangement of the works to invoke ridicule; and so his idea appealed to conservatives, who could view the last room simply as a bin for rejected entries.

Etex’s brochure evoked widespread and controversial discussion, and it is surprising that he has never been mentioned in connection with the Salon des Refusés. When the regular Salon opened and the number of refused works totaled over 4,000, his proposals gave critics and artists alike the substance for a direct attack on the Salon organization. Even the most conservative critics felt that the jury had no right to reject an “honorable mediocrity”—or at least not before long and deliberate consideration. Under pressure, the administration consented to the establishment of a Salon des Refusés. While the Salon des Refusés was meant to be a compromise solution placating both academic and independent factions, the Academy understood it as a repudiation of its authority. Indeed, the wording of the Emperor’s decision justified this notion: he wished “laisser le public juge de la légitimité de ces réclamations.”

But the Surintendent des Beaux-Arts, Nieuwerkerke, left the spurned artists the option of withdrawing their works from the Salon des Refusés. It was a brilliant idea that served to neutralize to some extent the impact of the radical institution. Over six hundred works were withdrawn—undoubtedly by those very artists who best exemplified the arbitrariness of the jury’s verdict. Nieuwerkerke exploited their fear of ridicule—probably aroused in part by Etex’s proposal—by creating a risky situation for those who still aspired to official honors. The jury itself invited public derision and took
pains to show what they considered the worst pictures in the most conspicuous places. The administration could thus appear liberal, while sustaining the aristocratic concept of the Salon by isolating the rejectees.

The scheme may be said to have backfired: in allowing the spurned artists to exhibit under the official aegis, the administration provided them with the conspicuousness of public display. At the same time, there appeared among the rejected artists a sufficient number of Realists and Naturalists to constitute a kind of "school"—a coherent trend which could be identified by the public. While the Salon des Refusés was in fact an agglomeration of disparate examples, the conspicuous presence of the independents gave it the cast of a unified show revealing characteristic features. The public was presented with an alternative repertoire to the moribund classic and romantic tendencies sanctioned by academic and most official spokesmen. Academicism was thus polarized as an opposition style, or, at least, relativized as one alternative among several. The jury’s systematic exclusion of the Realists and the Naturalists could only appear as a conspiratorial design. The government inadvertently reduced the Academy to being the exponent of a particular style and made it forfeit its position as the sovereign representative of the National Art. Critics immediately recognized this possibility. Thoré drew the following conclusion from the Salon des Refusés:

On peut... s’apercevoir... malgré l’indifférence actuelle pour les arts, qu’il y a en peinture deux courants hostiles, qui pépétueront, en d’autre termes, la lutte ardente des Classiques et des Romantiques, ou si l’on veut, des conservateurs et des novateurs, de la tradition et de l’originalité."

The Salon des Refusés also drew attention to the independents’ development of “sketch aesthetics.” Recognizing the advance of originality and spontaneity to the position of prime objectives, the independents now manifested the concomitant informal facture and brilliant palette. Effect was stressed—a feature most conspicuous to reviewers of the Salon des Refusés:

Au lieu de chercher... ce que les amateurs classiques appellent le fini, on aspire à rendre l’effet dans son unité frappante, sans souci de la correction des lignes ni de la minutie des accessoires."

Thoré noted that Jongkind and Harpignies were refused because of lack of finish, but recalled that Delacroix, Decamps, Corot and Diaz once shared a similar experience:
Si les peintres de la nouvelle génération prennent ce train-là, et si c’est là ce qui les fait refuser, qu’ils ne s’en tourmentent guère. Apparemment les ébauches de Corot valent mieux que les miniatures si finies de M. Gérôme.²⁸

The Salon des Refusés ended by causing a battle between *esquisseurs*²¹ and *finisseurs*.

The rejectees themselves adopted a school-like attitude in their organization. Immediately after the announcement of the Salon des Refusés, a *Comité de salut des refusés* was formed to consolidate the rejected artists and to prepare a catalogue. From their point of view they were a group setting up a “contre-exposition.”²² The very use of this rubric shows that polarization was the guiding idea behind the *Comité’s* actions. The *Comité* performed a role analogous to that of the Impressionists in their first joint-exhibition of 1874. Its members encouraged and supported one another in their radical formation.

Desnoyers certainly located the *Comité* in this context when he wrote of the Salon des Refusés: “Singuliére école, n’est-ce pas? que celle où il n’y a ni maître ni élève, et dont les seuls principes sont l’indépendance, la sincérité, l’individualisme!”²³ Indeed, the impact of the Salon was perhaps greater on the artists than on the public. While traditionally-minded spectators were made to feel ridiculous, the younger generation of artists saw the Salon des Refusés as a revelation. That others were doing similar things confirmed in their eyes the validity of their own undertakings and evoked a sense of fraternal participation. Manet’s prestige increased immeasurably after this exhibition, and he was adopted as the leader of the young independents. He also affected those artists who would form the Third Republic’s “juste milieu” group—artists practicing a compromise style, such as Gervex and Fantin-Latour (the latter, significantly, exhibited in both the regular Salon and the Salon des Refusés). The Salon des Refusés thus demonstrated that the independent trend had more than an isolated significance. At the official awards ceremony following the regular Salon, Vaillant proclaimed:

> Les artistes... trouveront toujours le public empressé d’accueillir une tentative originale, parce que l’invention est une des plus précieuses qualités de l’art.²⁴

To which Desnoyers retorted that the public heard for the first time “l’éloge officiel de l’invention, de l’originalité.”²⁵

The publicity accruing to the Salon des Refusés induced the administration to sponsor it again the following year. But this time the administration took steps to prevent the institution from enjoying the notoriety and splash of
the previous year. The jury assumed a less severe posture, and the leaders of
the 1863 rejectees were deliberately admitted to the regular Salon. Claretie
observed that Manet occupied the best place in the Salon. Moreover, the
proportion of absolute rejections fell from 70% to 30%, and the official line
had it that the optional Salon was expressly organized for works "jugés trop
faibles pour participer au concours des récompenses." The administration
thus manipulated the Salon des Refusés of 1864 so as to forestall critical com-
ment from press and public.

On this occasion the counter-exhibition did not appear as the systematic
exclusion of a single school, but as a hodge-podge of stylistic tendencies
lacking decisive qualities:

Tous les genres de tableaux que l'on rencontre dans les Salles officielles, se
retrouvent dans le Salon des refusés. On pourrait classer ces derniers en
adepts de l'Ecole et en réalistes, en peintres de batailles et en paysagistes, en
orientalistes et en bretonnants.

The Salon des Refusés of 1864 lacked the sensationalism of its predecessor.
Indeed, it presented a rather tragic spectacle. One of the pictures shown had
been painted by an aged artist—an ex-pupil of Gérard—and Claretie lamented
over what he felt was an unjustifiable humiliation.

The administration's plan succeeded, on the surface. The institution of the
Salon des Refusés was discarded for the duration of the Second Empire.
Nieuwerkerke inscribed in the margin of Cézanne's request for a new Salon
des Refusés in 1866: "On a reconnu tout ce que l'exposition des refusés avait
de peu convenable pour la dignité de l'art et elle ne sera pas rétablie." But
Cézanne's request attests to the viability of this institution as a promising
vehicle for organized display of independents hoping for official recognition.
From the time of the second Salon des Refusés to the first Impressionist ex-
hibition of 1874—exactly one decade later—the idea of the Salon des Refusés
kept alive the hope of combating despotic juries and encouraged the aspirations
of progressive artists. It became a rallying point for the Impressionists, in-
stilling in them a certain sense of security and inspiring a collaborative effort
to an extent heretofore unknown in the history of independent French art.
While the Impressionists continued to seek recognition through the official
system, the Salon des Refusés provided them with a model of group participa-
tion and sustained their revolutionary attitude. Bazille wrote to his parents in
1866 that if his works were rejected at the regular Salon, "Je vais signer des
deux mains une pétition pour demander une exposition des refusés." Dau-
bigny, a member of the jury that year, himself recommended to Renoir that a
new Salon des Refusés be petitioned. Even to the officially successful artist
the Salon des Refusés remained a tangible outlet for independents.
Cézanne’s request expresses clearly the emerging attitude of the indepen-
dents:

Je me contente de vous dire... que je ne puis accepter le jugement illégi-
time de confrères auxquels je n’ai pas donné moi-même mission de m’ap-
précier... Je désire en appeler au public et être exposé quand même... Que
le Salon des refusés soit donc rétabli. Dussé-je m’y trouver seul, je souhaite
ardemment que la foule sache au moins que je ne tiens pas plus à être con-
fondu avec ces messieurs du jury qu’ils ne paraissent désirer être confondus
avec moi....

Cézanne observed that his colleagues felt the same way and demanded an ex-
hibition open to every “travailleur sérieux.” In other words, Cézanne implied
that the jury’s verdict—based on an entrenched stylistic outlook inconsistent
with his circle of friends—was irrelevant. They desired neither academic
accolades nor academic mastery. On the contrary, they offered the public an
alternative style which the jury was unqualified to judge.

Again it must be emphasized that the young Impressionists were only
articulating the hopes of the wider community of artists. The French govern-
mental archives contain many requests from obscure artists supporting the
demand for a Salon des Refusés in the late 1860’s. In 1866 a painter named
Perpignon submitted a radical scheme to the administration proposing a
permanent exhibition of rotating artists open to all comers. As he claimed:

Tout individu qui met de la couleur sur la toile est peintre, et que nul n’a
le droit ni de lui contester ce titre, ni de lui refuser les privilèges qui s’y
rattachent, notamment celui d’être admis à l’exposition ouverte par le
gouvernement, et de s’y faire juger par le public.

Perpignon proposed the elimination of the jury because it had so far extended
its power that it not only could dictate artistic style but, even more decisively,
by monopolizing the vehicles of exhibition, could by fiat deprive a man of his
claim to the artist’s profession. By deposing the jury as sole arbiter and con-
stituting in its stead the general public as the ultimate judge of merit, indepen-
dents and radicals hoped to win the widest range of tolerance, and finally
acceptance, for their personal experiments. And although this scheme was
rejected by the administration, the idea of eradicating the jury remained, to be invoked by the promoters of the Salon des Indépendants in 1884.

In 1867 the regular Salon was organized together with the Exposition Universelle, and the entire community of artists anxiously awaited the result of the jury’s deliberations. Excepting Degas and Berthe Morisot, all the Impressionists were refused. Yet it was not only this group which suffered, but the great proletariat of artists who had to give way to foreigners and “exempts” admitted to the Exposition Universelle. Of approximately 700 places designated for the French 500 were reserved for exempted painters—a statistic that led to bitter protest even before the jury assembled. Of 3,000 French works submitted, 2,000 were refused. Once again the Salon des Refusés was raised as a standard to rally the rejectees. The Impressionists signed a petition for it along with numerous other groups.

On May 5, 1867 Nieuwerkerke received a petition for a Salon des Refusés signed, “Les refusés qui ont conscience de leur valeur.” The petition pointed out that the Surintendant’s promise to another group to reestablish the Salon the following year disregarded the immediate need of this institution, and it continued:

Au Salon des refusés il n’y a que des choses ridicules! Oui, car quand le jury sait, qu’après lui le public sera juge il affecte une grande indulgence pour ce donner raison; cette année qu’il ne s’y attendait pas, il n’a pas montré tant de scrupule, et si nous oûs vous demander avec tant d’instance une contre exposition, c’est, qu’en visitant le salon, nous avons été indignés d’y voir certaines choses si mauvaises qu’elles y font tâche, quand beaucoup d’entre nous en ont eûs de refusées dont le jury serait bien en peine de donner la raison, c’est l’injustice qui révolte, et croyez bien que ce n’est point une faveur que nous réclamons, mais c’est notre droit..."}

So ardent were the artists that complaints about their insurgent activity were filed with the Prefect of Police in the area of the Palais de l’Industrie, and he forwarded the complaints to the administration, together with radical literature protesting the policies of Nieuwerkerke and upholding the Salon des Refusés. On May 6 the Prefect forwarded a request from the artist Cimitière demanding the right to convene six colleagues refused by the jury to set up a “contre exposition.” The Prefect hesitated to grant the request before he had Nieuwerkerke’s approval. Needless to say, the latter did not wish to approve the scheme until he knew the precise conditions of the exhibition.

A critic from the liberal press took the opportunity to encourage sweeping
reforms of the Salon organization. He asserted that the numerous petitions for a Salon des Refusés would pass unheeded, but that he was encouraged by talk of a "grande réunion d'artistes pour provoquer une réforme de l'organisation des expositions, réunion qui aurait lieu au cirque Napoléon." It was within this context of widespread agitation for counter-exhibitions and reform that Manet set up his independent pavilion on the grounds of the Exposition Universelle. And as he wrote in the preface of his catalogue: "Montrer est la question vitale...."

The same year Bazille wrote to his family that he and his friends were contemplating the establishment of an exhibition independent of official support. Lack of funds, however, forced the abandonment of the scheme. But the idea led ultimately to the joint effort of 1874, and it is probable that, had Nieuwerkerke established a permanent Salon des Refusés that year, the Impressionists would never have felt the need to promote their independent venture. Yet Nieuwerkerke, forced to consider the idea again, did not adopt it, fearing to belittle French art in the eyes of foreign visitors.

During the next two years the jury assumed a somewhat softer line, and many of the Impressionists were received at the regular Salon. Nevertheless, a number of artists were refused, and in the eyes of the larger community the jury remained despotic. Dominated by the authority of Gérôme in 1869, the jury's verdict again led artists to invoke the Salon des Refusés. On May 27, 1869, a painter named Roosmalen wrote the administration requesting the establishment of a Salon des Refusés on behalf of the rejected artists. An ex-participant in the 1864 Salon des Refusés, Roosmalen recommended it as a means to satisfy "ce mélange des artistes sans chef officiel." He implied that such an institution would bring dissident elements under control—not only by providing an official outlet but by encouraging a more conventional style. Conversely, lack of official contact would generate more and more radical styles. Here Roosmalen touched upon a basic weakness of the official system—its growing inability to accommodate the huge aggregate of artists encouraged by the government's widespread involvement in the art world.

In 1870, the Impressionists were again well represented in the Salon, but the severe attitude of the jury toward Monet led to Daubigny's resignation. Véron, one of the first to suggest the Salon des Refusés, was also rejected, and he renewed his old request for a supplementary Salon. Referring to the original exhibition of 1863, he observed that its principal objective was to permit the public final judgment, and concluded: "Mais hâlas! une coterie a toujours réussi depuis cette date et cette année encore, à se réserver le privilège
exclusif des honneurs et des travaux.” Notwithstanding the pessimistic tone, Véron’s plea indicates that, as of the last Salon of the Second Empire, the refused idea had not diminished in significance for French artists.

The same year, Auguste Ottin, a future participant in, and organizer of, the first Impressionist exhibition, wrote a brochure arguing for active participation of artists in the administering of Salons. Ottin, whose son had exhibited in the 1864 Salon des Refusés, attacked the arbitrariness of previous Salon juries and asserted that their narrow interests precluded a fair treatment of the artistic proletariat. While he supported the Salon des Refusés in principle, however, he felt that it could be replaced by a community of self-governing artists. He proposed that the government assume only the responsibility of providing a location and the necessary funds to cover Salon expenses. Ottin warned that immediate government encouragement in this area was urgent:

Plusieurs groupes d’artistes se sont déjà formés et tous se sont nettement prononcés sur la nécessité absolue de sortir de cette état d’instabilité.... D’un autre côté, un autre groupe propose une association générale de tous les artistes ayant exposé et réglant entre eux toutes les affaires d’exposition: D’autre groupes se forment en petites églises, établissent leur règlement et le proposent à qui le voudra, etc. Tout cela c’est la confusion, rien d’officiel par conséquent, rien de stable, mais c’est néanmoins l’expression unanime de la nécessité de s’occuper d’urgence et d’une manière moins exclusive de l’art et des artistes. Ottin and his son were intimate with the Impressionists, and it is certain that he was here giving voice to the general sentiment of the group. Until the last moment the Impressionists desired to succeed within the official network, but the conservative attitude that emerged at the outset of the Third Republic further induced them to engage in independent activity. Even some conservatives felt that a permanent Salon des Refusés would serve to neutralize radical tendencies. Ottin’s proposals were rejected by both the final administration of the Second Empire headed by Maurice Richard and the first of the Third Republic headed by Charles Blanc. It is not fortuitous that Ottin himself ultimately participated in forming a “petite église”—the Société anonyme coopérative à capital variable des artistes peintres, sculpteurs, graveurs, etc.—which eventually culminated in the first joint Impressionist exhibition. Not only was Ottin treasurer of the group, he and his son also exhibited their work in the show. There was no Salon in 1871, and in 1872 the jury, responding to Blanc’s influence, was as relentless as ever. Blanc particularly opposed the Impres-
sionists, and his overbearing pressure on the jury to refuse them led to the resignation of Puvis de Chavannes. Blanc’s stringent attitude toward the artists sprang from another source as well: that year he began organizing the Musée des Copies—his own special brand of counter-exhibition—and he needed all the available space in the Palais de l’Industrie to accommodate the copies he commissioned. Indeed, space was an overriding consideration in dealing with admissions, although he concealed this need with lip service to the classical ideal. The severity of the jury and the rigid Salon regulations that year led to a plethora of protests signed by academic and independent artists alike. Even before the selections, the regulation stating that space alone would decide the number of admissions provoked a series of written protests sponsored by the Deputy of the Indre and Loire Department and deposited directly with Thiers, the President of the Republic. These petitions were then forwarded to the Minister of Fine Arts and finally to Blanc himself. Their content emphasized that Blanc’s restrictive measures threatened the many contemporary schools of French painting, “si nombreuse, si variée, naguère encore si vivante et si florissante.” The diversity of personalities signing these protests shows the ambience affected by Blanc’s policy. One was signed by René-Paul Huet and Viollet-le-Duc, another by Jobbé-Duval, and still another by Daubigny, Daumier, Corot and Manet."

And again the proletariat responded. On May 22, 1872 the mother of one of the spurned artists protested that of 4,800 works 3,400 were “non pas refusés, c’est impossible—mais repoussées faute d’espace pour les recevoir.” She concluded that the artists would be best served by a “galerie de repoussés” and hoped that the Republic would share her maternal sympathies. The same month Alphonse Lambert, a pupil of Corot and Daubigny, addressed Thiers directly over the jury’s antipathy to landscapists and noted that the majority of refused artists request a “salon des refusés.”

Perhaps the most significant manifestation of the independent artists in favor of a Salon des Refusés is the unpublished petition written by Authier to the Minister which I discovered in the Archives Nationales. Expressing shock and disappointment over Blanc’s policy of exclusion, he wrote:

En face de la situation faite à tant de jeunes artistes, nous croyons devoir protester et nous venons... solliciter de votre bienveillance de mettre à la disposition de tous ceux qui se trouvent refusés... une salle du palais de l’industrie, comme cela s’est fait en 1863 et 1864.

This petition was signed by twenty-six artists, among whom were Manet,
Jongkind, Fantin-Latour, Renoir, Cézanne and Pissarro." Pissarro’s signature was added by proxy; he wrote the following note attached to the petition:

Aytant toujours été d’avis qu’un artiste a le droit de faire voir les œuvres, je ne puis qu’adhérer à votre pétition. N’ayant pas exposé je vous envoie, néanmoins mon adhésion, désirant comme peintre voir les œuvres des artistes refusés." Pissarro generously supported a cause for which he had never ceased working since 1863. But this document is not only significant by virtue of its renowned signatories; in effect it represented the group that founded the first Impressionist organization. In addition to the Batignolles circle, Authier, Béliard and Rosse were among the original members of the Société des artistes, etc."

Blanc openly rejected Authier’s petition and even overruled the Minister, Jules Simon, who was willing to assign a special room to the refusés after the closing of the regular Salon." Curiously, Blanc himself encouraged the formation of independent groups to leave the government free to promote its own dogma of style based on the monumental art of the Renaissance." Here his Musée des Copies was meant to play a major role. When it opened to the public on April 15, 1873, it virtually created the same problem for contemporary artists as it had the previous year." The space it consumed forced the wholesale rejection of Salon admissions. Castagnary wrote a scathing rebuke of the Musée des Copies and the small amount of space given over to “living artists.”" This time the general outcry even surpassed that of the previous year, and under pressure from all sides Blanc yielded to the request for a new Salon des Refusés. The spurned artists were invited to submit their works to a second, more liberal jury which would then make selections for an Exposition Artistique des Œuvres Refusées." Among those participating were Renoir, Jongkind and Eva Gonzalez. But while this exhibition enjoyed some notoriety, its effect was less than in 1863." Indeed, the majority of the artists showing were sadly disillusioned." Moreover, it did not visibly alter Blanc’s rigid position, and his continued opposition to the new trends gave fresh impetus to the development of independent corporations.

The same year, 1873, Jongkind received offers from private groups of refused artists who wished to organize counter-exhibitions." In May the critic Paul Alexis encouraged the organization of independent group shows." Alexis gave sustenance to Monet, who already had begun to participate in such a group—perhaps the Société des artistes, etc. organized in part by Ottin père late in 1873. It is significant that Degas wished to divest its definitive organization of the refusé stigma, and sought to include as many regular Salon
exhibitors as possible. He invited de Nittis to join, explaining: “Puisque vous exposez au Salon, les gens mal documentés ne pourront pas dire que nous sommes l’exposition des refusés.” But despite efforts to the contrary Degas’s apprehension was fulfilled. The exhibition of April 15, 1874 (opening exactly one year after the Musée des Copies, which had contributed to the Impressionists’ displacement) was termed an “exposition des revoltés,” and one critic compared it unfavorably with the original Salon des Refusés of 1863. It was not possible by any stretch of the imagination to conceive of the first Impressionist exhibition apart from the Salon des Refusés. The latter served as the ideological precedent for the former’s organizers, and provided the backdrop for their immediate inducement to collaboration—Blanc’s restrictive measures of the years 1872–1873. Indeed, the Impressionist exhibition was a privately organized Salon des Refusés.

The impact of the subsequent private shows forced Salon reforms in the late 1870’s and 1880’s. But in 1884 the official jury again tried to block unorthodox trends, and the refusé concept was invoked once more. Over a hundred rejected artists—including Seurat, Signac, Redon, Bastien-Lepage and Angrand—united to form the Société des Artistes Indépendants, a title borrowed from the Impressionist exhibitions. While the promoters of the group enterprise wished to avoid the refusé label, the artists themselves considered their action in this light. Angrand wrote that the exhibition “ne sera rien autre chose qu’un Salon des refusés,” and the press agreed: Claretie compared the Salon des Refusés and the Salon des Indépendants.

The precedent of the Salon des Refusés had now inspired a permanent mechanism for exhibition free from the intervention of juries and despotic control. Within the framework of the new institution founded in 1884 all the radical movements of the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-centuries were initiated. The Salon des Refusés—an official innovation—thus proved to be a vitalizing factor in the whole development of contemporary art. While it is true that its official founders exploited it in part to expose rejectees to ridicule, the Salon in the end provided the first model of a showcase for promising talent. Even more significantly, the Salon des Refusés brought the principle to bear that, in art no less than in the political domain, the State ought not allow a dogma of style—supported by a monopoly of institutional facilities and mechanisms—to infringe upon the choice of a man’s career.
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While the open Salons of the Revolution and Second Republic were based on a similar principle, this distinction was blurred by their immediate political aims—directed as they were against the system of the previous regime. In both cases, the poor quality of the Salon entries overall led to modifications and ultimately to a restoration of admission juries.


Ibid., p. 126.

In 1836 Rousseau showed his refused Une vue prise à Freuleuse, près de Gisors in the atelier of Ary Scheffer. The critic Gustave Planche admonished all those "qui aiment sérieusement le paysage à visiter l'atelier de M. Scheffer...." In G. Planche, Études sur l'école française, Paris, 1855, Vol. II, p. 37. See also S. Rhéa, Exposition du tableau de la Sultanite refusé par le jury de peinture de 1842, Paris, 1842. A female painter, Rhéa accused the jury of prejudice and proposed a periodic exhibition of refusés to allow the public to judge for themselves. Also A. Galinard, Exposition particulière des œuvres de M. Auguste Galinard refusées par le jury de l'Exposition Universelle, Paris, 1855 (Fichier Mocque-Nélaton, légué au Service d'étude et de documentation du département des peintures du Musée du Louvre). See further R. Huyghes, G. Bazin, H. Adhémar, Courbet: l'Atelier du peintre, Paris, 1944, p. 111. Thus Courbet was not alone that year in his memorable confrontation with the official jury. Some twelve years later, Manet would use the same strategy on the grounds of the World's Fair. For additional references to private counter-exhibitions see P. Dury, Salon de 1883, Paris, 1883, p. 31.

Véron's dates are now unknown. A native of Poitiers, he came to Paris in the late 1830's and matriculated in the studio of Delaroche. From 1845 to 1868 he exhibited fairly regularly in the official Salon.

See T. Véron, La légende des refusés, Paris and Poitiers, 1878, pp. 1–2, 5f., 51f.; also his Dictionnaire Véron ou mémorial de l'art et des artistes de mon temps, Paris and Poitiers, 1878, pp. 1f.

Paris, Archives Nationales (hereafter called Arch. Nat.) É1 528, Véron's letter of April 8, 1861.

Ibid., his letter of April 11, 1861.

Also Véron, La légende, pp. 5f.


Ibid., p. 6.

12 Etex thus anticipated the reaction to the Salon des Refusés so brilliantly described by Zola in L'avant.


15 Le Moniteur Universel, April 24, 1863. The editorial staff of the Gazette des Beaux-Arts put it another way: "L'Institut conserve son rôle de juge de l'art officiel, mais le public est déclaré juge en dernier ressort." See Chronique des arts, April 26, 1863, p. 200.


20 Thoré, Salon, p. 415.

21 I hope I may be forgiven the use of this term to describe proponents of the freshly-painted surface in 1863. Neither English nor French yields a proper term applicable to these artists—"dessinateur" and "sketcher" being both grossly inadequate. Esquisseur at least has the merit of suggesting an artist working in oils.

22 See the Catalogue des ouvrages de peinture, sculpture, gravure, lithographie et architecture refusés par le jury de 1863, Paris, 1863, p. 1; Desnoyers, Salon de 1863, pp. 5–6; Adriani, "Courrier," Moniteur des arts, May 6, 1863. Chintreuil and Jean Desbrosses actually organized the Comité with headquarters at Chintreuil's apartment, 47, rue de Seine.

23 Desnoyers, p. 122.

24 Catalogue du Salon de 1864, p. viii.

25 Desnoyers, pp. 75–76.

27 See Arch. Nat. F21 529, brochure entitled “Statistique du Salon de 1864.” Also Tabarant, Manet et ses oeuvres, Paris, 1947, p. 82. This time the administration did not allow the show to be privately organized, and annexed the refusés to the regular catalogue under the heading of “Ouvrages non admis au concours des récompenses.”
31 Ibid., p. 142.
32 Cézanne, Correspondance, pp. 75–76.
33 See Zola’s remarks in his review of the 1866 Salon for L’Evénement, quoted in Rewald, Impressionism, p. 143. Zola himself advocated a Salon des Refusés that year and probably helped Cézanne formulate the letter to Nieuwerkerke.
34 Arch. Nat. F21 529, Perpignon’s letter to the Maréchal Vaillant, Aug. 24, 1866.
35 Arch. Nat. F21 295, Dossier: “M. François Delille (réclamation contre la décision du jury),” letter addressed to the Emperor, April 2, 1867. Delille’s complaint attests to the severity of that year’s jury. The jury first made the conventional preliminary selection, dividing the entries in two categories, the “Reçus” and the “Refusés.” Ordinarily, it would then grant the “refusés” a second review, but on this occasion the jury re-examined those received and placed several of these in with the “refusés”—including Delille’s entry.
37 Ibid., letters from Préfet de Police dated April 14 and May 6, 1867.
38 Ibid., extract from article printed in Phare de la Loire, Nantes, April 20, 1867. Nieuwerkerke wrote on the margin of the article the word “Socialiste.” Another clipping found among Nieuwerkerke’s papers advocating a Salon des Refusés was marked “Républicain.”
40 Rewald, Impressionism, p. 172.
41 Arch. Nat. F21 295.
42 Arch. Nat. F21 531, letter from Roosmalen to Vaillant, May 27, 1869.
44 Arch. Nat. F21 530, letter from Véron to Maurice Richard, April 8, 1870.
45 Auguste-Louis-Marie Ottin (1811–1899). A recognized sculptor, Ottin had studied with David d’Angers and won the Prix de Rome in 1836. The dates of his son, Léon Auguste Ottin, are at present unknown but he was of the same generation as the Impressionists. Both participated in the founding of the Impressionist organization.
46 A. Ottin, Organisation des arts du dessin, Paris, n.d. [1870], p. 5. Although originally addressed to Richard, Ottin’s pamphlet fell into Blanc’s hands as well. See Arch. Nat. F21 301, Dossier: “M. Ottin.” Ottin cut quite a curious figure; he stressed educational reform and wrote prolifically on art instruction, but his impulsive and insistent personality aroused the enmity of high-placed bureaucrats. See Ottin, Méthode élémentaire du dessin, Paris, 1868, p. 5. Ottin will be the subject of a future article.
48 In his French edition of the History of Impressionism, Rewald published the charter projects of the original Impressionist organization found among Pissarro’s papers which include Ottin’s participation. See Histoire de l’impressionnisme, Paris, 1955, pp. 338f; also the 1965 edition (Le livre de poche), Vol. II, pp. 239f. It should be noted that the early Impressionist group had nothing in common with Baron Taylor’s L’Association des artistes peintres, sculpteurs, architectes, graveurs et dessinateurs, which was strictly philanthropically oriented. See E. Maignot, Le Baron Taylor, Paris, 1963, pp. 85f.
49 Article 2 of the 1872 Salon regulations expressly stated that the number of works chosen by the jury depended on “la surface que présentera le local de l’exposition.” For the Museum of Copies see A. Boime, “Le musée des copies,” Gazette des Beaux-Arts, Vol. 64, October 1964, pp. 237ff. Originally scheduled to open in 1872, the museum was not officially opened to the public until the following year. Buon, the organizer of the regular Salon, wrote to Blanc just prior to the 1872 opening, urgently requesting the Director to set aside sufficient Salon space for the Museum of Copies as well as for storage space for another show (Arch. Nat. F21 534). Blanc also vetoed the idea of a Salon des Refusés following the official Salon because he wanted all available space for completing the hanging of the copies (Arch. Nat. F21 494, Blanc’s added note to Buon’s draft answering requests for a Salon des Refusés. Needless to say, it was scratched in the final draft). The critic Castagnary (then ignorant of Blanc’s museum) attacked the Director’s exclusivist attitude, observing that Blanc wanted to establish a Salon “avec cent tableaux et deux statues” (Salons, Vol. II, p. 8).
50 See Arch. Nat. F21 534, dated Feb. 23, 1872. The Deputy admonished Thiers to construct annexes to the regular Salon to accommodate more artists.
51 Ibid., letter from Virginia Rémy to Jules Simon, May 22, 1872.
52 Ibid., letter from Lambert to Thiers, May 1, 1872.
53 See Authier’s unpublished petition addressed to Simon in May 1872 in Arch. Nat. F\textsuperscript{21} 535.
54 Ibid., Pissarro’s unpublished letter of April 30, 1872. Pissarro’s statement confirms Rewald’s hunch that the artist did not send anything to the Salon of 1872—preferring, as he did, the patronage of Durand-Ruel. See Rewald, Impressionism, p. 272.
55 Rewald, Histoire, 1965, ed., Vol. II, p. 253. There is no data available on the author of the petition, “Authier” or “Authie.” While I have used Rewald’s published version of “Authier,” the name in the documents I examined appeared to me as “Authie.”
56 Arch. Nat. F\textsuperscript{21} 535, Simon’s marginal note on Authier’s petition: “Je vous prie d’examiner cela avec attention. Pour moi j’incline à leur accorder une salle après l’exposition.”
57 See Blanc’s “Du rôle d’un gouvernement dans les arts,” in Arch. Nat. F\textsuperscript{21} 533.
58 Buon advised Blanc not to allow the Museum of Copies and the Salon to run simultaneously, but Blanc preferred the opposite advice of his friends Delaborde and Chenavard. See Buon’s undated note of 1873 (February) and that of April 8, 1873 in the Arch. Nat. F\textsuperscript{21} 494. The critic Duparc observed the lack of adequate Salon space due to the simultaneous showing. See A. Duparc, “Salon de 1873,” Le Correspondant, Vol. 55, 1873, p. 826.
59 Castagnary, Salons, Vol. II, pp. 43f. Castagnary and others blamed the Museum for the Salon rejections. Chennevières, Blanc’s successor and the man responsible for closing the Museum of Copies, wrote that he had to abandon the project to make room for the next Salon and to give more emphasis to “living artists.” (Boime, “Le musée,” p. 239.) And in summoning the administration for this purpose, he wrote: “Cette première réunion... est motivée par l’obligation de préparer... la place nécessaire à l’exposition des œuvres des artistes vivants, de déplacer par conséquent... le Musée des copies” (Arch. Nat. F\textsuperscript{21} 572, “Commission des Beaux-Arts”). An English critic declared: “The curtailed space in the Palais de l’Industrie (one wing alone having been permanently made over to the Museum of Copies) required a close choice; and then a very fastidious judgment on the part of the selecting jury plied most freely the process of rejection, and threw a large body of dissatisfied—indeed, in their own estimate, much wronged—men into seclusion.” See the anonymous review, “The Paris Salon of 1873,” The Art-Journal, Vol. 35, 1873, p. 175.
60 See the unsigned article, “Exposition,” in Chronique des arts, May 10, 1873, pp. 185–186; also Rewald, Impressionism, p. 304.
63 Ibid., p. 115.
64 Rewald, Impressionism, p. 309.
65 Ibid., p. 313.
67 Perhaps the most important of these reforms permitted the artists themselves to select the jury. This was officially decreed December 27, 1880 and went into effect for the 1888 Salon (Arch. Nat. F\textsuperscript{21} 538). But the Salon des Refusés continued to be invoked by the artists. A painter named Racine demanded such an exhibition the day following the opening of the Impressionist show in 1874 (Arch. Nat. F\textsuperscript{21} 553, letter from Racine to Chennevières, April 16, 1874). And in 1878, in a meeting of the Conseil Supérieur des Beaux-Arts, Jules Dupré requested the establishment of a permanent Salon des Refusés (Arch. Nat. F\textsuperscript{21} 558, Séance du Conseil, Supérieur des Beaux-Arts, Nov. 24, 1878). See also Véron, Légende, pp. 73f.
68 The critical study of this group is to be found in Pierre Angrand, Naissance des artistes indépendants 1884, Paris, 1965.
69 Ibid., p. 31.