



OCEAN STATEMENT

'LOCALLY SOURCED' KEEPS IT LIGHT AT CRAFTLAND

BY GREG COOK

Ⓢ How do we define local art? It seems like a simple question, but immediately you start asking: Must it be made here? By artists who live here? Do you include art made by folks who live in, say, New York but teach at RISD? Or art made by people who grew up here? Or once lived here?

As a person who coined the term “yokelism” to talk about and support locally-made art, I find myself getting tripped up at times by the definitions. Different answers can have different effects. Do you define it narrowly, trying to support people who live here making art now? Are you trying to acknowledge a long legacy? Do you define it broadly to lay claim to and build off of all that energy?

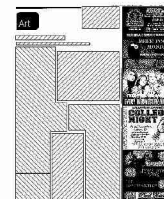
“Locally Sourced” at Craftland (235 Westminster St, Providence, through October 19), which arrives as a complement and cheeky answer to “Locally Made,” the RISD Museum’s Rhode Island art extravaganza, tries out defining locally made as narrowly as possible by rounding up 14 local artists who make art from materials they find locally — a definition that for these smart alecks includes discovering them at their local art supply shop.

“Through their actions, these artists further strengthen the contemporary art landscape by supporting the local economy and establishing pride in the ‘Made In Rhode Island’ brand,” writes curator Robert Stack of Providence’s Yellow Peril Gallery.

Of course, the organizers note, the show is “a sort of pun, lovingly poking fun not only at shows like the current one at the RISD Museum, but also restaurants that use the farm-to-table movement almost to overkill in their PR.”

So Babs Owen cuts out rings of paper and affixes them, floating like happy bubbles, atop photos of a jumping boy. “Photographs are printed on paper from Utrecht and collaged with cut pieces from the artist’s Pawtucket-based mill studio,” the exhibit checklist explains. “Model is artist’s son, who was born at Women & Infants Hospital of Rhode Island.”

And Brooke Goldstein’s *Washed Up Collection* is described as “10 vintage bottles, pencils from Jerry’s Artarama, bottles from Savers, Seekonk Speedway Flea Market, AS220 Black Box Flea Market (Foo Fest), and assortment from artist + friends.” Which means fun, folksy colored pencil drawings of ships — a paddlewheeler, a battleship, a submarine, a Viking ship, and a square-rigger of broken hearts — cut out and





displayed in handsome glass bottles.

“Locally Sourced” is really an occasion for a frolic. Philippe Lejeune’s *Images Happening* is tall phone booth-like wood-framed box. It seems like you should be able to look straight through, but with the simple magic trick of a mirror placed diagonally inside, you get the amusing feeling of looking into another dimension close to but slightly staggered from this one.

Tom West’s *The End of American Pop* Art sculpture is a generic diet soda bottle that has spilled a big bronze foamy puddle across the floor — happily in the shape of a stretched out United States.

Johnny Adimando’s *Structural Study I-VI* are black-and-white prints cut out and layered so that they look like architectural plans for starfighters assembled from recycled and X-rayed rocket engines, gears, columned buildings, and microscope eyepieces.

There’s nothing too ambitious in “Locally Sourced.” The general tone is light, with the best pieces aiming for ingratiating fun. The show is too much a gag to reveal much about what’s going on here — except maybe Rhode Island shenanigans.

➤ The recent NecronomiCon fest in honor of the late locally-sourced horror, fantasy, and sci-fi author H.P. Lovecraft has wrapped up, but a lingering echo is “Ars Necronomica,” at Brown University’s Granoff Center (154 Angell St, Providence, through September 13).

It showcases deliciously creepy paintings and drawings of a severed horse head; an Edwardian fellow with his face skinned down to the meaty muscles; a man befriending a zebra in the mountains; and drooling feral demons in a cemetery. Styles tend toward cartooning or, ahem, realism.

Don’t miss Nick Blinko’s pen drawings, particularly *Sightings of Brown Jenkin, the Furry Blasphemy*. It depicts a feral thing with a bald, bearded man’s head — a reference to Lovecraft’s tale *The Dreams In the Witch House* — among rats and a skeleton wearing a pointy witch’s head. The creatures are cool, but it’s the background that makes the drawing — a vibrating, crazy quilt pattern of obsessive pen hatching that fills the entire paper horror-vacui-style, wanting to take over everything. ©