

Vegans vs. Beefeaters

by Tim Slowinski



Slowinski Meat Promotional Vehicle Acrylic on canvas, 1989 12" x 9"

The painting *Highway Rest Stop* depicts a deranged clown cooking up burgers for a bunch of pasty looking customers. The idea is obvious, a satirical critique of the fast food industry, Ronald McDonald, Burger King—of those huge highway rest stops where you can stop after a long day of driving and find absolutely nothing worth eating. After making the painting I pondered the validity of the point—does it really matter what anyone eats?

I'm a pseudo vegetarian now and was a strict one for a number of years. I have lived in Woodstock and in artist communes and met all kinds of people that are fanatically obsessed with food. People not only obsessed with the type of food that should be eaten, but with how and when it can be eaten. Certain foods are seen as good only when eaten in a certain way, in a certain combination, or in the proper order. Some foods are only supposed to be eaten by themselves. Cantaloupe for instance should only be eaten alone, with no other foods, and you should only eat it on an empty stomach and you must wait until it is digested before eating anything else. Don't ask me why, it does not seem to matter that all the food will be rendered down into a hydrochloric acid slurry in the stomach. These fanatical eating rules must be adhered too—or else—a paranoid state of food dementia will result.

In reality does it really matter that much what you eat? One hundred years from now everyone reading this will be

dead and it will not matter what they put in their mouth. Fat or thin, healthy or sickly, carnivore or vegetarian, the state of everyone's being—or non-being—will be the same. Vegans will argue that it does matter, that rain forests are being slash-burned to make room for Ronald McDonald's cattle, that the ozone layer is being destroyed by methane gas from cow farts and manure piles. The globe is heating up and will be destroyed and it's all because of the damned beefeaters! This could be true, but even if it does it matter? I can close my eyes and transport myself through time back to the age of the dinosaur, or further back, to the origin of the solar system. Then I can zoom forward a few billion years to the obliteration of the earth as it is sucked into the sun and I think—nah! Who cares if the earth heats up, life on earth is doomed no matter. It's like waiting around in a doctor's office for the bad news of some incurable disease. Why bother, just go home and forget about it.

In the end I can only think of one reason not to eat cows. It has to do with pulling the trigger. If I hire a killer to shoot someone I'm going to jail for murder and for me with cows it is the same. I'm unable to walk down the meat aisle of the supermarket, or wait in the line of a fast food joint and disassociate myself from the execution of the cow. I do sometimes eat a chicken, I'm biased by species. If there was a chicken in the yard I don't think I'd have that much trouble wringing its neck—or a turkey for that matter. I think I would shoot a turkey in the head, it's a little big for neck wringing. I could take a fish out of a river and chop its head off with a knife, I did this all the time when I was a kid. But a cow or a pig—I just could not slit its throat, or slam a sledgehammer down on its skull. That's the way they do it in the factory. So I don't eat 'em.

To tell you the truth I don't really care what anyone else eats. It used to bother me and so I made a lot of these anti-meat paintings. Why did I make this one? I suppose old habits die hard, like eating chickens.



Slowinski Burger Booth Acrylic on canvas, 1985 46" x 62"

slowart@aol.com SLOWINSKI www.slowart.com/slow