Massey was an African-American self-taught artist and poet. While incarcerated in an Ohio state correctional facility during the 1940s, he corresponded with the editor of the surrealist publication *View*, an exchange that resulted in the inclusion of Massey’s art and poetry in issues of the magazine between 1943 and 1946. [A fully illustrated catalog will be available in early September]

**SHUT UP: JOE MASSEY’S MESSAGES FROM PRISON**

SEPTEMBER 12—OCTOBER 19, 2019
OPENING RECEPTION:
SEPTEMBER 12, 6:00–8:00 PM

Joe Massey. Untitled (“What a Man”), 1946. Ink on paper. 11” x 8.5”.
Sawada | Kontani | Sasaki

9–17 July 2019

70–72 Old Street, London, EC1V 9AN

JENNIFER LAUREN
GALLERY

jenniferlaurengallery.com
RAW NEWS
Outsider events and exhibitions around the world

SULTON ROGERS
Humorous and macabre work by a Mississippi carver

OSCAR AZMITIA
Compelling work from a New York studio artist

RAYMOND COINS
The classic American self-taught sculptor

INDIAN VILLAGE MURALS
A centuries-old tribal tradition still upheld

LEOPOLD STROBL
An introduction to an artist from Gugging

WILLEM VAN GENK
A detailed study of a masterwork

SHINICHI SAWADA
A celebrated ceramic artist from Japan

EX VOTOS OF MIGRATION
Reflecting the struggles of present-day migration

RAW REVIEWS
Worldwide exhibitions and events

GALLERY & MUSEUM GUIDE
Details of notable international venues
**MUSEUM AND GALERIE GUGHING**

until Aug 30 and Sep 1

At galerie gugging until August 30, *flora & fauna brut… may has come* presents new works by *gugging* artists and other international outsider artists, all created in relation to nature. Until September 1, museum gugging devotes special attention to the textiles, photographs, and writings of August Walla in *walla. photo.text=files*.

*MUSEUM AND GALERIE GUGHING*
Am Campus 2, A-3400 Maria Gugging, AUSTRIA
www.gugging.at, www.galeriegugging.com

**JENNIFER LAUREN GALLERY**

Jul 9–17

Jennifer Lauren Gallery presents a group show that brings together three Japanese artists who are working out of supported studios in Japan. It will feature the fantastical ceramic works of Shinichi Sawada, Akio Kontani and Nobuo Sasaki.

*Jennifer Lauren Gallery*
Sway Gallery, 72 Old Street, London, EC1V 9AN
www.jenniferlaurengallery.com

**OCTOBER GALLERY**

until Jun 29

LR Vandy: *Hidden* features new works, including more from Vandy’s “Hull” series.

*OCTOBER GALLERY*
24 Old Gloucester Street, London WC1N 3AL, UK
octobergallery.co.uk

**TIM TER WAL**

until Aug 15

*Dreamscapacity* presents architectural drawings by Dutch artist *Tim ter Wal*.

*OETERREICHISCHE GESELLSCHAFT VOM GOLDENEN KREUZE*
Kärntner Straße 26 (Eingang Marco- d’Aviano-Gasse 1), 1010 Wien, AUSTRIA. www.eoegg.at

**DR GUISLAIN MUSEUM**

until Oct 20

In *Blood Test: Genetic and Artistic Manipulations*, music, visual arts and theatre merge to explore whether we really want to know everything that science can tell us.

*MUSEUM DR. GUISLAIN*
Jozef Guislainstraat 43, 9000 Gent, BELGIUM
www.museumdrguislain.be

**MADGE GILL RETROSPECTIVE**

until Sep 22

A major retrospective of visionary artist *Madge Gill* in her home town brings together drawings, newly uncovered large-scale embroideries, textiles and archival objects, many of which have never been exhibited before.

*WILLIAM MORRIS GALLERY*
Lloyd Park, Forest Road, Walthamstow, London, E17 4PP, UK
www.wmgallery.org.uk
Two exhibitions will showcase work by Outside In artists: **Hard Wired**, in partnership with Chrysalis Arts, sees technology-inspired pieces by ten artists tour four venues across Yorkshire, East Riding and Lancashire (June 8 – November 16). The **Ivon Hitchens** exhibition at **Pallant House Gallery**, Chichester, (June 29 – October 13) features creative responses by Outside In’s Step Up course participants.

**OUTSIDE IN**
Jun 8 – Nov 16, Jun 29 – Oct 13

To coincide with the publication of *The International Encyclopedia of Surrealism* (ed. Michael Richardson) in which **Ody Saban** is featured, works by Saban can be seen in **The Surrealism of Yesterday and Today** at the **Redfern Gallery**.

**ODY SABAN**
Jul 10 – Nov 10

**ART AND MENTAL HEALTH**
until Oct 11

**BLACK SHEEP GALLERY**
Jul 1 – Sep 15

**ODY SABAN**
Jul 10 – Nov 10

**ART AND MENTAL HEALTH**
until Oct 11

**BLACK SHEEP GALLERY**
Jul 1 – Sep 15

**ODY SABAN**
Jul 10 – Nov 10

**ART AND MENTAL HEALTH**
until Oct 11

**BLACK SHEEP GALLERY**
Jul 1 – Sep 15

**MAUDIE** features a selection of original works by Nova Scotia folk artist **Maud Lewis**.

**ODY SABAN**
Jul 10 – Nov 10

**ART AND MENTAL HEALTH**
until Oct 11

**BLACK SHEEP GALLERY**
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Jul 10 – Nov 10

**ART AND MENTAL HEALTH**
until Oct 11

**BLACK SHEEP GALLERY**
Jul 1 – Sep 15
Jean Dubuffet: Un barbare en Europe presents Dubuffet’s artistic production in all its diversity, with 290 works and objects on display. MUSÉE DES CIVILISATIONS DE L’EUROPE ET DE LA MÉDITERRANÉE 7 promenade Robert Laffont, 13002 Marseille, FRANCE www.mucem.org

Chicago Calling: Art Against the Flow explores Chicago’s history of embracing art beyond the mainstream through works by ten of its own influential artists, including Henry Darger, Lee Godie, Mr. Imagination, Drossos Skyllas, Dr. Charles Smith and Joseph Yoakum. Parallel exhibition Hey! Modern Art & Pop Culture #4 includes works of outsider art, visionary art and art singulier. HALLE SAINT PIERRE, 2 rue Ronsard, 75018 Paris, FRANCE www.hallesaintpierre.org

Musée de la Création Franche presents works by Vanina Desanges and Dimitri Pietquin in two parallel solo exhibitions. MUSÉE DE LA CRÉATION FRANCHE 58 Avenue Maréchal de Lattre de Tassigny, 33130 Bègles, FRANCE www.musee-creationfranche.com

Curated by Françoise Monnin, Les Croqueurs d’Étoiles presents works by both trained and self-taught artists. Inspired by the first landing by humans on the Moon, the exhibition explores artists’ conceptions and portrayals of outer space. Featuring three installations by André Robillard alongside works by Günter Neupel, Jerzy Ruzczyński, Laurence Bonnet, Jesse Reno and 75 other artists. LA COOPÉRATIVE-COLLECTION CÉRÈS FRANCO 5 Route d’Alzonne, 11170 Montolieu, FRANCE www.collectionceresfranco.com

The Outsider Art Fair presents its seventh Parisian edition, showcasing over 35 new and returning international galleries with artwork by established self taught, art brut and outsider art creators along with a selection of exciting new discoveries. On Saturday, October 19, OAF will partner with Hôtel Drouot for a day of special programmes, including panel discussions and film screenings. This year’s annual presentation of the Art Absolument Prize for Outsider Art will focus on living female self-taught artists. The winner will be awarded €10,000.

CRÉATION FRANCHE until Sep 1

OUTSIDER ART FAIR, PARIS Oct 17–20

HALLÉ SAINT PIERRE until Aug 2

JEAN DUBUFFET until Sep 2

LA COOPÉRATIVE-COLLECTION CÉRÈS FRANCO until Nov 3

RAW NEWS FRANCE
BIZ’ART – BIZ’ART
Jun 2 – Sep 30

Des couleurs pour l’été presents works by Danielle le Bricquir. LES HALLES DE GERLESQUIN 24 Rue du Dr Quére, 29650 Guerlesquin, FRANCE www.lebricquir.com

BIZ’ART – BIZ’ART’s latest group exhibition includes works by Françoise Sablons, Marie-Françoise Valois, Patrick Evereux and others. BIZ’ART – BIZ’ART 2 Chemin de Prayat, 39300, Le Vaudieux, FRANCE www.bizart-bizart.com

MUSÉES DE LAVAL
Jul 13 – Oct 20

Until September 8, see works by François Monchâtre. July 13 until October 20, works by Alain Pauzié are shown. MUSÉES DE LAVAL Place de la Tremoille, 53000 Laval, FRANCE musees.laval.fr

2X2 FORUM
Oct 3 – 6

In October, the 2x2 Forum for Outsider Art, an international art fair, will take place for the sixth year at Kunsthaus Kannen. The biennial forum provides a platform for sharing ideas around outsider art, art brut and contemporary art. KUNSTHAUS KANNEN, Alexianer Münster GmbH, Alexianerweg 9, 48163 Münster, GERMANY kunsthaus-kannen.de

ART CRU BERLIN
Aug 2 – 31

Works by artists from Open Atelier St. Hedwig, Berlin and Project Ability, Glasgow are presented in a dream – what else. GALERIE ART CRU BERLIN Oranienburger Str. 27, 10117 Berlin, GERMANY. www.art-cru.de
Everything from the Ground, Loam and Clay presents a variety of ceramics from the present day, created from some of the oldest artificial materials in human history.

KUNSTHAUS KANNEN
until Sep 29

FLORAL FANTASIES
until Aug 4

Maria Callegaro e Alessandro Santoro. Margins of the sky presents 20 works by two contrasting artists.

MARONCELLI 12
until Sep 27

Herren Plaats
until Aug 23

In Cityscapes, Galerie Atelier Herenplaats includes works by artists from Debajo del Sombrero (Madrid), Project Ability (Glasgow) and from Herenplaats.

MARONCELLI 12
Via Maroncelli, 12 – 20154 Milan, ITALY. www.maroncelli12.it

GALERIE ATTELIER HERENPLAATS
Schietbaanstraat 1, 3014 ZT, Rotterdam, THE NETHERLANDS www.herenplaats.nl

Jerome Plaats

In Gewaechse der Seele: Floral Fantasies between Symbolism and Outsider Art, a show highlighting the relationship between Dubuffet and the city of Venice.

DUBUFFET IN VENICE
until Oct 20

Palazzo Franchetti presents Jean Dubuffet e Venezia, a show highlighting the relationship between Dubuffet and the city of Venice.

TREGER SAINT SILVESTRE
until Sep 15

NÚCLEO DE ARTE DA OLIVA, OLIVA CREATIVE FACTORY, R. da Fundição, 3700-119 São João da Madeira, PORTUGAL. tsscollection.org

Jean Dubuffet

Curated by Antonia Gaeta. Extravaganza includes works by outsiders including Anna Zemánková, Eugene Von Bruennenhein, Friedrich Schröder-Sonnenstern, Marilena Pelosi, Mose Ernest Tolliver, Pradeep Kumar and more.

RAW NEWS
GERMANY, ITALY, NETHERLANDS, PORTUGAL
KOJADINOVIC AT MNMA  
until Aug 15

COLLECTION DE L’ART BRUT  
Jun 28 - Sep 22

CREATIVITY EXPLORED  
Jul 18 – Sep 12

MUSEUM IM LAGERHAUS  
until Sep 8

MUSÉE VISIONNAIRE  
until Jul 28

STACY C. HOLLANDER  
Aug 17 – Sep 15

JEANINE TAYLOR  
Feb 17 – Sep 15

Antonio Ligabue: The Swiss Van Gogh 
focuses on the “other” in art, illuminating the cultural, sexual and gender-related, and religious facets of the theme. 
MUSEUM IM LAGERHAUS  
Davidstrasse 44, 9000 St. Gallen, SWITZERLAND  
www.museumimlagerhaus.ch

Papagena and Other Odd Fishes 
features miniature opera-stages 
by Bernhard Vogelsanger, 
costumes and other curiosities 
created by a variety of artists. 
MUSÉE VISIONNAIRE, Predigerplatz 10, 8001 Zurich, SWITZERLAND  
museevisionnaire.ch

Stacy Hollander is leaving the 
American Folk Art Museum after 34 years, having served as deputy director of curatorial affairs, director of exhibitions and chief curator.

Stacy Hollander

Lagniappe: Art of Andre and Pat Juneau 
features the duo’s brightly coloured metal furniture and sculptures embodying the Cajun canon. 
JEANINE TAYLOR FOLK ART  
211 E. 1st Street, Historic Downtown Sanford, FL, jtfolkart.com

Curated by Isaac Haney-Owens and Francis Kohler, group exhibition Cityscape includes original paintings, drawings, and sculpture of San Francisco landmarks, architectural landscapes, and the city dwellers that create the fabric of urban life. 
CREATIVITY EXPLORED GALLERY  
3245 16th Street, San Francisco, CA 94103  
www.creativityexplored.org

Antonio Ligabue

Srboljub Kojadinovic, a self-taught painter and sailor, civil engineer and travel book writer. 
MUSEUM OF NAÏVE AND MARGINAL ART  
Boška Đuričića 10, Jagodina, SERBIA  
www.mnmu.rs

Voyage to the future through oceans of the past is an exhibition of paintings by Srboljub Kojadinovic, a self-taught painter and sailor, civil engineer and travel book writer. 
MUSEUM OF NAÏVE AND MARGINAL ART  
Boška Đuričića 10, Jagodina, SERBIA  
www.mnmu.rs

Pat Juneau

Stacy Hollander

Pat Juneau

Isaac Haney-Owens

Stacy Hollander

Isaac Haney-Owens
WALL POWER!

Quilts from the
Karen and Werner
Gundersheimer
Gift

AUGUST 6–SEPTEMBER 1, 2019

AMERICAN FOLK ART MUSEUM
2 LINCOLN SQ., NEW YORK CITY
WWW.FOLKARTMUSEUM.ORG

This exhibition is supported in part by Joyce Berger Cowin, David Davies and Jack Weeden Fund for Exhibitions, the Ford Foundation, public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council, the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and the New York State Legislature, and the Council for Traditional Folk Art.

**CAVIN MORRIS**
until Aug 3

In collaboration with La ’S’ Grand Atelier (Vielsalm, Belgium) Cavin-Morris Gallery presents works by Belgian outsider artists Joseph Lambert, Éric Derochette and Philippe Da Fonseca in Effusions of Light. Cavin-Morris Gallery 210 11th Ave # 201, New York, NY 10001 cavinmorrisc.com

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**AMERICAN VISIONARY ART MUSEUM**
until Sep 1

Parenting: An Art without a Manual focuses on the art of parenting. The 36 featured artists include Morton Bartlett, Daniel Belardinelli, JJ Cromer, Alex Grey, Jordan MacLachlan and Ray Materson. AMERICAN VISIONARY ART MUSEUM 800 Key Highway, Baltimore, MD 21230. www.avam.org

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**ODY SABAN**
Sep 5–19

Organised by Peculiar Mormyrid, The Polymorph Bodyscape is a game and group exhibition that explores surrealism and the body. Includes works by French artist Ody Saban. THE BAKERY, 825 Warner St SW, Atlanta, GA 30310 www.thebakeryatlanta.com www.peculiarmormyrid.com

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**JUSTIN DUERR AT INTUIT**
Jun 27 – Jan 5

Justin Duerr: Surrender to Survival presents a selection of drawings by the Philadelphia-based artist. Works by Susan Te Kahurangi King continue to be shown through August 4, 2019. INTUIT: THE CENTER FOR INTUITIVE AND OUTSIDER ART, 756 N. Milwaukee Avenue, Chicago, IL 60642. www.art.org

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**MARY FRANCES WHITFIELD**
until Nov 23

Mary Frances Whitfield: Why? is a collaborative exhibition between the Abroms-Engel Institute for the Visual Arts at the University of Alabama at Birmingham and the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute. Why? presents paintings by the artist that graphically depict horrific racial terror lynchings perpetrated against African Americans. UAB ABROMS-ENGELE INSTITUTE FOR THE VISUAL ARTS, 1221 10th Avenue South, Birmingham, AL 35205. www.uab.edu

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**AMERICAN FOLK ART MUSEUM**
Aug 6 – Sep 1

Wall Power will display quilts—many of which are very modern in design and appeal. AMERICAN FOLK ART MUSEUM 2 Lincoln Square, New York, NY 10023 www.folkartmuseum.org
**CREATIVE GROWTH**

Jun 28 – Aug 10

The Creative Growth gallery will transform into an experimental curatorial space for *Unfiltered: An Artist-Curated Exhibition*, as artists working in the Creative Growth studio take over the gallery to present installations of their own work.

**RICCO/MARESCA GALLERY**

Jul 11 – Sep 7

For more than 30 years, Thomas Lyon Mills has been granted access to paint in the Italian catacombs and European pagan sites. From there, beginning with his onsite work and the influence of his dreams, he returns to his studio to work on pieces – often for years. Ricco/Maresca Gallery presents *Thomas Lyon Mills: Liminal Space* from July 11 through September 7. From September 12 through October 19, *Shut Up: Joe Massey’s Messages from Prison*. Ricco/Maresca Gallery, 529 W. 20th St, New York, NY 10011

**FOUNTAIN HOUSE GALLERY**

until Aug 7

The term flâneur describes a person who walks the city in order to experience it. This exhibition, titled *The Flaneur*, curated by Adam Yokell, features works inspired by Fountain House Gallery artists’ observations of New York City and other environments.

**MARY T. SMITH AT SHRINE**

until Jul 28

I WE OUR SHrine presents works by Mary T. Smith.

**JOHN MICHAEL KOHLER ARTS CENTER**

Jul 14, 2019 – May 17, 2020

Dr. Charles Smith expresses profound narratives about American and African-American history and culture through his sculptural figures. John Michael Kohler Arts Center presents the largest museum exhibition to show his work. Dr. Charles Smith: *Aurora* will focus on more than 150 works that were part of a major installation at the artist’s home in Aurora, Illinois, from 1986 to 1999, which he titled “The African-American Heritage Museum and Veterans Archive.”

**MIKE’S ART TRUCK**

until Aug 29

The Alliance for Historic Hillsborough and Mike’s Art Truck present *Outsider Art in the Visitors Center*. Hillsborough Visitors Center, Alexander Dickson House, 150 East King Street, Hillsborough, NC 27278
FROM ALL ANGLES

Inspired by the everyday world and nature, Sulton Rogers’ carvings are often humorous and macabre but they also have a poignant edge.

CAROL CROWN
Well-endowed women wearing bikinis and tight, figure-hugging dresses; men dressed to the nines in business suits and tuxedos; blues singers; couples engaged in X-rated embraces; devils, vampires, and werewolves. These, among many others, are the denizens of the outlandish imagination of contemporary folk artist Sulton Rogers. There is an untold number of Rogers’ small-scale statues, all with an unexpected twist, often humorous or bizarre, sometimes grotesque or dark. He often gave his figures exaggerated, bizarre facial features, such as the *Tongue Waggers* (on front cover) with their elongated, slithering tongues and huge teeth. He made hybrid creatures, such as the *Hawk Guys, Lion Man* and *Cat Lady*. He was interested in “haints”, a Southern word for ghosts, which he portrayed as intense and sometimes misshapen, and occasionally placed in large doll-house structures that he called “haint houses”. He carved the dead in coffins – containers for jewellery, he said, meant to scare off thieves.

Sulton (sometimes misspelled as “Sultan”) Rogers was born in 1922 in Mississippi, near the university town of Oxford. As a boy, he was taught to carve animals and canes by his father, a skilled whittler, but it would be many years before he took up carving again. At 27, he left Mississippi and travelled throughout the Mid-West looking for work. He joined the Army, was stationed in Texas between 1943 and 1944, and finally settled in Syracuse, New York, in 1952, where he worked...
Haint House with Haints, c. 1990s, painted wood carvings, haint house 70 x 27 x 17.5 in. / 177.8 x 68.58 x 44.45 cm; haints, height from 5 1/2 to 18 in. / 13.97 to 45.72 cm, courtesy Gordon W. Bailey Collection
as a carpenter. In 1970, he was hired as a machine operator at the company Allied Chemical where he worked until his retirement in 1984. It was during night shifts there that he began carving again.

In the 1980s, during one of his trips home to Oxford, he met the folklorist William R Ferris, founding director of the Centre for the Study of Southern Culture at the University of Mississippi and, later, Chair of the National Endowment for the Humanities. As Rogers told it: “I came down South to my sister’s house on vacation an’ I was carryin’ some carvings in a box to my nieces and nephews. Ferris saw ’em and bought ’em and they never did get to those children!” Ferris became a keen collector of Rogers’ work and later donated his collection to the University Museum of Mississippi, which houses over 200 of Rogers’ works and where a permanent display is planned for later this year.

Rogers liked using soft woods, such as sugar pine, to carve his statues, which range in size from several centimetres to nearly a metre. He began by “squaring out” a block of wood with a saw, often identifying details in pencil, then using a pocketknife to carve. Sometimes he left figures untouched, in the natural colour of the wood, while at other times he lightly shellacked them. On occasion, he used latex paint to colour them. He also used a wood-burning tool to add detail to hair and facial features.

Rogers rarely titled, signed or dated his works. Some figures, with their ungainly facial features and harshly carved surfaces, may seem to be early creations, as they lack the confident, practised touch of such works as Wedding (1980s). However, Rogers’ style did not develop from the simple to the complex. The stiff presentation of the human body, as shown in works like the Ghost Haint (c. 1980), is repeated throughout Rogers’ career. Wedding came later and, although its three figures are more refined, they too have the same rigid pose.

In other instances, Rogers invested his standing figures with rhythmic, fluid movement, such as the Man in Pink Shirt and Green Pants (undated). Less well-known
are his figures that take more complicated poses, such as those in The Card Game (1992). Here, Rogers portrays three players seated around a table: two cheaters in profile at either end, and a bald man in the centre. The tricksters have stuffed extra cards into their pockets and one of them, who has cards hidden in the hem of his trousers, manoeuvres his foot under the table to secretly pass a card that is tucked between his toes to his colleague.

Rogers also carved entwined figures. Two of the finest, dated before 1986 and both lightly varnished, are housed in the University of Mississippi Museum. The first shows an enthusiastic dentist who has pinned down his patient by jumping up and kneeling between his legs, while using one hand to grip the man’s head and the other to clamp his tooth with pliers. Full of detail and humour, it demands to be viewed in the round. Equally worthy of close scrutiny is Man Riding a Rooster. With his stiff body, the rider is like a cowboy on a bucking horse, while the rooster, by contrast, is full of dynamic movement.

Ferris recorded that Rogers “learned first to conceive ‘futures’ or imagined shapes before actually carving the image from wood”. He also stated that Rogers was inspired by his dreams, sometimes waking at night to sketch an outline of the image he’d seen, then carving it the following day. Rogers himself said that he often tempered the ideas that came from his imagination by drawing from what he observed in nature. Talking about his carved serpents, Rogers described the way fanged snakes bite: “A snake’s jaw runs like on a track. They don’t just bite you. They strikes. His mouth fly open and then come down. The tooth hooks back. They don’t go straight in. They hooks back. And you snatch it
Black Christ on Cross, late twentieth century, wood, paint and cloth, 9.5 x 15 x 3 in. / 24 x 38 x 7.5 cm, courtesy: High Museum of Art
in yourself when they hit you. And when the teeth hit, the poison shoots out its tongue. I seen a lot of them during my lifetime." Another source of inspiration was the everyday world. Seeing a man in a bar, Rogers determined to recreate his image: "That guy could take his tongue out and run his tongue up around his eye, all up there. I ain't never seen a guy like that before."

Rogers was also aware of and influenced by other artists. His carvings of a dead person in a casket, such as *Coffin with Stand* (1991), were inspired by the work of two famous Mississippi residents: the self-taught sculptor James "Son Ford" Thomas (1926–1993), and the self-taught painter Luster Willis (1913–1994) whose work Rogers saw in Ferris's book *Local Color: A
Rogers said that he wanted his statues to entertain. He used humour to draw attention to and ridicule the human condition, giving horns to a preacher, who speaks out of the side of his mouth; portraying a red devil in a casket with an evangelist and a nude she-devil; and displaying a high-heeled man naked except for a towel that barely covers his genitals. Sometimes his carvings are simply funny: a power couple with horse heads and the arms of wrestlers, an almost nude woman riding a bridled, polka-dotted serpent, and a seated dog holding a gun and smoking a cigarette.

There is, however, another, less well-known side of Rogers’ work, pieces that are more factual and down-to-earth in subject, and sometimes surprisingly touching. He carved racehorses and riders, a farmer driving a horse-drawn wagon, and a sombre funerary tableau depicting a carriage pulled by white horses and containing the flag-wrapped casket of Martin Luther King, Jr. While Rogers could not be described as a pious man, some of his most moving depictions take religion as their theme – for example, a black-robed gentleman preaching; a serene, white-robed black Jesus; and the poignant *Black Christ on the Cross*.

Rogers continued to carve until his death in 2003. His work is featured in a number of institutions and private collections, and mentioned in various publications, but there is still much to be discovered about this artist and his carvings. He may have been drawn to the odd, the offbeat and the humorous, but he was also a master of pose, gesture and innuendo, and the discerning viewer should take the time to consider his work from all angles.

Dr Carol Crown wrote, taught and spoke about the work of self-taught artists for over 30 years at the University of Memphis, where she is now Professor Emeritus and continues her interest in the field.
BLAZING A TRAIL OF MEMORIES

Through his painting, Oscar Azmitia has found a way both to hold onto memories and to keep a version of his collected objects.

PAMALA ROGERS

Oscar Azmitia had a difficult childhood. The youngest of three, he was born in Manhattan in 1978 and raised in Queens, New York. From the age of seven until he was 18, he was home-schooled by his mother after a very difficult time in the public school system. He found being in the company of other children very stressful, and he was teased and bullied for being different and immature. He felt misunderstood and confused, and began to have terrifying nightmares which persisted for years.

Azmitia withdrew from the outside world and retreated into his imagination. Drawing became an important vehicle to help him cope with feelings of isolation, anxiety and depression. He sketched prolifically.

The Genealogy of the Messiah, 2013, acrylic on used embroidery hoop, 12 x 12 in. / 30.5 x 30.5 cm. All images courtesy: Pure Vision Arts
and, influenced by comic books and G.I. Joe, often drew superheroes and cartoon characters. Eventually, he moved on to creating storyboards featuring his own original characters and texts. History was another favourite subject for Azmitia, and he enjoyed staging elaborate battle scenes using three-dimensional paper drawings. Religion would also become a key theme in his work – his family members were devout, churchgoing Christians and, as part of his daily education, he was required to memorise biblical stories and scriptures from a Baptist home-schooling curriculum that his mother used. This had a lasting impact and, as he matured, he began to incorporate his faith and extensive knowledge of the Bible into his art.
Jammin’ with James, 2013, acrylic on wood, 20 x 16 in. / 51 x 41 cm
God's Gifts Are From God.

What is pure religion?

Religion is...

Helping widows.

Faith without works is dead.

Believing in Jesus Christ is not enough. Even the demons believe.

I wish it were never true! Alas, but it is! Oh no! He's alive! We're doomed! Ugh! It scares me!

True faith in Jesus as Savior.

Repentance from sin.

True faith denounces sin & obeys God.

Abraham had true faith.

Abraham, drop your knife!

That kind of faith leads to eternal life in the heavenly paradise.

For more information, please feel free to visit a Bible-believing church where the Holy Spirit is at work. May God bless you as you seek to further your knowledge of the truth.

- Oscar A. (oscarant316@hotmail.com)
For many years, Azmitia had no explanation for his social difficulties. It was not only the challenge of interacting and fitting in with others but also of concentrating and staying focused. At one point, he was misdiagnosed with attention deficit disorder but, when he was 23, he was finally diagnosed with Asperger syndrome. Azmitia explains, "Because of my Asperger syndrome, it was hard for me to make friends so I developed a complex imaginary world, where I could illustrate my thoughts, feelings and memories. As an adult, my paintings are a way to express the loneliness, fear and sadness I have experienced. Humour is also important in my art and helps me get through the tough times in life. Through art, I can change the narrative of my past and become a victorious hero interested in reconciliation, instead of a person seeking revenge and being bitter. It is very important to me for my work to have a positive message and be inspirational to others." And, true to his word, he creates devotional objects, each one a meticulously created labour of love with an uplifting message of hope.

A turning point came for Azmitia in 2006, when – wanting to develop his artistic skills and interests – he began attending Pure Vision Arts, a not-for-profit studio for artists with autism, based in New York. It gave him the opportunity to create a substantial body of work and to socialise with like-minded artists. He flourished at the studio and finally found a sense of belonging and community. The pieces he created there were intriguing, combining his knowledge of religion, biblical scriptures and elaborate texts, with his eye-catching, illustrative, comic-book style.

Azmitia subsequently created an extensive portfolio of diverse and expressive work known for its graphic quality, rich colour, attention to detail, and sense of humour. As well as reflecting his religious background, many of his paintings show his interest in nostalgia, popular culture and old New York buildings. Completely self-taught, he has a natural talent for painting and creating a sense of perspective and foreshortening.

In addition to being an artist, Azmitia is an avid collector of items such as coins, VHS tapes, record albums, scrap wood pieces, and old newspaper and magazine clippings. After being asked repeatedly by his parents to throw out some of his accumulated stash, he realised that by painting images of the items, he could

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The Six Days of Creation, 2014, enamel on record album, 12 x 12 in. / 30.5 x 30.5 cm
When life throws a lemon in your face, you grab it and make lemonade.”

preserve their memory. “When life throws a lemon in your face, you grab it, and you squeeze that lemon hard, until you make lemonade,” he says.

He also began to recycle items from his various collections and assimilate them into his work. In 2012, he first created his signature miniature paintings on objects such as coins. After some experimentation, Azmitia found that enamel paint worked best because it adhered well to metal and plastic surfaces and had a rich, glossy finish. He used very tiny brushes or toothpicks to paint minuscule details and text. Many of the materials he used were dug out from rubbish bins or discovered in secondhand shops; not only did this suit his creative and political ethos, but it also kept his expenses down.

Not long after this stage in his creative development, Azmitia’s work began to gain attention for its idiosyncratic use of materials and striking imagery. In 2013, he was awarded the Genius of Autism Award for artistic achievement by the McCarton Foundation in New York. His “Good Haven High” series was featured in the publication The Best American Comics 2017. The comic book-style series, painted on cutting boards (a pun on the “board” of education), is loosely autobiographical and chronicles his personal challenges as a person on the autism spectrum in the New York public school system. Since 2014, his work has been included in group exhibitions in the Netherlands, Austria, Japan and the US, particularly in New York. He has also been a regular contributor to New York’s Outsider Art Fair for many years, most recently in 2019.

Oscar Azmitia is on a mission to turn trash into treasure and to save the planet by recycling scrap materials and giving them a second chance. By transforming records, pennies and other old, discarded objects into art, he is reducing his carbon footprint and spreading a positive message. As he does with the cast-off items, Azmitia is making something new and hopeful from his past. He has worked hard and persevered, despite the obstacles he has faced in his life. As he says: “I continue to blaze my own trail against all odds and look at me now. I am just getting started. Praise the Lord!”

Pamala Rogers is the director of Pure Vision Arts studio in New York.
DREAMS IN WOOD AND STONE

Retired farmer and notable folk artist Raymond Coins created carvings inspired by his visions, dreams and faith

JAMES ARIENT
“You can’t come on Sunday – that’s the Lord’s Day. You can’t come on Saturday – the banks are closed. And you can’t come on Thursday – Ruby gets her hair done. And bring cash money.” So went my initial phone conversation with the artist Raymond Coins in 1986.

Born on a small farm in the town of Stuart, in Patrick County, Virginia, in 1904, Coins (pronounced “Ko-ins”, in two distinct syllables) was of Scottish-American ancestry and came from a long line of poor, subsistence, mountain farmers. By the time he was ten, he had moved with his family to an area near Winston-Salem, North Carolina. His formal schooling ended in the fifth grade without him having learned to read or write (his wife later taught him to chisel “WR Coins” on his work) and he began working on farms in the area.

Coins married Ruby King in the mid 1920s, and they settled in Pilot Mountain, North Carolina, where he worked as a farmer. The couple were members of the Rock House Primitive Baptist Church and, in 1936, Coins assumed a position there as church deacon. His connection to his church was to become a major influence in his life and, subsequently, in his art.

In 1950, he and Ruby were able to buy a small farm of their own. They moved in with their three children, and for many years Coins grew crops, such as corn, oats, rye and wheat, and during the winter months worked as a floorman in tobacco warehouses. It was not until his retirement in the 1960s that his career as an artist began in earnest. Restless and bored, he began to fashion imitation Native-American arrowheads and tomahawks out of river stones and, in this way, discovered a new career. He once said, “I never knew a person who enjoyed himself working. But when I retired, I found that I do – because I can’t sit still.” (1)

At first, Coins gave away his works or sold them at low prices. He was surprised to find out later that some had been passed off as authentic relics and sold at a profit: “I started makin’ tommy hawks an’ Indian bowls. I’d split me a hickory stick an’ put [the rock] on the stick an’ tie a leather string around it. Back at the time, I sold it for about five dollars. I sold one I know of, a fella kep t it a year an’ sold it for one hundred dollars.” (2)

As his confidence grew, Coins moved on to carving whatever was suggested to him in the natural shape of the stone. He said, “I check the rock, an’ pick out what I want out of it. I can jus’ about see the picture in there. Then take the chisel an’ axe, cut it down, then sand it.” (3) He created animals, such as frogs, bears, buffalo and deer, as well as human figures which he and Ruby sometimes dressed up. He began making his famous “doll babies” with their bulging features, protruding nipples and wing-like appendages. They resembled the Moai figures on Easter Island but, as the artist said, with their bald heads, they also looked like Coins himself.

His work got progressively larger, with some pieces reaching life size. They were solid and weighty, like a stone alligator that required four men to lift it into a truck. His style became expressionistic and more
stripped back; powerful in their simplicity, his carvings could be taken for the products of a primitive culture.

Coins moved on to working in wood, as well as stone, preferring it because it did not produce dust. He would search for the right piece, preferably cedar and with branches that, to his eye, resembled heads and limbs. Many people thought that his best work was the wooden piece that sat outside his house – a doll-baby postbox with outstretched hands, waiting to receive the day’s mail. Then, one day, it disappeared to be replaced by a regular, hardware-store box. Over the years, many collectors had asked to buy the doll-baby postbox but
Coins had always refused, as he couldn’t be bothered to make a replacement for himself. Then one collector made him an offer that he could not turn down—he would buy the postbox and provide a replacement for the artist. This was good enough for Coins. He may be best known for his doll babies but his gravestone-like tableaux portraying religious themes are also significant in his body of work. Inspired by his deep faith, Coins would carve in the round and in bas-relief, using a chisel and an axe to etch out scenes, such as crucifixions, and Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Coins had vivid dreams or visions throughout his
life and believed that they represented guidance from God. He would often carve scenes from them – his creation *Dream* was inspired by a dream in which, he said, he was walking by his house, along a road leading up to the sky; at a crossroads, he could see temptations to the right and a child to the left, but he went straight ahead and met a serpent (the Devil) which he wrestled and defeated. Coins did not talk about his visions often – he once stood up in church to discuss one of his dream carvings but, receiving a mixed response from the congregation, he reverted to being guarded.

While he was proud of his creations, Coins did not have an all-consuming sense of himself as an artist. If he had somewhere to go, or if he had a visitor, it always took precedence over any art project he was working on, and every day he made sure he took a break to have lunch with Ruby at the local drugstore. That is not to say that he did not appreciate the financial worth of his art – in fact, he was very particular about this aspect of his work. He did not believe in cheques and would only accept cash payments. He would also be irked if he discovered that someone had sold one of his pieces at a profit beyond what he had earned from the initial sale. It was once reported in *Maine Antique Digest* that a collector had donated a small doll baby to a fundraising auction; as so often happens at this type of event, it achieved an inflated winning bid, multiple times more than the amount Coins was typically getting for a similar piece. A visitor, thinking Coins would be interested in how well his piece had been received, reported the auction story to him. Annoyed, the artist decided to raise the price on all his new sculptures to the same inflated level. Once the nature of fundraisers was explained to him, as well as the fact that such a huge increase would most likely cost him future sales, he lowered his prices again.

Coins continued working until 1990, when advancing age and a loss of inspiration caused him to put down his tools for good, and it was just a few years later, in 1998, that he passed away. Although he received a North Carolina Folk Heritage Award in 1995, it was not until after his death that he began receiving the appreciation for his work that his legion of fans felt he was owed. His longtime friends and supporters, Barry and Allen Huffman, gifted an important collection of his wood and stone works to the Hickory Art Museum, in Hickory, North Carolina, where it is still on display. Coins’s creations have been included in a number of group exhibitions, including “Signs and Wonders: Outsider Art Inside North Carolina” and “Passionate Visions of the American South”, “Outside the Main Stream” and “Art Outsider et Folk Art”. Several works by the artist have been sold at auction – most significantly, *Stele Commemorating the Founding of a Church* was sold at Christie’s in New York in January 2017. The piece was given a pre-auction estimate of $8,000–$10,000 but sold for an astounding $68,750. Perhaps Coins’s art is now receiving the recognition it deserves – as well as the price tags.

Notes

3. Ibid.

Dr James Arient has been a collector and advocate for self-taught art and artists for over 40 years. He first visited Raymond Coins at his home in 1986.
In the Adivasi villages of north-east India, the murals on the mud house walls change with the seasons and reflect the culture of the people.

DEIDI VON SCHAEWEN
The houses in the Adivasi tribal villages of Hazaribagh, in north-east India, are a sight to behold. Adorned with graphic, vibrant patterns and simple yet evocative images of wildlife, the walls seem to have a life of their own, standing out against the natural landscape.

The murals are not simply for decoration nor are they a gratuitous expression of creativity; they are produced by the married women of the villages in celebration of particular festivals and ceremonies, both religious and secular. The making of the murals is an ongoing task because, with the arrival of the seasonal rains, the designs get blurred and washed away, so that patches of the plain, mud-hut walls beneath reappear. When the next celebration comes around, the women start painting the walls all over again.

The Adivasi tradition of house painting is centuries old; some say, it is rooted in prehistoric rock art. Passed from generation to generation, mothers and aunts to daughters and nieces, the practice occurs across the region’s different tribes, such as the Oraons, Santals, Mundas, Gonds and Kurmis. There are a dozen or so different styles of house painting, but within those styles the murals are personal to the tribe and to the artist, variations even occurring from house to house. The Adivasi consider their homes to be sacred, and daubing their walls with art is an expression of faith, identity, culture, pride, family, love, thanks and more.

The two most significant types of wall art are Khovar and Sohrai. Khovar wall paintings appear from January to June, the wedding season. The marriage designs, which are intended to transform the houses into “bridal chambers,” can only be drawn by married women, known as Devi after the Indian mother god. The bride’s mother, aunts and other female relatives work to get the hut ready for the wedding night when the bridegroom will stay in his new wife’s home. The artists start by covering the house walls – external and sometimes internal – with black earth (manganese). Once dry, the black base coating is covered, section by section, with white earth (kaolin). Using broken combs, bamboo sticks or their fingers, the women scratch designs into the still-damp white surface of each section to reveal the contrasting black beneath, a technique called comb cutting or sgraffito. They draw quickly, freely, filling their mud canvases with birds, animals, leaves, flowers, hearts, doorways and swirls. They are simple, spontaneous renderings but they often carry symbolic meanings and good wishes for the newlyweds. The interior murals can last for many years but – when the monsoons arrive in June – the striking black and white artwork, that has been so painstakingly drawn on the external walls, bleeds away into the earth.

Come October when the rice is ripening, the Sohrai wall paintings begin to appear, in celebration of the harvest. Unlike the monochromatic Khovar creations, these drawings are embellished with detailing in earthy
above: House of Parvati Devi, in Belwara village, east Hazaribagh

above: House of Kaushaliya Devi, Oriya village, south-east Hazaribagh

above: Interior of Khovar (marriage room) in the house of Jasodha Devi, Kharati village, Hazaribagh
above: Comb-cut peacocks, elephants and patterns by Phulaso Devi of Jorakath village, Hazaribagh

above, middle and top: Harvest wall paintings (Sohrai) created by the women artists of Bhelwara village, east Hazaribagh
Autumnal reds, yellows and oranges, giving them a bright, joyful feel. The murals are seen as forms of Mother Earth, as well as being sacred offerings to her. Honouring fertility, abundance and prosperity, the designs show plants and creatures of the forest, such as tigers, deer, elephants, peacocks and snakes. Agricultural or river tribes show lotus, cows, goats, pigeons and other domestic animals. Sometimes the male god Pahupati (Lord of the Animals) makes an appearance riding a bull or an elephant.

But the Adivasi tradition of house painting – and tribal life as a whole – is in jeopardy because, for the last twenty years or so, open cast mining and deforestation have spread through the north-east of India. The development of concrete houses also presents a significant threat, and is gathering momentum as the government offers financial incentives to those who build their homes in this way. Very occasionally, mud plaster is used on the concrete walls so that the villagers can continue decorating them in the age-old way; but, in most cases, the use of concrete leads to the discontinuation of the murals.

The Tribal Women’s Artist Collective was set up in 1993, by an academic named Bulu Imam, to preserve the villages as well as the women’s art. His son Jason was one of the only men to create the murals. One of
the collective’s initiatives has involved the women creating their mural designs on sheets of paper which are then sold; not only can the art be appreciated further afield, but the proceeds bring some additional income to the villagers. Another newer association, Femmes du Hazaribagh, encourages the women artists to continue the wall-painting tradition by providing them with pigments of earth colours that are already prepared, and also by offering them gifts, like blankets and saris.

In the meantime – although to a far lesser degree than in bygone years – the creative cycle of house painting flows with the seasons, year in, year out. Walls are decorated again and again with art that is not constrained by the creative rules of the outside world, art that expresses so much about the tribes that create it. The murals may have a somewhat temporary, fleeting existence but, rather than diminishing their worth, this gives them an ethereal, almost mythical beauty that should not be washed away permanently.

Deidi von Schaewen specialises in architectural photography and has published many books of her work. She travels the world capturing images of threatened civilizations, and has exhibited her village mural photos in London (2015) and Paris (2016, 2018). They are currently on show at La Maison des Cultures du Monde, Vitré, until October 15, 2019.
ODD ATMOSPHERES

The Austrian *art brut* creator Leopold Strobl’s distinctive drawing-collages are bold in form and rich in ambiance

EDWARD M GÓMEZ

*Untitled*, 2019, 4 x 6 in. / 10 x 14.5 cm, pencil and coloured pencil on newsprint, mounted on paper,
All images courtesy: Galerie Gugging, Maria Gugging, Austria
In the overlapping categories of art brut and outsider art, numerous creators have produced drawings, mixed-media assemblages, and other works that are partly or wholly abstract. (Consider, for example, among others, the works of such artists as Jeanne Tripier, Eric Derkenne, Anna Zermánková, Dan Miller, and Judith Scott.) Now, with the emergence in recent years of the intriguing drawings of the Austrian Leopold Strobl, the role of abstraction in the bold compositions of one of the most original artists anywhere on the contemporary scene have come into sharp focus – and again have shown just how expressive this art-making element can be in the work of an innovative autodidact.

“As a child, I made all kinds of art and I liked to experiment with materials,” Strobl recalled during an interview earlier this year at Galerie Gugging, part of the Art Brut Centre Gugging, an arts complex northwest of Vienna that includes a gallery, museum, artists’ residence and art studio. This multifaceted institution has long played a leading role in promoting the work...
of notable art brut creators in Austria.

Strobl, who was born in 1960 in the state of Lower Austria, north of Vienna, noted that, as he was growing up, despite the interest he expressed in making art, his teachers told him that becoming an artist was not a likely prospect for him, and that an artist’s life would be very hard.

“That did not deter me,” he said matter-of-factly.

Strobl, who, with his long, grey-white beard, gentle gaze, and soft-spoken manner, brings to mind a large elf, explained that he went on to make landscape pictures and, eventually, just a few years ago, began clipping photos of landscapes from newspapers. He was especially interested in photos showing large expanses of sky. “Making art has an almost religious character for me”, he noted, adding, “I’ve always been interested in the sky; I used to go up on the roof and look at the sky.”

The small-scale, intimate-feeling works for which he has become best known are at once drawings and collages. To create them, he starts with photographic images clipped from printed publications, which he pastes onto fresh sheets of paper. Using plain and coloured pencils, he then outlines in black certain basic shapes within the compositions of these found images, accentuating them and effectively creating new compositions on top of the old. That is because he also colours over in black certain visible subjects within his found photos, purposefully obliterating, for example, the appearance of any human figures or other distracting elements within them.

Colouring his skies in such images in various shades of green and sometimes blue, Strobl produces reworked pictures that glow and hum with the restrained, concentrated energy of some of his trained, modernist counterparts’ more self-conscious varieties of minimalist art. Curiously, his abstract or semi-abstract pictures’ aesthetic charge and the mysterious atmospheres they seem to conjure up within pictorial space that is often no larger than that of ordinary playing cards bring to mind the resonant character of Zen calligraphy, whose gestures are both the expressions and the records of keenly focused creative impulses.

Strobl observed, “It’s the lines, the colours, and the forms in the photographs that I find and then rework that interest me. Normally, he produces a drawing a day. Looking for the photographs in newspapers that serve as his source material is an enjoyable task, he said, but he noted that it can be time-consuming. “When I find a photograph that appeals to me, right away I have a sense of what I can do with it,” he explained. “I think about which parts I’ll draw over. I look for photos without too many churches or buildings.” One of Strobl’s favourite sources for photographs is the Kronen Zeitung, a leading national newspaper in Austria. The artist said, “I’m lucky if I can find one good photo per issue of any newspaper.”
Leopold Strobl at Galerie Gugging, February 2019, photo: Edward M. Gómez

Leafting through an album in which some of his recently completed, still unframed drawings had been gathered together, Strobl pointed to one in which, somewhat unusually for an artist who prefers images of nature and landscapes, the interior of an old castle appeared, its foreground figures obscured by one of his signature black blobs. In another picture, Strobl’s overdrawing covered but also evoked the form of an exploded atomic bomb’s swelling mushroom cloud.

Admirers of modernist, geometric abstraction may find in the bulbous, curvilinear forms that appear like giant lumps or boulders in Strobl’s compositions, covering cars, human figures, or other subjects, echoes of the sensuous, even voluptuous lines and shapes that characterize the paintings, drawings, or sculptures of such definitive modern artists as Jean Arp, Henry Moore, or Myron Stout. Of course, Strobl, who is mostly unaware of canonical modern-art history, does not intentionally set out to evoke such remarkable affinities in his work.

For all its simplicity, the formal language Strobl has developed in just the last few years is surprisingly expressive. Together, his abstract forms and muted palette conjure up strange atmospheres, without referring explicitly to any specific subjects. In one of his untitled pictures, a tall protuberance shoots out of the earth like a geyser, its thick stalk and bobbing head solidified and looming, monumentally, against the blue glow of a nocturnal sky. In another, an almost rectangular black object lies on the ground, seen, it appears, in close-up, like some kind of unknown artifact waiting to be examined. With his pencils, Strobl almost always draws small, rounded corners around his images, framing them with a specificity of compositional point of view that helps accentuate the planar contrast – or spatial tension – between his foregrounded, dark abstract shapes and the coloured backgrounds around and behind them. “These drawn-in corners are very important to me,” he said.

Referring to the character of the abstract shapes that become the subjects of Strobl’s pictures, Nina Katschnig, Galerie Gugging’s director, recalled a comment about them made by Brett Littman, the director of the Noguchi Museum in New York. That institution showcases the accomplishments of the Japanese-American, modernist sculptor Isamu Noguchi (1904–1988), an artist whose oeuvre bridges the aesthetic sensibilities of the East and the West, and whose works often exude a sense of the transcendent. “Littman noted that Strobl’s abstract shapes sometimes resemble those of Noguchi’s sculptures,” Katschnig said.

Looking through his album of recent drawings, Strobl pointed to one in which he had coloured over a photo showing people in a city street, another in which he had obscured part of a Chinese landscape, and still another in which he had obliterated some animals. In many of his pictures, he noted, the resulting forms he creates by overdrawing unwanted elements in his found photos resemble high-peaked mounds or mountains.

Strobl sipped a cup of tea and nibbled a jelly-filled doughnut as he examined his artworks. He paused, and in the straightforward, unhurried way in which he speaks, explained, “These hills are extending upward, reaching to the heavens to be with God.”

Interview and translation from German by Raw Vision’s senior editor, Edward M. Gómez.
Dutch outsider artist Willem Van Genk (1927–2005) left behind a body of work that commemorates his life experience. His paintings and drawings are packed with layered, crowded and intricate detail – so much visual information that it can be challenging to untangle and interpret. His paintings can be seen as mind maps; complex networks of feelings and ideas. His 1971 painting *Kollage van de Haat* (*Collage of Hate*) is an important example of this and is analysed in detail in this article. To aid the identification of the areas of the painting that are discussed, there is an image key overleaf followed by corresponding numbered enlargements of details from the painting.

Van Genk grew up in The Hague, the only boy of ten children in a staunchly Catholic family. His sisters were at boarding school and, after his mother died
prematurely from cancer when he was four, he was sent to stay with an aunt, his mother’s sister. From there, he went to two different boarding schools, but did not get on well at either. Once back at home, he tried to learn a profession and had a few jobs, but none lasted long. He would get distracted by his real interests, such as reading, trains and stations, and drawing. In the end, he was sent to Arbeid Voor Onvolwaardigen (AVO), an institution set up in The Hague to provide employment for people with disabilities. The name translates as “Labour for the Unworthy”, and to Van Genk it felt like a prison. After each day of meaningless work, he would go to his sister’s home to draw and paint – the only pastime that made him happy.

In 1958, aged 31, he presented some of his work to a local art academy. His large cityscapes in ink and
watercolour impressed the assessors, but Van Genk’s psychiatrist at the AVO would not allow him to leave the institution to start an art course. To get around this, Van Genk started attending the academy in the evening to practise drawing, painting and engraving. Then, in 1964, the director of the academy arranged for him to have an exhibition, and so his career as an artist began.

In his drawings and paintings, Van Genk made many references to his life experiences, beliefs and values. He felt powerless as a person, and his art was a way to assert himself and to express his views and feelings. He was fascinated by the visible signs of power – uniforms, parades, weaponry, and military buildings and monuments. He wore raincoats, with ornate buttons, in a size that was too big for him to disguise his small frame and to give him a sense of being somebody. Internally, Van Genk’s feelings of inferiority and insignificance persisted, but in the external world his career progressed until, by the 1980s, he had found his place as an established outsider artist. In the mid 1990s, he had a series of strokes and was hospitalised. While his health deteriorated, his status as an important Dutch outsider artist grew, and it continued to do so after his death in 2005.

Kollage van de Haat is a painful work to look at. It is a three-panelled piece, the left and right panels of which are each dominated by a large, deeply lined face. We can presume that they both represent the same person and that both are dead. In the left-hand panel, the eyes (1) are open but the gaze is vacant and unfocussed. The figure is tightly wrapped up to the shoulders in a red blanket (2), while the folded-over top sheet is filled with elongated lettering inviting us to “Visit Union Tours for a trip to Asia”. The floral motif on the blanket resembles that of the ornamental borders that Van Genk’s father drew in his travel diaries. The words written across it “Cinderella hoses!” refer to a brand of bed linen. The figure has a label tied around his neck identifying him as “Wim van Gent” and implying that his empty stare is that of a corpse – the deceased is ready for transfer to the mortuary. A tiny Japanese cocktail flag has been pricked into his nose (1), which also bears the words “New Realism” and “New Deal”. The eyes seem dry, but their whites show the names of two Dutch rivers, the Vecht and the Rhijn, possibly alluding to streams of tears.

On the right-hand panel, the eyes are closed and the face seems to be melting into the flames that lick at the chin (3). Here, too, the nose sports a tiny Japanese flag. Any doubts as to whether the face depicts that of the artist can be dispelled by the word “Self-portrait” running down one side. As further evidence of identity, back in the left-hand panel, the label tied to the figure’s neck bears a quote by Van Genk, from an article about him by noted Dutch journalist “Bibeb” (Elisabeth Maria Lampe-Soutberg) – “Ik ben een stuk grijs papier” (“I am a piece of grey wrapping paper”). The quote, which reflects the artist’s feelings of insignificance, became the title of the article which was published in 1964, the same year as Van Genk’s first show in Hilversum and his participation in the seminal group exhibition “Pop Art and New Realism” in The Hague.

The middle panel of Kollage van de Haat gives us a third, smaller view of the same ravaged face (4), in this case not yet quite dead. The head rests on a white pillow flanked by the words “New York Hilton” and “Double Room”. The expression on the face is one of rage, and a long scream issues from the gaping mouth. Towering above is a man in a striped suit firing a revolver (5) at an unseen target; he is visibly tense, a cigar clenched between his lips (6). The orange arrows radiating from his eyes shoot towards the head in the

For enlarged details of the numbered areas indicated in the key above, see opposite and pp. 54–57.
left-hand panel. There, the victim’s face is flanked by words including “Haat” (7) and “Cancer”.

Although Ven Genk persists in blurring the narrative, Kollage van de Haat clearly addresses some of the most painful episodes in his life. The themes are unmistakable – epithets painted on the turned sheet in the middle panel that say “The Dutch. Moron. Homo. Phyl. Cancer. Patient. Imbisyl. Sinasloah. Flikker. Etc” (8) are consistent with labels hurled at the artist in real life, such as referring to his mother’s death from cancer. He felt ill at ease with the commonplace sex culture depicted in his imagery: women with milk-squirting breasts; lingerie brands like “Hunk möller Lexis” and “Triumf” (Triumph); explicit novels such as Ik Jan Cremer (I, Jan Cremer) and suggestive phrases like “porno press”, “sex bom” and “sex in groepsverband” (group sex) (9).

He may have found sexual references distasteful and unsettling – but, perhaps for that very reason, they occupied his thoughts and work.

Murderers and pistol-toting thugs are regular denizens of Van Genk’s creative world. Violence pervades Kollage van de Haat – a woman and two children are stabbed to death, a strangler strikes in Cologne, Ernest Hemingway visits the bullfights in Pamplona, and a thousand suicides occur daily. Politics enjoys an equally unsavoury presence. As a youth, the artist had rejected the Christianity of his upbringing and turned instead to Communism with its promises of support, wealth and peace for all. However, after Stalin’s death he, like many others, discovered the truth of the totalitarian and oppressive system of the post-war USSR. The names of dissidents, rebellious Russian writers and composers, and new leaders in the Soviet republics, began to appear in his paintings. The left-hand panel of Kollage van de Haat shows the book Communisme in Ontbinding (Communism in Disintegration). Meanwhile, a white-coated doctor flaunts the anti-Vietnam war slogan “Stop the bombing” on his chest, a slogan that Van Genk repeats lavishly elsewhere in his work. He also suggests that the Dutch newspapers are full of anti-American, Communist propaganda. He was fascinated by the ostentatious parades of Soviet Russia and its Eastern Bloc allies, and often incorporated them into his art. A banner hoisted amid Soviet flags proclaims “Down with the Japanese Imperialism” (10). Fascism was another favourite theme. The book Nacht over Nederland (Night over Holland) was a rich source of World War II imagery for him. Other books whose covers can be spotted in his work relate to science and psychiatry (11).

Art and architecture were also key topics for Van Genk, as this painting shows. He twice includes The Berlin Airlift Memorial (12), built in 1951 at Tempelhof Airfield to honour the Allied forces who dropped food into West Berlin when it was blockaded by the Soviets in 1948. The Ossip Zadkine sculpture The Destroyed City (13), commemorating the wartime bombing of Rotterdam in 1940, can be found three times. Van Genk
makes associations with Congrès Internationaux d’Architecture Moderne (CIAM) and its 1930s idea of The Functional City in which rebuilding involved creating function-based zones. He refers to Rotterdam as a “stad in beweging”, a “city on the move”, dedicated to rebuilding its ruined centre.

Van Genk’s fascination with the world of art is obvious in Kollage van de Haat. There are references to painters’ materials, such as Flexa, Japan Lakken and Frische Farben. In two places, he replicates pieces of abstract art, and he also mentions Sonsbeek and Middelheim (locations of prestigious international sculpture exhibitions). There are references to Klee, Goya (14) and Picasso, as well as to his own exhibitions. But why place an exhibition title on the face’s nose (1)? Did Van Genk feel he had been led by the nose with regard to New Realism? After all, the organisers categorized him as a traditional realist, implicitly undermining him in relation to modernist art. A quest to discover his own place in the art world permeates his whole oeuvre.

His professional insecurity can also be seen in the way he signed his work. He usually first signed his paintings with his name but then added “Bragah, Pocket Collage and MK”. In this painting, a second signature appears in the yellow band below the right-hand panel: “(GKF) Bratt. Printing. Comp. Model. WFAM Hage ’71. Holland. Coll. ZH.” (15) Van Genk painted Kollage van de Haat in 1971 while he still had some prospect of international recognition under the management of the art and design connoisseur Pieter Brattina. Unfortunately, Brattina was prone to making empty promises. Van Genk exposed his own vulnerability and dependence by second-signing his works with “Bratt” or “Bragah” (abbreviations of Brattina). Van Genk’s interest in Japan – note the cocktail flags – may also stem from this relationship, as Brattina had many contacts there. He assured Van Genk of an exhibition in Tokyo, a dream prospect for the artist who loved travelling and was fascinated by the exoticism of Japan – but nothing ever came of it.

A common motif in Van Genk’s work is spiderwebs, and in no other work are they deployed so prolifically as in Kollage van de Haat. On the left panel, a blue web, painted over a black web, bears the book title Kunst en revolte. Het politieke plakkaat en de opstand van de Franse studenten (Art and Revolt. The political poster and the French student uprising). On the right, another double web mimics an old logo of VARA Radio (16) with spreading radio waves. The text “Drs. Carp. Psychiatric Culture Tomorrow” threads circumferentially around the blue, upper web. This is a translation of the book title Toekomstige Psychiatrie (11), depicted below the web. In the left-hand panel, there is also a three-layer web, the top-most layer marked with “Webster Inc.” (17). The word “Haat”, repeated nine times, floats on a lilac-coloured spiderweb, and black spiderwebs stretch between the despairing, raised arms of Zadkine’s sculpture.

Van Genk’s use of spiderwebs is significant and, perhaps more than any other element in his work, reveals how he perceived the world: each of us can be trapped like a fly in the sticky meshes woven by powerful individuals (“Machtkonzentrationen” (18) means “concentrations of power”) and, once caught, we will be sucked dry. Van Genk understood these dangers and wanted to highlight the systems responsible for them – it was his way of coping with a menacing world. The misery that radiates from the figures in Kollage van de Haat turns it from a “Kankerpaviljoen” (cancer ward) into a bitter indictment of society. The artist saw the systems but lacked the capacity to infiltrate the power concentrations. The outcome is haat.
SHINICHI SAWADADA

Working deep in the woods, this Japanese sculptor creates pieces that are unique and mysterious

MIZUE KOBAYASHI

Shinichi Sawada works silently and calmly, his fingers moving with complete certainty and dexterity to create his distinctive clay sculptures. At 37, he is one of the most recognised art brut artists from Japan, but he himself does not grasp people's fascination with his work.

As a child, Sawada attended a school for children with special educational needs for several years, and was then enrolled at a boarding school in the city of Kusatsu where he was diagnosed as being on the autistic spectrum. From the age of 18, he began to attend a local social welfare facility – an institution for people with mental disabilities called Nakayoshi Fukushikai, in Shiga Prefecture, western Japan. He went three or four times a week and, although he lives with his parents, he still regularly goes to the centre today.

At first, Sawada tried his hand at Sashiko (a traditional form of Japanese embroidery) during his sessions at the institution – but it was pottery that drew him in. Because the centre did not have a proper area for ceramics, the head of the facility arranged for a small, sheet-metal cabin to be constructed deep in the woods, a few kilometres from the main buildings, in which Sawada and others could create. However, the cabin was, and still is, a very basic structure that can only be used in the warmer months as it has no real

Untitled (17), n.d., ceramic, 8 x 8 x 8 in. / 20 x 21 x 20 cm, photo: Andrew Hood
walls or doors; low temperatures prevent people from working there and also affect the clay.

Sawada has a set routine on Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. In the mornings, he works with others in the in-house bakery, making bread and then selling and delivering the produce locally. Sometimes, he also helps out packing small electrical items. In the afternoons, he is driven over to the pottery cabin with Akio Kontani, another sculptor, and Iketani, the retired facilitator who has worked with Sawada since he first started coming to the institution.

Iketani built two large earthenware kilns in the cabin, but they are only lit twice a year due to the cost of the wood and the dedicated labour required to monitor and keep them at the right temperature continuously for three days and nights. One of the kilns can be heated to 800 degrees, which gives the clay a black colour, while the larger kiln goes to 1,200 degrees, creating a reddish-brown hue with a slight sheen (the exact tone depends on the amount of ash that crystallises during the firing). After being fired, the kilns take at least a week to cool down, and it is only then that the ceramics can be removed. All the artists who use the cabin need to have their work fired, so space in the two annual firings is shared out equally.

Sawada is a prolific artist. He takes four or five days

Untitled (58), n.d., ceramic, 10 x 6 x 7.5 in. / 25 x 15 x 19 cm, photo: Ellie Walmsley
this page: *Untitled (23)*, n.d., ceramic, 10 x 10 x 3.5 in. / 26 x 26 x 9 cm, photo: Andrew Hood

opposite: *Untitled (51)*, n.d., ceramic, 6 x 12 x 6 in. / 15 x 30 x 15 cm, photo: Ellie Walmsley
to complete one of his ceramic creatures. Each is built around a cylindrical base that is hollow in the centre. Most have faces on more than one side, and some have several faces stacked on top of one another giving the creations a totem pole look. All the pieces are covered in little spikes – or “thorns”, as some people describe them. These attachments have evolved over time, becoming denser and more rounded. Sawada applies them in quick succession, often laying them out in straight, orderly lines across the surface of the clay. He moves his delicate fingers – which are often described as ladylike – without hesitation, and works in silence, although a gentle tune on the stereo often plays in the background.

No-one knows who or what Sawada’s spiky creatures represent; due to the nature of his autism, the artist barely communicates verbally. He demonstrates such confidence and assuredness when he works that it seems that he has envisioned exactly how his final piece will look, despite having no visual references in front of him. He replicates one of around 15 different creature motifs each time, but, as each piece is created entirely from memory, there are subtle differences that make each finished piece unique.

In 2013, his work featured in the 55th Venice Biennale, in the Encyclopedic Palace. Curator Massimiliano Gioni says that he chose to include Sawada’s works because he had never seen anything like them before. He says, “Perhaps it is the opposite – I chose them as they seemed to contain so many variations of things I had seen before. I liked how they connected to centuries of depictions of imaginary
beings (which immediately complicates any reductive reading of self-taught art as developing outside traditions and art history). I couldn’t help thinking of Borges’s book of imaginary beings, of medieval bestiaries and pre-Columbian sculpture. And I loved the combination of fidelity – realism, if you will – and freedom of imagination. They displayed a faith in the power of imagination, depicted with absolute precision, that I had rarely encountered before.”

Sawada’s work has evolved in recent years, moving towards a freer aesthetic. Since 2015, fellow sculptor Kontani has been working alongside him in the pottery cabin. At one point during this period, Sawada stopped attending for nine months – with his limited verbal communication, not even his family understood why. It is clear, however, that Kontani’s style of sculpting has had an effect on Sawada – his creations have altered to look remarkably similar to Kontani’s with less regimented spikes. In 2018, new works of the two artists were shown for the first time side-by-side in the “Art Brut Japonais II” show at the Halle Saint Pierre in Paris.

Alongside his ceramic sculptures, Sawada recently began to make cars from paper while at home with his family. He would work on them for around three hours after arriving home from the institution. Each car took three or four days to complete and includes intricate details such as seats, a speed gauge, door handles and wing mirrors, and some moving parts that replicate the real thing. Sawada’s parents recall that he did not use scissors for these pieces, but simply tore the paper with his hands. He made around 30 vehicles and then, one day, he just stopped. Again, due to his lack of communication, no-one knows why. He appears to have a fond attachment to the cars and is protective of them; to date, he has only given permission for them to be shown at “Komorebi: Art Brut Japonais” in Nantes in 2018 and at the Halle Saint Pierre later that same year.

Conversely, Sawada’s ceramics work is currently in several collections, including the Collection de l’Art Brut in Lausanne, the abcd collection in Paris, and the Dammann Collection in Switzerland. Earlier this year, it was also featured at New York’s Frieze Art Fair. Back at the institution in Shiga, his work takes pride of place on shelves in the entrance area, where he places them once they have been taken from the kiln. Those who run the institution are keen for local government to know about Sawada’s sculptures and all the artwork that is created within their walls; they want external acknowledgement for their work and that of the artists. They are not concerned with art brut terminology; for them, labelling by the outside world is irrelevant and it is the art and the act of creation that are important. The same certainly goes for Sawada as he continues to make his sculptures in the pottery cabin in the woods.

Mizue Kobayashi is Art Director of The Social Welfare Organization Aiseikai. She specialises in Japanese art brut and was recently involved in the “Art Brut Japonais II” exhibition in Paris.
At the Basilica of Our Lady of San Juan de los Lagos in Jalisco, Mexico, miracles are depicted in small paintings on pieces of scrap tin. Car crashes and surgical operations, violent crimes and animal attacks, illnesses and house fires all appear in vivid, often crudely illustrated scenes. Each one shows a celestial figure – the Virgin Mary, Jesus Christ or a saint – who is interceding to protect these unfortunate souls from harm. Known as retablos, these works of folk art come from the ex-voto tradition of using material objects to communicate with the divine. The paintings are commissioned or created to show gratitude for a prayer answered or a disaster averted.

Retablos can be found in churches and shrines around Mexico, with Our Lady of San Juan de los Lagos being one of the biggest pilgrimage sites. As such, it is an ongoing reflection of contemporary concerns. In 1988, while conducting fieldwork for the binational research initiative the Mexican Migration Project, Jorge Durand, Professor of Social Anthropology at the University of Guadalajara, and Douglas Massey, Professor of Sociology and Public Affairs at Princeton University, noticed that this church’s retablos frequently represented themes of Mexico–US migration.

“Unlike other sources of information on Mexico–US migration, retablos would capture events as they were experienced by the migrants themselves”, Massey explains. “The pictures and texts could provide a rich source of data on a subject that has been notoriously resistant to study because much of the migration was...
“We want US audiences to see what Mexican migration looks and feels like from the other side of the border”

undocumented. We thought that by analysing retablos left by migrants and their family members, we could understand how US migration felt and was understood by the people who experienced it.”

The two men began searching antique stores, curio shops and galleries to create a collection of retablos specifically about migration. They found paintings of border crossings and safe returns, as well as representations of the issues that often face migrants, such as the difficulty of finding a job, getting sick while far from home, hazardous working conditions, legal troubles and getting lost in an unfamiliar place.

In December 1990, Durand and Massey debuted their collected retablos at the Diego Rivera Studio Museum in Mexico City, but they also continued to visit rural shrines throughout west-central Mexico – a major area for migration to the US – photographing and acquiring more examples of the artworks. This collection now includes 58 votive paintings, ranging from a 1954 retablo for a woman who was caught under the wheels of a bus in border town Brownsville, Texas, to a 1990 depiction of a man behind bars, asking that with this offering he be granted his freedom in the US. In 1995, Durand and Massey co-authored Miracles on the Border: Retablos of Mexican Migrants to the United States. In their text they noted that, while themes like homecoming were significant across the decades, later in the twentieth century retablos related to legal problems and documentation increased, reflecting how the US had begun applying stricter rules for immigration.
Although relevant to the overall, larger debates about migration, these retablos have highly personal narratives of hopes, needs and survival. One undated painting shows six figures wearing baseball hats and sombreros fording a turbulent river, with accompanying text that expresses thanks for safe passage into Texas, likely over the Rio Grande. Another from 1960 shows a couple kneeling with candles in an abstracted landscape, facing a divine saviour emerging from a cloud, and includes the text: “I give infinite thanks to Our Lady of San Juan de los Lagos for having enabled me to cross the border and return with health.”

An undated retablo of a man in a hospital bed gives thanks for his recovery from a lung illness that he contracted while working in Harlingen, Texas, a city located in a part of the Rio Grande Valley that is frequented by migrants.

“We want US audiences to see what Mexican migration looks and feels like from the other side of the border, and to see it as very human and humane enterprise in which ordinary people are trying to make a better life for themselves,” Massey says. “This has always been an important goal, but it has become more important to us in the ‘Age of Trump’ when Mexican migrants are denigrated as criminals and threats to American society.”

Recently, selections of these collected retablos were featured in ‘Agents of Faith: Votive Objects in Time and Place’, an exhibition which ran from September 2018 to January 2019 at the Bard Graduate Centre in New York. There, they were among over 250 works examining how votive traditions stretch from the ancient world to
the present day, whether a first- to second-century Roman sacrificial goat carved in marble, or a Harley-Davidson motorcycle deposited in 1995 at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC.

“I think votives are these things that speak to all of us,” said Ittai Wenryb, Associate Professor at Bard Graduate Centre and “Agents of Faith” curator. “And I think we all at a certain point in our life did something that was either votive or resembled votive, whether we buried a rock next to a tree, or put something under our pillow, or left some note somewhere, or just engraved our name on a wall. It’s one of the broadest cultural categories in the history of mankind.”

In this context,”Agents of Faith” demonstrated how retablos emerged in seventeenth-century Mexico, bringing together European traditions of votive...
painting with indigenous practices of votive giving. Before they became popular art, early Mexican votive paintings could be lavish commissions – in the exhibition, a large oil on canvas from 1777 shows a woman lying in an opulent room, surrounded by attendants and religious icons, as a surgeon cuts cancerous tumours from her breast. Even this elaborate, accomplished artwork was left at a church shrine, an act of thanks meant, like all retablos, to be an ephemeral, temporary offering. As Weinryb says, “They were never supposed to exist past the moment of the deposition, the moment of their own sacrifice. It’s by accident of history we have all of these objects.”

Indeed, the survival of Mexican retablos as folk art is partly thanks to a surge of interest from Mexican modern artists in the 1920s and 1930s. “You can see it very much in the work of Frida Kahlo who was influenced by the luminous colours and also the dreamlike, theatrical juxtaposition of elements that you see in retablos”, says Juliana Dweck, Curator of Academic Engagement at Princeton University Art Museum. “Retablos were central to establishing indigenous cultural identity in the wake of the Mexican Revolution.”

In these paintings by untrained artists, modernists saw a visual practice that was distinctly Mexican, separate from the academic style of European art schools. The 1921 “Exposition of Popular Art”, the first major Mexican folk art exhibition, featured retablos. In its catalogue, artist Gerardo Murillo (“Dr. Atl”, 1875–1964) praised them as representing “more than any other manifestation” the collective faith of the country. Muralist Diego Rivera amassed a significant collection of the paintings and once stated that “the anguish of our people caused this strange flowering of painted ex-votos to rise up slowly against the walls of their churches”.

The Durand and Massey retablos are now split
between two collections – the Massey-Fiske (named for Douglas Massey and his wife Susan Fiske) and the Arias-Durand (named for Jorge Durand and his wife Patricia Arias). A display of over 50 retablos from the two collections has recently taken place at the Princeton University Art Museum. Alongside the pieces was a 1982 self-portrait by Nahum B. Zenil (b. 1947), a contemporary Mexican artist inspired by retablos. His Santo de mi devocion (Saint of my devotion) is enshrined with flowers like an offering and has a flat perspective reminiscent of the painted figures in shrines around Mexico. Alongside is a facsimile of the thirteenth-century Galician–Portuguese codex Las cantigas de Santa Maria, showing people giving thanks for miracles performed by the Virgin Mary. Arranged chronologically between this medieval European text and the contemporary painting of Zenil, the retablos are part of an ongoing thread of art and belief. However, they have a strong identity and message of their own. Dweck’s hope for the exhibition was “to enable visitors to get a sense of the shared, but also shifting over time, concerns of Mexican migrants over the course of the twentieth century. It’s almost a whole century of US-Mexican labour.”

The retablos of migrants in the last century still resonate today, when crossing borders remains as perilous as ever. In the political vitriol over border walls and immigration, the individual experiences of migrants are drowned out. Looking at retablos, one does not need to understand the words on the paintings to connect with the lives of the people that are portrayed so expressively. In these small works are the universal desires to live, to love and to find a place in the world, no matter the risk.

Allison C. Meier is a Brooklyn-based writer on art, history and culture. She was senior editor at Atlas Obscura and, more recently, a staff writer at Hyperallergic. She moonlights as a cemetery tour guide.
Halle Saint Pierre is hosting an exhibition dedicated to the outsider art of Chicago. The genre emerged in this US city in the mid twentieth century, at a time when the New York scene was the most dominant in the world. In 1951, Jean Dubuffet chose Chicago as the location for the first American retrospective of his work; then, in the 1960s, the outsider art of Chicago inspired the Chicago Imagists and led to their distinctive, irreverent creations. The genre went on to firmly establish itself in the city and, in 1991, Intuit: The Center for Intuitive and Outsider Art – the first American art centre dedicated solely to outsider art – opened its doors to the public.

Organised by independent curator Kenneth Burkhart, and Lisa Stone, curator of the Roger Brown Collection, “Chicago: Foyer D’Art Brut” was first presented at Intuit, under the name “Chicago Calling: Art Against the Flow”. Bringing together ten artists, the exhibition shows work dating from 1941 up to the present day. All of the featured artists – bar Henry Darger – participated actively in the outsider scene of Chicago, displaying their work in the gardens and streets of the city. In contrast, Darger lived as a recluse in his one-room apartment. His work – The Story of the Vivian Girls, in What is Known as the Realms of the Unreal, of the Glandeco-Angelinian War Storm, Caused by the Child Slave Rebellion – was discovered only after his death. Consisting of 15,145 pages and more than 300 collages, it reveals an extensive imaginary world and recounts the dramas of seven sisters battling to save children from brutal attack. Another classic Chicago self-taught artist, Joseph Yoakum, also invented a new sort of reality through his imaginary landscapes, describing his work as a “spiritual unfoldment”. More imaginary universes can be seen in the work of the aptly named Mr Imagination (Gregory Warmack) who created environments and sculptures from cast-off objects, such as bottle caps and old paintbrushes. He gave his creations regalia, such as thrones and sceptres, and cemented the original memories of the used materials, so restoring their power.

Two other artists included in “Chicago: Foyer D’Art Brut” devoted their creative output to architecture. Impassioned by Catholic churches, Italian emigrant Aldobrando Place created various models, colouring small details of the ornamentation; while Wesley Willis reproduced the urban landscape of Chicago in his expressive drawings.

Other works on display come from William Dawson, Lee Godie, Pauline Simon and Drossos Skyllas who became well-known for their visionary approach to portraits and sculpture. And, among the numerous African American artists included in the exhibition, Dr Charles Smith has created an enormous tribute to the African diaspora in the USA, in particular celebrating 7,000 African-American soldiers who died during the Vietnam War.
The American self-taught artist Renaldo Kuhler (1931–2013) was a proficient draughtsman and imaginative storyteller who, over several decades, gave tangible form through drawings, sculptural objects and costumes to “Rocaterrania”, an imaginary country whose history, culture and customs he also devised.

On a map of the real North America, Kuhler—who was born in New Jersey to a Belgian-immigrant mother whom he detested and a German-immigrant father who designed trains—situated Rocaterrania in upstate New York, near the border with Canada. Spending his youthful years in the 1940s on an isolated ranch in Colorado, to which his family moved following his father’s retirement, young Renaldo, feeling “more dead than alive”, as he wrote in his diary, immersed himself in creating his fantasy country. Its look and ambience reflected those of the Victorian styles and the nineteenth-century Germanic and Eastern European lands that fascinated him.

This first-ever commercial-gallery showing of a selection of Kuhler’s drawings, along with a few objects, offered viewers a good sense of the character and scope of his Rocaterrania creation. Images of ornately decorated buildings, along with those of royal figures, spies, athletes and “neutants”; Kuhler’s physically fit, androgynous young adults, referred to his imaginary country’s civic institutions and social hierarchy. Some of the artist’s pictures portrayed aspects of its landscape, too.

While Kuhler’s depictions of his neutants and of various female personages suggest a frisson of eroticism, overall, his grand opus lacks the transgressive edginess of Henry Darger’s peculiar, Victorian children’s tale, In the Realms of the Unreal, or the literary-musical-technical sophistication and experimentation of Adolf Wolff’s imagined universe. Kuhler saved some of his very best drawing for the work he did as a scientific illustrator at the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences in Raleigh, where he worked until he died. There, he appeared at his office, regarded by his colleagues as an amiable eccentric, in a Rocaterranian, Lederhosen-style costume.

There is more of Kuhler’s fantasy country still to be discovered. This exhibition opened the door, enticingly, to further exploration of its curiosities and surprises.

Edward M. Gómez
Amélie Ravalec’s dazzling film — “documentary” is too dry a term — is a chronology of art, madness and the unconscious, an account of Western society’s attempts to characterise and depict states of mental affliction, altered consciousness and irrationality. The film presents us with a vivid cavalcade of artworks, each of which is worthy of analysis, speculation and appreciation; and, by way of expert commentary, locates the work in the philosophical and aesthetic concepts of its era. Early notions of sin, infirmity, possession and psychic transformation — all varieties of what was seen as “folly” — give way to the idea of melancholia as both a pathological condition and a source of wisdom and insight, and later still to the embracing of unreason and the unconscious by the avant-garde. More than 350 works of art are featured and expert commentaries are provided by art historians, psychiatrists and neuroscientists, and gallerists and curators. In addition, writer Siri Hustvedt and artist Laurie Lipton offer firsthand accounts of the creative processes operating between conscious and unconscious states.

The film details the turn from the nineteenth century onward towards preserving, collecting and celebrating the artistic productions of creators who are themselves afflicted, and often confined and functioning (or not) outside the bounds of mainstream society. No longer the sacrificial victims of the Age of Reason, no longer merely marginal, eccentrics or deviants, they begin to inspire compassion and the realisation that they are gifted, to be ‘rehumanised’ and valued within the new traditions of art brut and outsider art. Art & Mind is an unparalleled chronicle, a journey into haunting, haunted places, which will fascinate and captivate both experts in the field and those for whom its themes are less familiar.

Tony Thorne

ANDRÉ ROBILLARD
Galerie Polysémie, Marseille, France
April 25 – May 25, 2019

André Robillard was born in 1931 and brought up near Orléans, in north-central France, where, in his late teens, he was sent to a regional psychiatric hospital. In time, he gained considerable autonomy and, although he still resides on the hospital’s property, today he maintains his own residence and studio, where he produces the imaginative, mixed-media assemblages and drawings for which he has become well known.

This gallery presentation of some of the artist’s creations of recent years featured some of his familiar rifles made from such found materials as a hairbrush, a metal crutch, an electric flashlight, and small, stuffed-animal toys. Also on view were drawings in ink on plain, brown-coloured kraft paper, whose subjects ranged from sailing ships from the distant past and rocket ships of a far-away future, to portraits of Jean Dubuffet (1901–1985). About two decades before his death, Dubuffet acquired some of Robillard’s works for his personal collection and was in communication with his self-taught counterpart.

Robillard’s creativity was especially on display in his mixed-media figurines depicting astronauts, including the American Neil Armstrong, who, in 1969, became the first human to walk on the Earth’s moon. To make the helmets for these statuettes, Galerie Polysémie director François Vertadier explained, Robillard made a point of purchasing some ice-cream treats that came packaged in containers with spherical, clear-plastic lids. He saved, washed and reused them, since they perfectly suited his artistic purpose.

Elsewhere, in several jigsaw-cut-out, freestanding wooden sculptures embellished with marker-ink details, Robillard gave form to an owl, a giraffe, and an underwater group of fish. As always, in all of the clever creations on view, the artist expressed the mix of playful invention and sheer joy in crafting his art that have become hallmarks of his distinctive œuvre.

Edward M. Gómez
EOA CONFERENCE
Stockholm and Sala, Sweden
May 24–26, 2019

Over 100 people – artists, representatives from studios, museums and galleries, and a host of other experts – from the USA and more than 14 European countries, attended the European Outsider Art (EOA) annual conference in May. Titled “E-QUALITY”, the three-day event was hosted by the Inuti Foundation to discuss “Quality and Equality in Outsider Art.”

The programme took place in venues in both Sala and Stockholm, including all three Inuti studios, and was packed with performances, environmental art, panel talks and lectures. Thomas Röske from the Prinzhorn Collection spoke on “Considerations on Quality and Equality in Outsider Art” and Rebecca Hoffman discussed “Art Fairs: What Goes into Creating Cultural Events with a Global Reach?” Meanwhile, British artist Tanya Raabe-Webber’s offering, Portraits Untold, involved live portrait sittings during which she captured many attending delegates on her tablet computer. At Inuti Lilla Essingen, the musical and visual experience Weesst! was presented by Kristoffer Ekelund and Jan-Albert Carlsson, and a visit to Jan-Erik Svendenberg’s Little Istanbul revealed a garden abundant in colourful, wooden, miniature mosques. In Sala’s Aguelimuseum, “Nordic Outsider Craft” – an exhibition of present-day art created with traditional craft techniques – was on display, organised by Finnish art researcher Minna Haveri and curator Elina Vuorimies.

Then, to celebrate the tenth anniversary of EOA, the conference day in Sala closed with a birthday party, offering food and drinks, live music, and an Argentinian DJ-duo who really got the dance floor moving!

The next EOA meeting will take place in Paris, during the Outsider Art Fair, on October 17, 2019. All members are welcome. The EOA conference in 2020 will be held in St Gallen, Switzerland, and will focus on “Outsider Art and Tradition.”

Lotte Nilsson-Välimaa
RAW REVIEWS

SLOTIN FOLK ART AUCTION
112 E Shadbourn Avenue, Buford, GA 30518
April 27–28, 2019

This year’s Slotin Folk Art Auction took place over two days, listed 1,119 lots, and opened with 150 lots of pottery, canes and miscellany. Amy Slotin, who runs the auction with her husband Steve, commented that there were “lots of international buyers this time, primarily via LiveAuctioneers,” and went on to say, “It always amazes me when people in Hungary, Russia, Israel and Dubai are buying Jimmy Sudduth and Mose Tolliver, while folks in France and Switzerland seem to be attached to art brut.”

The sale grossed US$1.15 million, with only a dozen lots selling for over $10,000. The top lot, which sold at US$34,800, was an oil painting entitled _Home Dear Home_ by Anna Mary Robertson “Grandma” Moses, an artist whose work is seldom seen at Slotin. More typical Slotin offerings included Sam Doyle’s Larie Rivers; seen in Raw Vision in 1998, it brought $24,000. One of two Edgar Tolson Adam and Eve tableaus reached $22,000, and the lone Ellis Ruley work, Autumn Leaves, with minor restoration, sold at $20,400. Other top performers included an intricate work in coloured pencil on paper by Frank Jones which went for $14,400, an unstretched canvas by John Bellany entitled Vesperland which reached $13,200, and Coat by James Castle which sold for $12,000. Purvis Young, Clementine Hunter and Mattie Lou O’Kelley rounded out the top lots.

The Autumn Slotin Folk Art Auction is scheduled for November 9–10, 2019. For more information and catalogue requests, go to: www.slotinfolkart.com.

Marty Steiner

JABER AL MAHJOUB

preface by Cérès Franco, with essays by Bertrand Bellon, Jacques-Yves Gucia, Francoise Monnin, Emmanuel Daydé, Laurent Lefebvre and Barbara Tissier
lelivredart, Paris, France, and Montreux, Switzerland, 2018

ANDRÉ ROBILLARD

La fleur au fusil: Entretiens avec Françoise Monnin
La Bibliothèque des Arts, Lausanne, Switzerland, 2016

Françoise Monnin, the editor-in-chief of Artension, a well-known art magazine based in France, has for many years written about _art brut_. She has also curated exhibitions in the field.

In these books, which have been published in French, Monnin examines two of her longtime interests – the life and work of André Robillard (b. 1931), and the colourful, expressive oeuvre of Jaber al-Mahjoub, who was born in Tunisia in 1938, is based in Paris, and is commonly known simply as ‘Jaber’.

Since he began making mixed-media assemblages in the 1960s, Robillard has become known for his rifle, rocket-ship and airplane sculptures made with found materials – broomsticks, food tins, jar lids, plastic tubing – and for his drawings celebrating astronauts and outer-space themes. In _André Robillard: La fleur au fusil_ (the book’s title refers to “the flower in the shotgun”), Monnin gathers together several interviews which she conducted with the artist between 2011 and 2016.

The making of art, observes Robillard – who routinely refers to his creations as “machins” (“thingamajigs”) instead of as “works of art” – is “a magical thing”. He recalls that, as a little boy, he viewed a comet and fell in love with stars, planets and the vastness of outer space. He also describes his working methods, in which spontaneity plays a role, along with that of the subjects that inspire him.

In their book about Jaber, Monnin and her collaborators examine the fecund imagination of an artist whose vibrant paintings, with their brushy, boldly outlined motifs, and small sculptures made of papier-mâché and other materials, refer to his village origins in North Africa, as well as to nature, social relations and their creator’s encounter with European culture. Their book accentuates the deep sense of humanity that flows from the work of an artist who for many years has been itinerant – a familiar, vivacious and enigmatic figure on the streets of Paris. Both of these books offer insightful appreciations of their subjects’ personalities and creative impulses.

Edward M. Gómez
FOUNTAIN HOUSE GALLERY AND STUDIO PROVIDES AN ENVIRONMENT WHERE ARTISTS LIVING WITH MENTAL ILLNESS CAN EXPRESS THEIR CREATIVE VISIONS AND EXHIBIT THEIR WORK.

BRYAN MICHAEL GREENE
DIVINA PARTICULA AURAE: THE DIVINE SPIRIT IN THE HUMAN PERSON (DETAIL) 2019 DIGITAL PAINTING ON ALUMINUM 36 X 24 IN.

June 20 - August 7, 2019
Curated by Adam Yokell

This program is funded, in part, by generous support from the Hearst Foundation, Inc., the Renate, Hans and Marie Helmann Trust, the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation, the David Rockefeller Fund, and the Laurie M. Tisch Illumination Fund.
LEARNING FROM MADNESS
Brazilian Modernism and Contemporary Art
Kaira M. Cabanas, Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2018
ISBN 13: 978-0-22655628-4

This is a short, academic work with black-and-white illustrations, rather than a “showcase” book, but it raises some important issues. Not only does it fill a gap in our knowledge of Brazilian psychiatry between the two World Wars; but, with its unusually open-minded treatment of patient art, it also raises crucial questions about the ways in which such art has been appropriated, first of all by art brut and surrealism, and, more recently, by the curatorial strategies of what the author calls “the global circuit of contemporary art.”

Cabanas looks at a wide range of literature about “psychotic art,” in Europe and also in South America where it is relatively unknown. That overview alone makes this a valuable book. A number of key theoretical issues—about the relationship between madness and authorial responsibility, or the ways in which the assertion of a universally accessible creativity effectively decontextualizes patient art, for example—are also dealt with succinctly and clearly.

The case of Bispo do Rosário (1909–1989), to whom a whole chapter is devoted, is exemplary. On the one hand, his work can be viewed purely within the context of psychiatric diagnosis; on the other hand, it can be—and has been—assimilated into the ecumenical world of contemporary art (The Encyclopaedic Palace of 2013’s Venice Biennale is one such instance) and effectively kidnapped from its original context.

This dilemma is somewhat over-simplified. Traditional art history implies that the historical and biographical data surrounding a work are indispensable to understanding and appreciating it. This would also apply, she maintains, to psychiatric art. Yet, she invokes the example of the art historian Aby Warburg’s Mnemosyne Atlas (1927–29), in which images of movement and prototypical emotional gestures are assembled regardless of their original context, and says, “Such anachronistic time works against an art history that locks the meaning of works of art in the past or mythically revives their meaning in the present.” (p. 157). She does finally provide some examples of works that “displaced divisions between caretaker and cared for; the healthy (sane) and others who are sick (mad)” (p. 163), though these are films not exhibitions. A thought-provoking contribution to the field.

David Maclagan

THE DISORDERED MIND
What Unusual Brains Tell Us About Ourselves

The winner of the 2000 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine for his work in the fields of learning and memory, Eric R Kandel is a professor of neuroscience at Columbia University in New York and a senior investigator at the Howard Hughes Medical Institute in Maryland. In this new book, he lucidly summarises for both the layman and the more specialised reader alike the latest research concerning the nature of mental illness, particularly schizophrenia, and explains the biochemical and neurological nature of illnesses affecting the brain.

Kandel notes that, thanks to today’s advanced imaging technology, scientists have a better understanding of the different regions of the brain in which aberrant activity related to such illnesses as depression, bipolar disorder and autism occur. The Disordered Mind is full of insights, such as, for example, the fact that talk psychotherapy has been shown to have actual physical effects on the brain, or that genetic studies of schizophrenia and bipolar disorder have demonstrated that there may be some overlap between these ailments.

Of special interest to aficionados of art brut and outsider art who are aware that some notable artists in these related fields were affected by schizophrenia is Kandel’s chapter on brain disorders and art. Here, he writes, “Today, we know that creativity originates in the brain. It has a biological basis. We also know that, while certain forms of creativity arise in association with mental disorders, our creative capability is not dependent upon mental disorder.”

Kandel notes that the nineteenth-century Romantic movement regarded psychoses “as exalted states that free a person from conventional reason and social mores,” but that “[t]he idea that creativity is correlated with mental illness is a Romantic fallacy.” That important observation needs to be emphasised in discussions of art brut and outsider art, for even today, unfortunately, some viewers still assume that being affected by mental illness is a necessary condition of the creators of such art forms. It is not, and Kandel’s book does a great service by blasting away that misguided notion of cause and effect.

Edward M. Gómez
Le musée est fermé pour travaux du 29 avril au 1er septembre.

Réouverture le 1er septembre pour le vernissage de l’exposition Carlo Zinelli.

The Collection de l’Art Brut is closed until September 17th for construction work. The Art Brut XXL show is taking place in the gardens of the Château de Beaulieu in Lausanne and featuring large-scale photographs of Outsider Art “environments”.

MARY FRANCES WHITFIELD

WHY?

MAY 31 - NOVEMBER 23, 2019

Abroms//Engel Institute for the Visual Arts and the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute

The Collection de l’Art Brut is closed until September 17th for construction work. The Art Brut XXL show is taking place in the gardens of the Château de Beaulieu in Lausanne and featuring large-scale photographs of Outsider Art “environments”.

ART BRUT XXL

28.06.19 - 22.09.19

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**SWITZERLAND**
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outsiderartfair.com
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Black Bear, Bill Traylor, Poster paint and graphite on cardboard, c.1939-42. 23 x 19 framed

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