

WIDEWALLS

Get Acquainted with Art Dealers Collecting Outsider Art Today

By Balasz Takac
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For a long time, the art historical canon has been entirely focused on art that is institutionally recognized, admitted by distinguished scholars, and showcased in renowned galleries and museums. However, in the past two decades, the trends started shifting as the art market expanded and the interest moved to art produced by self-taught individuals on the margins.

The Surrealists and postwar proponents of the CoBrA art group and Art brut valued such an approach, however, it wasn't until the 1970s when the umbrella term "Outsider art" was coined by the art critic Roger Cardinal to describe an array of alternative approaches to art-making that feature berserk states and ideas, extreme mental states or ludicrous fantasy worlds.

To follow up on the renewed interest in this subject matter, New York-based Andrew Edlin Gallery is hosting an exhibition titled *An Alternative Canon: Art Dealers Collecting Outsider Art*, showing the broad tendencies found in practices of outsider artists.

The Resurgence of Outsider Art

Building on the legacies of pioneering art dealers such as Sidney Janis (1896-1989) and Phyllis Kind (1933-2018), numerous contemporary galleries are now exhibiting Outsider Artists.

While Janis featured twentieth-century giants like Pollock, De Kooning, and Rothko, and wrote about Morris Hirshfield and John Kane, American primitive painters in his seminal 1942 book *They Taught Themselves*, Kind used to exhibit the works of both contemporary art and self-taught artists at her galleries in New York and Chicago. Today more dealers and gallery owners show increasing interest in the works by amateur artists by adding them to their collections.



Henry Darger - Untitled (She Got to Sit on Ringo's Lap), c. 1966-67. Mixed media on paper 18 x 24 inches.

The Artists

This exhibition will show almost seventy-five artworks loaned from more than thirty dealers. The visitors will have a unique chance to experience the paintings by Folk Art legends such as John Kane and Grandma Moses, a Bill Traylor drawing, works by artists associated with the Creative Growth Art Center, sculptures by legendary New York street artist Curtis Cuffie, the works of Japanese Outsider artists Misaki Ohya and Yuichi Saito, vernacular art relics from Frank Maresca; and many more fascinating artifacts.

In the past three years a couple of significant solo exhibitions of Outsider artists took place elsewhere throughout the country; for instance the Bill Taylor's retrospective at the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington D.C. in 2018 or the current exhibiting the drawings of the late Chinese outsider Guo Fengyi at Barbara Gladstone Gallery.

The curatorial concept for the upcoming exhibition by Paul Laster is an extension of the survey titled *Relishing the Raw: Contemporary Artists Collecting Outsider Art* that was displayed at the New York Outsider Art Fair in January this year.

An Alternative Canon: Art Dealers Collecting Outsider Art will be on display at Andrew Edlin Gallery in New York from until 28 August 2020.