

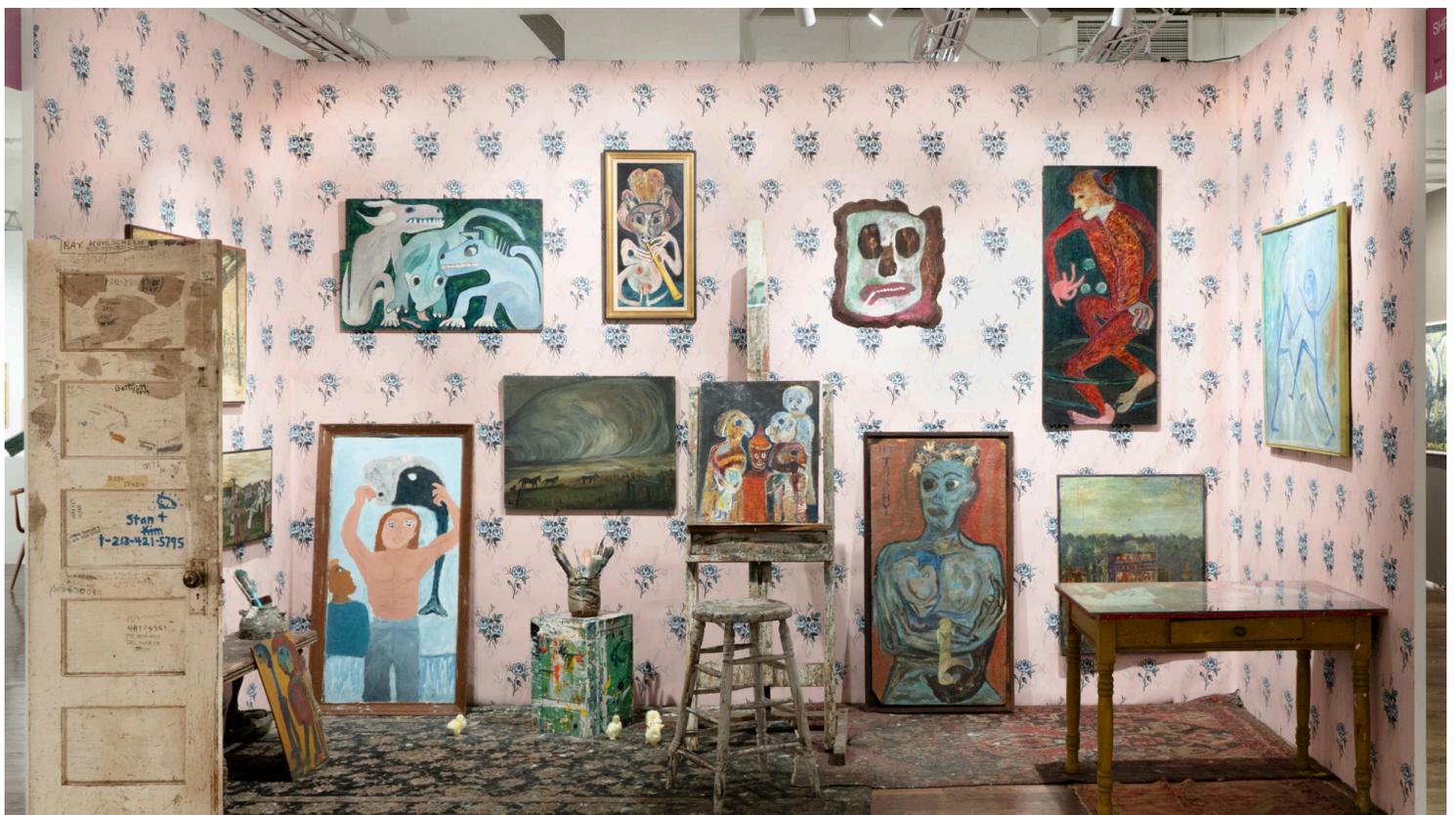
ART & CULTURE

What to See at the Outsider Art Fair 2026 in New York

This year's edition returns to the Metropolitan Pavilion with 68 exhibitors, smuggled Iranian pastels, a fashion shop, and a 40 percent surge in demand

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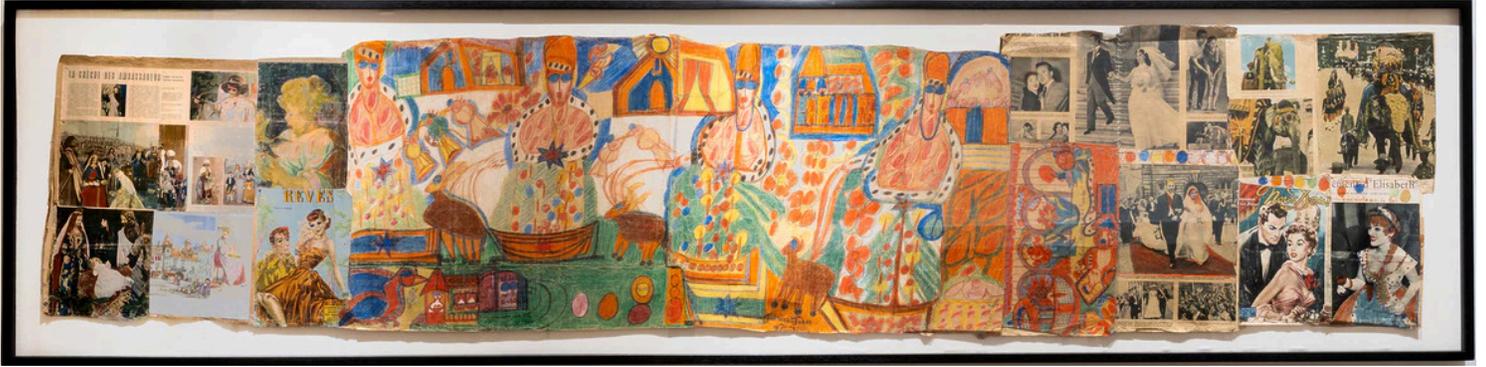


Installation image of SHINE's Jon Serl-dedicated booth.
PHOTO: TRISTAN MARTINEZ, COURTESY OF SHRINE

Outsider art has always had its devotees, but the 34th edition of the [Outsider Art Fair](#), returning to the Metropolitan Pavilion March 19 through March 22, works at a different scale. Attendance surged by 40 percent last year. The vast majority of those visitors were first-timers. This year brings 68 exhibitors, a new fair director, Elizabeth Denny, 13 debuting galleries, and two programming firsts: live performances and an outsider fashion shop. Self-taught art, long sidelined by the mainstream, is pulling a crowd.

[OAF](#) owner [Andrew Edlin](#) shares a theory on outsider art's allure. "The artists who are being shown were not making the work for the most part for an audience," he says. "It's more personal, it's more autobiographical. And

you know, I always thought that the more personal something is, the more universal. We can just relate to it.”



Feerie de Fete (1952) by Aloïse Corbaz.
PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND ANDREW EDLIN GALLERY

This year’s fair leans into that relatability with expanded programming. Friday brings two performances and three “OAF talks” to the fair, including a political satire from the Norwegian puppet theater group Wakka Wakka. One of the fair’s two curated spaces, “From The North,” spotlights Inuit prints and drawings from Canada. The space’s curator—a leading expert on Inuit art—will lead a panel discussion with the chief curator of the **Musée des Beaux-Arts de Montréal**. “RUN STORE,” another curated space making its fair debut, is an outsider fashion shop led by **Susan Cianciolo**, an artist and educator who revives her cult 1990s New York label “Run” for the occasion.



Bruno Pig (2025) by Robert Griggs.
PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND PASC



Untitled (1989) by Abraham Lincoln Walker.
PHOTO: COURTESY OF ANDREW EDLIN GALLERY

At **Edlin's own booth**, neurodiverse artist Nicole Appel shows portraits that are less faces than full consortiums of a person and what they love. Nearby are several works by visionary artist Abraham Lincoln Walker (1921-1993), an evangelical speaker and house painter by trade who created over 800 paintings in near total solitude. At the heart of the installation, an "art-brut masterpiece" by Aloïse Corbaz (1886-1964) commands most of the back wall.

Like Edlin himself, veteran outsider art dealers anchor the fair with heavy-hitting names. One of just three galleries to have exhibited at the fair since its 1993 inception, Philadelphia's **Fleisher-Ollman** features a drawing by Martín Ramírez (1895-1963), widely considered a self-taught master. During the last 15 years of his life, Ramírez created nearly 300 drawings of astonishing expression and clarity within the confines of DeWitt State Hospital, where he underwent treatment for schizophrenia. New York's **Ricco/Maresca**, another of the original trio, presents works by several Outsider Art icons, such as **Henry Darger**, Achilles Rizzoli, Grant Wallace, **Bill Traylor**, and Gus Wilson—each recognized only after death. The booth also displays five new works from London-based painter and psychiatric nurse Sarah Theresa Lee, whose domestic interiors tip into **Hitchcock**-grade horror.



Artemis (1919-1925) by Grant Wallace.
PHOTO: COURTESY OF RICCO/MARESCA

Then there is work that cuts closer to the present. At **PULP**, a newer gallery out of Holyoke, Massachusetts, multiple works from the Iranian artist known by the alias Affsoongar were smuggled out of Tehran in recent weeks, during wartime. While she cannot travel to her own exhibition spaces, the art quite literally takes on a life of its own. Working in oil pastel on paper, Affsoongar—the name derives from the Farsi word for enchanter—constructs an alter ego: an empowered Persian woman living freely in a vibrant parallel world, exempt from religious and patriarchal restriction.

To Edlin, the individualistic range is the point. “It’s not a movement,” he claims, “It’s a genre. Each person is like their own movement. There’s no compulsion to evolve, or to say, ‘What am I going to do for my next show?’ There’s just the compulsion to create.”

The Outsider Art Fair runs from March 19 through 22 at the Metropolitan Pavilion, 125 West 18th Street, New York, NY.