

JOHN BYAM

Born 1929, Oneonta, New York; died 2013.

Using combinations of wood, sawdust, glue, paint and ink, Byam has produced three-dimensional objects that while recognizable, remain equivocal. Byam's sculptural work follows in a long tradition of woodcarving in rural America, however, his use of sawdust mixed with a glue binder lends many of the objects a soft focus, giving them the appearance of emerging or slipping from view. This is also reflected in the artist's choice of imagery that at times indicates a personal longing for travel and exploration beyond his daily life. Conversely, Byam's works on paper, utilizing a variety of materials including pencil, crayon, and marker, often include portraits and written commentary, and speak clearly and directly about contemporary culture and its fascination with media and celebrity.

In 1929, John Byam was born in the "city of the hills," Oneonta, NY. He lived and worked at the local trailer park owned by his parents until the 1940s when he subsequently worked for the D&H Railway. During the Korean War, he was stationed in Japan for two years, and then returned to Oneonta in 1952 continuing his duties as a trailer park attendant and taking a job as part-time gravedigger. In 2013, he died in a nearby assisted living facility. His first New York exhibition had opened only weeks before. The Daily Star wrote for his obituary, "He was an interesting and most unusual man. There are no immediate survivors."

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2020

Drawn by I John Byam, online, Andrew Edlin Gallery, New York, NY

2017

John Byam: Unearthed, Andrew Edlin Gallery, New York, NY

2015

John Byam: Sculptures and Drawings, The Good Luck Gallery, Los Angeles, CA

2013

John Byam, Andrew Edlin Gallery, New York, NY

2012

The Artwork of John Byam: As Near As Can Be, Project Space Gallery, SUNY Oneonta, New York, NY

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2024

Unaccompanied Conversations, Andrew Edlin Gallery, New York
Something Familiar, Shelter Gallery, New York

2021

Super-Rough, guest curated by Takashi Murakami, Outsider Art Fair special exhibition, New York, NY

2016

this one is smaller than this one, curated by Paulina Bębecka, Postmasters, New York, NY
World Made By Hand, Andrew Edlin Gallery, New York, NY

2015

I Taught Myself, Greg Kucera Gallery, Seattle, WA

2014

Collection Bruno Decharme, la maison rouge, Paris, France

2014

The Armory Show, Andrew Edlin Gallery, New York, NY

2013

Véhicules, Collection de l'Art Brut, Lausanne, Switzerland

2012

John Byam & Matt Blackwell, Parker's Box Gallery, Brooklyn, NY

ARTICLES

2018

Meier, Allison. "The Unearthed Wood Carvings of a Part-Time Gravedigger." *Hyperallergic*, January 26.

2015

"John Byam," *Outsider Art Now*, February 21.

2013

Molarsky, Mona, "Review: John Byam," *ARTnews*, April "Critic's Pick: John Byam," *New York Magazine*, February 25.

Cohen, David, "In From the Cold: The Outsider Art Fair," *ArtCritical*, February 2.

Corbett, Rachel, "One of My Artists Is a Witch: New Outsider Art Fair Offers an Enchanting

Mix," ArtInfo, February 1.

Smith, Roberta, "Feeling Right at Home on the Fringe," New York Times, January 31.

PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Collection ABCD, Paris, France

Collection de l'Art Brut, Lausanne, Switzerland

Museum of Everything, London,