

Willem Van Genk

Dutch, 20th century.

Born 1927, Voorberg; died 2005, the Hague.

Willem Van Genk, (1927 - 2005), was born in Voorburg in the Netherlands, the youngest child and only son in a family of ten. His mother died when he was five. He suffered from severe health and behavioral problems. Van Genk started drawing at home and at school, as a substitute for his dreams of travels to distant countries. He was eventually placed in an orphanage, and then a Christian school specializing in arts and crafts. Here, he studied advertising and graphics for two years but proved incapable of adapting to demands made on him. He was transferred to a home for the mentally handicapped in the The Hague, where he received a small salary for his activities in the workshop. With this money, Van Genk bought himself painting materials. His principal sources of inspiration were tourist guides, collected photographs, and, in particular, his voyages to the Soviet Union, Rome Paris, Madrid, Copenhagen, Cologne, and Prague. Van Genk often portrayed the conflict between good and evil, with God, Lenin, and Mao Zedong facing up the Devil, Hitler, and Stalin. His work appeared in exhibitions but he refused to sell to private collectors. Van Genk gave up painting in 1988.

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

2019

Memory Palaces: Inside the Collection of Audrey B. Heckler, American Folk Art Museum, New York, NY

2014

Willem Van Genk, American Folk Art Museum, New York

2010

The Museum of Everything, Pinacoteca Giovanni e Marella Agnelli, Turin

2008

Heterotopia: Works by Willem van Genk and Others, Deutsches Architektur Museum, Frankfurt

2006

Inner Worlds Outside, traveling exhibition, Sala de Exposiciones de la Fundación "La Caixa," Madrid; WhiteChapel Gallery, London; Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin

2005

Dubuffet & Art Brut, traveling exhibition, Museum Kunst Palast, Dusseldorf, Germany; Collection de l'Art Brut, Lausanne; Museum of Modern Art Lille Metropole, Villeneuve D'Ascq

2000

The Outlanders, Collection de l'Art Brut, Lausanne.

1998

Museum De Stadshof Zwolle, Museum Charlotte Zander Bonningheim, Collection de l'Art Brut, Lausanne.

SELECTED COLLECTIONS

Collection de l'Art Brut, Lausanne

Halle Saint Pierre, Paris

Museum Dr. Guislane, Ghent

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

The Museum of Everything, exhibition catalogue, Pinacoteca Giovanni e Marella Agnelli & Electa, Turin/Milan, 2010.

Förster, York & Peter Cachola Schmal, *Heterotopia: Works by Willem van Genk and Others*, exhibition catalogue, Deutsches Architektur Museum, Frankfurt, 2008.

Inner Worlds Outside, exhibition catalogue, Fundación "La Caixa," WhiteChapel Gallery, Irish Museum of Modern Art & Ediciones El Viso, Madrid, 2006.

Dubuffet & Art Brut, exhibition catalogue, 5 Continents Editions & Museum Kunst Palast, Düsseldorf, 2005.

Van Berkum, Ans, "Willem Van Genk," *Raw Vision*, No. 36, 1998.

Van der Endt, Nico, *Lexicon of Twentieth Century Dutch Naïve Art*, Venlo/Antwerpen, 1995.