

Henry Darger

September 11 - October 23, 2010

Curated by Valérie Rousseau

Andrew Edlin Gallery is pleased to present *Henry Darger*, its third solo exhibition of the renowned self-taught artist's work. The show, comprised of approximately two dozen works taken from the gallery's inventory and borrowed from private collections, encompasses some of Darger's very earliest experiments in collage, as well as an ample selection of his large-scale, late-career masterpieces. Among them, are several works that are being exhibited for the first time, including a panoramic composition that showcases creatures never before encountered in Darger's *Realms of the Unreal*: green-skinned plant/human hybrids with vines and blossoming flowers growing from their girlish bodies.

Darger created an epic fantasy world in art and literature called *The Realms of the Unreal*, an extraterrestrial planet populated by sweet, courageous young girls, warmongering adults and a species of supernatural, fairy-like beings called "Blengins." It first began as a novel that eventually reached more than 15,000 pages in length (microfilm files will be on view), but was soon accompanied by watercolor and pencil works of visual art that illustrated the novel. During Darger's lifetime, these artworks were never exhibited and it was only just before he died that his astounding, life-long body of work was discovered and eventually revealed to an ever-increasing and admiring public.

This exhibition provides an exceptional opportunity to observe the astonishing tension in Darger's compositions. In part, this is the result of the artist's dynamic use of hybrid forms and contrasting elements: children half-girl half-boy, adults as sadists and saviors, idyllic peaceful scenes and episodes of horrific violence, anthropomorphic clouds, vivid imagery and segments devoid of color, creatures half-human and half-animal.

Henry Darger's reputation as one of the most compelling, imaginative and challenging artists of the 20th century is only becoming more widespread as the new millennium unfolds. Because he worked outside of the mainstream art establishment, his vision and invention drew upon his own private passions and tragic childhood history, and thus both his small and monumental works of art are charged with a powerful personality. Darger's influence upon today's young artists has been thoroughly documented in Klaus Biesenbach's recent book, *Henry Darger* (Prestel, 2009).

The opening reception on **Saturday, September 11th, from 4 to 7 pm**, features two special events: At 5 pm, the acclaimed author **Rivka Galchen** (*Atmospheric Disturbances*, 2009) and special guests will lead a discussion on Darger centered around John Ashbery's poem *Girls on the Run*. At 6 pm, the indie rock band **The Vivian Girls** will give a musical performance.