James Edward Deeds
Born 1908, Panama; died 1987, Christian County, Missouri.

Raised on a farm in Springfield, Missouri, James Edward Deeds was institutionalized at age 17 following an attempted suicide. He would spend most of his life in Nevada's State Hospital No. 3, where he took solace making crayon-and-pencil drawings.

Deeds' work presents an idyllic survey of 19th-century American life — Civil War soldiers, steamboats, ladies in feathered hats, factories, and horses. His characters, often donning carefully rendered period costume, stare straight ahead with wide, unblinking pupils. The initials "ECT" reoccur, likely in reference to the electro-shock treatment he received twice weekly. His subject matter may have been inspired by the *National Geographic*s he received from his family in the mail.

Deeds was considered "boisterous" and "hilarious" by the hospital's staff. He remained at the institution until 1973 when, at the age of sixty-five, he was released into the care of a Missouri nursing facility. He died there fourteen years later. His complete works, bound into a single album, were accidentally discarded by his brother during a move, but were discovered by fortuitous chance and rescued from oblivion, then formally introduced to the art world by dealer Harris Diamant.

Now hailed as a quintessential American outsider artist, Deeds' work can be found in the Collections abcd, Montreuil; Dammann, Basel; Treger Saint Silvestre, Porto; de l'art brut, Lausanne, Switzerland; as well as the Museum of American Folk Art, New York and the Centre Pompidou, Paris. A catalogue raisonné, *The Drawings of the Electric Pencil*, was published in 2010.

Selected Exhibitions
2026
Afterlife, curated by Paul Laster, Andrew Edlin Gallery, New York, NY

2018
Vestiges & Verse: Notes from the Newfangled Epic, American Folk Art Museum, New York, NY

2013
James Edward Deeds, The Electric Pencil, Galerie Christian Berst, Paris
Talisman of the Ward: The Album of Drawings by Edward Deeds, Hirschl & Adler Modern, New York

Selected Collections
Collection abcd, Montreuil
Collection Dammann, Basel
Collection de l'art brut, Lausanne, Switzerland
Collection Treger Saint Silvestre, Porto
Museum of American Folk Art, New York
Centre Pompidou, Paris

Selected Bibliography

Goodman, Richard, and Harris Diamant. The Electric Pencil, Drawings from Inside State Hospital No. 3, Princeton Architectural Press, 2016.
Dagen, Philippe, "James Edward Deeds," *Le Monde*, December 8, 2013.
James Edward Deeds, The Electric Pencil, exhibition catalogue with a preface by Philippe Piguet, Galerie Christian Berst, Paris, 2013.
Parker, Thomas B., *Talisman of the Ward: The Album of Drawings by Edward Deeds*, catalogue essay, Hirschl & Adler Modern, New York, 2013.
The Drawings of the Electric Pencil, Electric Pencil Press, 2010.