

Outsider Art Fair, New York City

The Word is Out on Outsider Art

by Julie Schlenger Adell

The word is out. The seventh edition of the Outsider Art Fair (OAF) under the helm of gallerist Andrew Edlin's Wide Open Arts, held January 17-20, during Americana Week, was a big hit with collectors, dealers, and curators who made the trip downtown to the Metropolitan Pavilion for the four-day event. Replete with events at the nearby Ace Hotel, as well as a curated space dedicated to the late Chicago and New York City dealer Phyllis Kind, the show had 63 exhibitors with works by the "old masters" of the genre and discoveries by unknown artists.

Interest in the field has grown, evidenced by the \$4.26 million Outsider and vernacular art auction at Christie's on Friday, January 18. Furthermore, the OAF, which was founded in 1993, has run a Paris edition each October for the past six years under the auspices of Wide Open Arts.

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"We've worked hard to expand the audience," said Andrew Edlin during the fair's preview. "We have curators and board members from major museums. The eyes of the art world are here," he noted.

Dealers seem pleased. "It's better curated, and there are discoveries to be made," one dealer commented. Red dots kept appearing during the run of the show. Sales included a William Edmondson carving of three doves and many other works from Fleisher/Ollman, Philadelphia. Just Folk, California, had a dedicated booth of works by Bill Traylor and sold three works on opening day. Creativity Explored, San Francisco, whose booth filled with art by "Five Women," sold 17 works by Selene Perez. Works by Valentino Dixon were sold by Andrew Edlin Gallery, as were two acrylics on panel by Joe Coleman, among other sales. And several face jugs and an African American bedcovering sold from Hill Gallery, Birmingham, Michigan. Creative Growth Art Center, Oakland, California, had a popular booth and sold a large painting by Dan Miller to collectors Jill Fleisher and Sheldon Bonovitz. Works by Latefa Noorzai were also the focus of attention and sold.

Karley Klopfenstein, deputy director for development at the American Folk Art Museum, which is one of the sponsors of the fair, was seen strolling the booths during early access. Asked what she thought of this year's show, she replied, "I studied art and have looked at art my entire life. I'm rarely surprised. I've seen enough Warhols to last a lifetime. This is fresh. It's new."

Contemporary galleries such as Julie Saul, New York City, and Maccarone, Los Angeles, were new to the show. Saul brought vernacular photography, and Maccarone had a booth dedicated to political drawings by actor Jim Carrey.

Ceramics and sculptures, fiber art and textiles, and paintings and photography are mediums that Outsider artists employ to make their art. Whether it comes from a spiritual vision, a compulsion, or obsession or is a way to answer the voices in their heads, to share their pain, or to make life bearable or better, one thing is evident: it must be made. Although the artists' stories are compelling, it is their art that comes first. As dealer Shari Cavin of Cavin-Morris Gallery noted, "Art comes first. It speaks."

The Paris edition of the Outsider Art Fair will be held October 17-20 at Atelier Richelieu. Further information is available at (www.outsiderartfair.com).



The Outsider Art Fair got the word out by selling tote bags and hats at the entrance to the event. The image used is by Minnie Evans (1892-1987), a North Carolina domestic who began drawing in 1935 after having a vision from God. The artwork used, untitled (*Three Faces in Floral Design*), 1967, in crayon, graphite, and oil on canvasboard, is from the estate of Minnie Evans, courtesy of the Cameron Art Museum, Wilmington, North Carolina. The image was used on the front cover of the fair's catalog as well.



Big Town Gallery, Rochester, Vermont, a newcomer to the show, filled its booth with hand-painted shoes, boots, trays, platters, and plates by Rick Skogsberg (b. 1948). Skogsberg, a.k.a. RICKSKO, lived in a commune for 30 years in Vermont, worked as a computer programmer and a logger, received an advanced degree in poetry, and after ordering several pairs of men's shoes online drawing on them. One hundred and twenty pairs later, his "Can't Lose Shoe Collection" was conceived, followed by the "Stalking Stealth Collection" and the "Here Today Collection." Each shoe was signed indelibly, and each pair was given a number. Prices ranged from \$1200 to \$4400 for shoes; \$2400 to \$3200 for the double-sided plates; and \$3200 to \$3800 for the trays.



Fiber artist Alyson Vega, who shows her work through Fountain House Gallery, made *Global Warming* in 2018. Made of wool roving and wet felt sewn on fabric, this 19" x 20" work was priced at \$900. Vega's *Grid* (not shown), 2018, fabric collage, 17" x 13", had an asking price of \$800, and it sold.



These women were at the fair during the early access hours and left with smiling faces and a piece of art.



Ricco/Maresca Gallery, New York City, asked \$50,000 for *Cathedral*, 1988, by William Hawkins. The enamel paint on masonite work measures 39½" x 48".



Fred Giampietro Gallery, New Haven, Connecticut, displayed 19th-century American cast-iron works, all by anonymous artists, on the outside wall of its booth. The angel blowing a horn, in original paint, was \$7500. The ventriloquist dummy, on the far right, 23 $\frac{3}{8}$ " high, was tagged \$7500. The crow on a signpost, 20 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 47", was priced at \$8500.



A space dedicated to the late dealer Phyllis Kind, curated by *Raw Vision* magazine senior editor and art critic Edward M. Gomez, featured works by various artists with whom the dealer had associations. Seen here is an untitled work by Nek Chand (1924-2015), a road inspector from Chandigarh, India, who in 1965 began building a garden filled with sculptures from found materials, such as broken glass, tile, stone, and bottle caps. Chand's garden covers 40 acres and is filled with thousands of sculptures. It is one of India's most visited sites, wrote Gomez. This sculpture was on display courtesy of Cavin-Morris Gallery, New York City, and the Phyllis Kind Collection. It was not for sale. A Chand sculpture, *Lady Fetching Water*, concrete over metal armature, from the collection of Eugenie and Lael Johnson, with provenance of the Phyllis Kind Gallery, Chicago and New York City, sold at Christie's Outsider and vernacular art auction on January 18 for \$17,500 (est. \$6000/8000).



Two carved limestone sculptures by William Edmondson (c. 1874-1951) were shown by Fleisher/Ollman Gallery, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The single dove, 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 11 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ ", was priced at \$175,000. The triple dove sculpture sold. They originally sat on top of headstones, said John Ollman.



Fountain House Gallery, New York City, provides a space for artists living and working with mental illness. The nonprofit organization cultivates artistic growth and collaborates with a network of artists, curators, and cultural institutions. Seen here are two works by Jorge Pablo Hernandez, who incorporates elements of architecture, engineering, and chemistry in his artworks. *New York City—Sept 24th of 2018* and *New York City—Sept 4th of 2018*, ink on paper, each 14" x 11", were priced at \$600 each. "Much of his linear/geometric work expresses his vision of New York City," a wall tag noted.

Hearts, 2015, by Heinrich Reisenbauer (b. 1938), Edding marker and acrylic on canvas, 63" x 19 $\frac{3}{4}$ ", was priced at \$9500 by Nina Katschnig of galerie gugging, Klosterneuburg, Austria.



Hill Gallery, Birmingham, Michigan, offered several vintage American face vessels made of stoneware with glaze and paint, most from the Midwest and the South. They ranged in price from \$3800 to \$18,000. The early Georgia harvest face jug above, clay with black glaze and paint, on a pedestal base, sold.



Models of Philadelphia landmarks by Kambel Smith (b. 1986) were on display in the booth of Chris Byrne of Dallas, Texas. Smith was diagnosed with autism at age six. He uses cardboard and other discarded materials to create his sculptures. Seen here are models of the Ben Franklin Bridge, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the PSFS Building, the Merchants' Exchange Building, and the Divine Lorraine Hotel.





By William A. Hall, *Seek and Sleek at the Arch of Setting* (above), 2018, pencil and crayon on card, was available from Henry Boxer Gallery, Surrey, United Kingdom, for \$6500. The gallery also showed drawings by Angelika, who spent most of World War II in a German psychiatric hospital in Potsdam. The “mediumistic” drawings, produced on found paper using pencil and crayon, were uncovered in the 1980s when they were included in a gallery show in Berlin. The gallery showed them for the first time in the U.S. Seen below is *Pavillion (House Design)*, 1948, ink and watercolor on card, double-sided, with a price of \$3400. It sold.



Gallerist Carl Hammer of Chicago, Illinois, in his booth in front of works by Joseph Yoakum. Hammer also exhibited works by Henry Darger, Howard Finster, Lee Godie, Frank Jones, Bill Traylor, and others.



Lindsay Gallery, Columbus, Ohio, showed works by Stephen Warde Anderson (b. 1953), a self-taught artist who focuses heavily on portraits of film stars, famous women, and historical subjects. Anderson attended the University of Chicago for one year and served in the U.S. Navy. He then decided to spend his life making art. Seen here is *Madame du Barry*, 2018, 36" x 24", acrylic, priced at \$2500.



These women came from Japan to attend the fair.



The tattooed upper arm of exhibitor Lucy Gross of SAGE Studio, Austin, Texas, pays homage to characters from Outsider artist Henry Darger’s 15,000-page typed manuscript *The Story of the Vivian Girls, in What is Known as the Realms of the Unreal...* with his large-scale watercolor drawings. Gross’s mother, an artist, brought her to New York City when she was 15 to see a Darger exhibition at the American Folk Art Museum.

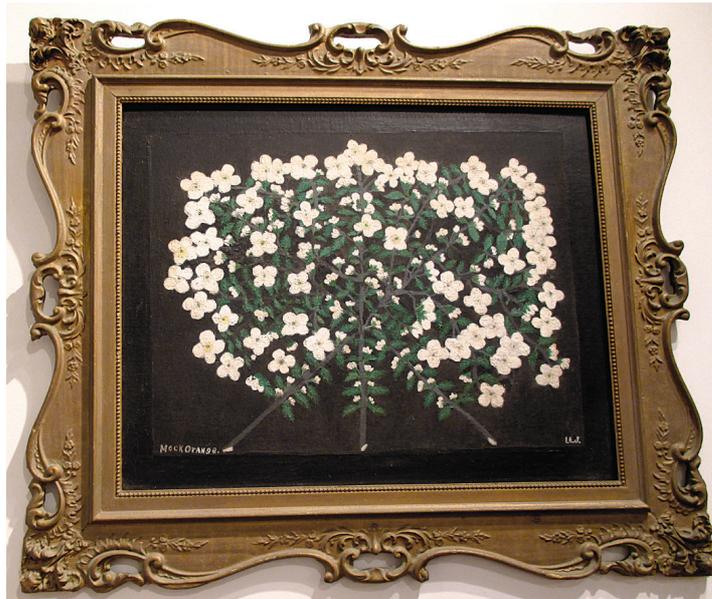
SAGE Studio was a first-timer at the OAF and brought works by David Sulak, who was diagnosed with autism at an early age. Sulak’s work “is a shrine to everyday items and places that have made an impression on him.” He does his own matting and framing. The gallery is located in a refurbished shipping container and provides adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities with materials and support to produce, exhibit, and sell their art. Artist Katie Stahl is a cofounder of the space, which opened in 2017.



Dealer Fred Giampietro (left) of New Haven, Connecticut, in his booth.



This African American bedcovering, maker unknown, circa 1920, of South Carolina origin, made of feed sack and applied scraps, clothing construction, was sold by Hill Gallery, Birmingham, Michigan.



Steven S. Powers of Brooklyn, New York, showed *Mock Orange (Philadelphus)* by Ida Jones (1874-1959), a self-taught artist who began painting at age 72. The dealer asked \$6800 for the circa 1952 16" x 20" oil on canvasboard. Jones, who lived in Chester County, Pennsylvania, focused on landscapes and still lifes.



This untitled 2009 work by Henriette Zephir was available from Cavin-Morris Gallery, New York City. The 15" x 11" watercolor and ink on paper was priced at \$7500.



Tanner Hill Gallery, located in Arkansas, Tennessee, and New York City, offered *The Nice Home on the Hill* by Mattie Lou O'Kelley (1908-1997), oil on canvasboard, signed, dated May 1975, titled on original label, 24" x 36", for \$22,000. Dealer Angela Usrey also showed a group of woodcarvings by Savannah, Georgia, barber and artist Ulysses Davis.



Maccarone, Los Angeles and New York City, a newcomer to the fair, had a dedicated booth of political cartoons by actor Jim Carrey, called "IndigNATION: Political Drawings by Jim Carrey, 2016-2018." "The drawings express Carrey's views on the current American political climate, many of which were created after the mid-term elections," according to a press release. Seen here is Carrey's interpretation of Norman Rockwell and his art. *Abnormal Rockwell*, acrylic and water-based markers on sketchbook paper, 15" x 12" framed, was priced at \$8000. Four drawings sold at the fair. Signed and numbered printed editions of 11 of the political drawings are available on the gallery's website as well, priced at \$800.



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