

ABSTRACTS AND AUTHORS

ENGLISH ANNEX

EDITORIAL

Eva di Stefano

Contemporary Egyptomania: in this issue, there is a wide-ranging and well-documented survey by Jo Farb Hernandez of the 'Egyptian'-inspired environments in Spain. She references decorative apparatuses and pharaonic fantasies, both naive and cultured, that lead to reflection on the reasons for such a deep-rooted attraction that perhaps also implies a superstitious will for power. Another important study is dedicated to the case of the recently rediscovered medium artist Wilhelmine Assman. The issue is completed by previews and reports of exhibitions from Venice to Estonia.

Eva di Stefano taught Contemporary Art History at the University of Palermo from 1992 to 2013; she founded the Outsider Art Observatory in 2008, which she runs together with the homonymous magazine published since 2010; among her many publications on 20th-century art, the volume "Irregolari. Art Brut e Outsider Art in Sicilia" (Kalòs, Palermo 2008) should be noted.

DOSSIER – EGYPT IMAGINED

Jo Farb Hernández

The Persistence of Memory: The Appearance of Egyptian Motifs in Spanish Artist-Built Environments

This article introduces the genre of monumental environments conceived and built by self-taught creators for their own personal use, with a focus on Spanish sites that include a significant number of components that allude to the arts and mythology of ancient Egypt. Illustrated through a presentation of the constructed or painted works by makers without formal art training, these works bely the "outsider" misnomer often applied to such structures, which assumes that these creators live an isolated existence inspired solely by self-referential motivations. Yet despite the links these environments clearly manifest to various subjects evocative of Egypt's unified kingdoms and the seemingly everlasting potency of its imagery, because each art environment is uniquely conceptualized and realized with no connection or communication between or among the artists, there is, consequently, no relationship between or among the sites themselves, nor is it possible to posit a thread of confluence that unites them. Each artist was inspired to include Egyptian references on his own, for his own personal reasons, without being prompted by knowledge of other environments that may display comparable motifs.

Jo Farb Hernández, Professor and Gallery Director Emerita, Department of Art and Art History, San José State University, San José, CA, USA; and Director Emerita, SPACES – Saving and Preserving Arts and Cultural Environments, now Sheboygan, WI, USA.

VENICE BIENNALE SPECIAL

Yaysis Ojeda Becerra

Visa-Free and Passport-Free: Outsider Art at the Venice Biennale

A free and critical look at the Venice exhibition and a focus on the presence of some great historicized brut artists: Madge Gill, Anna Zemánková, Aloïse Corbaz, as well as the contemporary Leopold Strobl – just four outsiders out of three hundred artists. The author also notes a limit with respect to the theme of the exhibition 'Strangers Everywhere' in the exclusively European origin of the four, while today many cases of authentic, vulnerable outsiders, strangers to market strategies, continue to emerge precisely from that disadvantaged South (which the programmatic challenge of the Biennale aimed to represent).

Yaysis Ojeda Becerra, born in Cuba, lives in Madrid, is an art critic and independent researcher specializing in Art Brut and Outsider Art, and collaborates with several magazines dedicated to Outsider Art including "Raw Vision" and "Bric-à-Brac". Among her published volumes are the following: El Aullido Infinito (La Habana, 2015) on the work of some Cuban brut artists and La piel del Grito (Hypermedia 2022).

Florian Müller

Landscapes and monoliths by Leopold Strobl

Leopold Strobl, a contemporary Austrian artist, whom the Biennale has nevertheless had the merit of making known to a wider audience, deserves a special in-depth analysis, which we publish thanks to the press office of the Gugging Museum, of which he is on his way to becoming the new star or rather the icon. With his disturbing monoliths that rise in the landscape like dark omens, Strobl represents the restless, disturbing and visionary soul of Outsider Art.

Florian Müller, a journalist, heads the press and communication office of the Gugging Museum, Vienna.

EXPLORATIONS

Turhan Demirel

The 'equivocal' monkey and other stories by Heinz Mewius

The life of Mewius (1939-2000), on the German island of Rügen in the Baltic Sea, is the precarious life of a person marginalized by destiny and vocation, who invents a thousand jobs and finally fills his maladjustment and loneliness by creating bizarre and colorful figurines by sculpting wood or drawing. Despite the evident naivety of his production, in the totalitarian atmosphere of the GDR before German reunification, the paradoxical suspicion of an intention of political criticism caused him to be banned from exhibiting.

Turhan Demirel, born in Turkey, lives in Wuppertal; a neurosurgeon, he is one of the most passionate collectors in Germany of Outsider Art, which he disseminates through conferences, publications and exhibitions.

IN-DEPTH

Elmar R. Gruber

A mixture of avant-garde and entertainment industry: Wilhelmine Assmann, medium and artist

Assman, a German mediumistic artist, was very popular at the beginning of the twentieth century and then fell into total oblivion. The author of the article, who rediscovered her, reconstructed her path tangential to the avant-garde, in particular to the expressionists of the Brücke, the contemporary interest of journalists and scholars, and the spectacularization of her sessions in a popular Berlin venue. This is another important piece of the parallel and unconventional history of art, where medium creators are protagonists thanks to their sensitivity.

Elmar R. Gruber, a psychologist and parapsychologist, has worked in the field of research on and dissemination of anomalous mental phenomena and on the anthropological context of spiritual manifestations, including shamanism and Tibetan Buddhism. Today he is the top scholar on and collector of mediumistic art: COMA, based in Munich, includes more than 1300 works by 60 authors (www.mediumistic.art)

PREVIEWS

Anic Zanzi

The Art Brut season opens in Italy: a major exhibition in Milan

2024 has proved to be a significant and promising year for knowledge and diffusion of Art Brut and Outsider Art in Italy: from the Rome spring exhibition of the Decharme collection, to which we dedicate an article in the next section, to the big autumn exhibition Dubuffet and Art Brut. The art of outsiders that brings to Milan (at MUDEC), in addition to some works by Jean Dubuffet, a selection of works from the Collection de l'Art Brut in Lausanne, among which our favorite Sicilian Giovanni Bosco will not be missing. We present it by anticipating a text extracted from the catalog dedicated to a frequent theme: the representation of the body, dismembered, energetic, and transformed.

Anic Zanzi, an art historian and a graduate in public relations, has been a curator of the Collection de l'Art Brut in Lausanne since 2003, for which she has handled numerous exhibitions and publications. She was previously an assistant curator at the Toms Pauli Foundation in Lausanne, dedicated to textile creations.

Giorgio Bedoni

Carlo Zinelli, restless form and the line of the dream

In Piacenza, Galleria Biffi dedicates an exhibition – a tribute to Carlo Zinelli from October 2024 to January 2025 with an exhibition itinerary open to dialogue between the most historic and well-known exponent of Art Brut in Italy and artistic experiences born from other scenarios. It is a dialogue that explores affinities, built around thematic promptings: the curator of the exhibition, Giorgio Bedoni, gives us a preview of some reflections and some stimulating comparisons with famous mainstream artists such as Maria Lai, Giuseppe Capogrossi and Emilio Isgrò,

Giorgio Bedoni, a psychiatrist and psychotherapist, teaches at the Brera Academy of Fine Arts in Milan. The author of various essays (including *Visionari. Arte, sogno, follia in Europa, 2004* and, with Antonio Rocca, *Vincent Van Gogh, 2024*), he has curated several exhibitions on the theme of art and psychiatry, art brut and outsider artistic experiences in their relationships with twentieth-century and contemporary art.

REPORT

Giada Carraro

Celestial Epics. From France to Italy

Celestial Epics is the title of the Art Brut exhibition in the Decharme collection held from March to May 2024 at Villa Medici, home of the French Academy in Rome. It is a collection that includes diaries, anarchitectures, ghosts, heterotopias, and micro- and macrocosms, cartographies: the entire repertoire of the great historical and contemporary Art Brut, and which in this splendid location in the heart of the capital was able to enter into communication with the art of the past and present, leaving the niche area to which they are generally relegated. This is the main objective of the collector Bruno Decharme, declared in the interview that we published in issue 22.

Giada Carraro, an art historian, lives in Bologna, collaborates with public and private bodies on cultural heritage cataloguing and digitalisation projects, and is an independent researcher in the field of irregular art and fantastic architecture, to which she dedicated the project "Bric-à-brac Italia" (www.arteoutsider.com).

Pavel Konečný

Hidden Worlds Expanding: a Triple Exhibition in Estonia

The field of Outsider Art, despite its progressive affirmation, remains open to discoveries and lateral geographies, and this is perhaps its main fascination. This summer the destination of the explorer of 'unknown lands' of art unexpectedly turned out to be Estonia, with the exhibition Hidden Worlds Expanding, which from 1 June to 29 September 2024 presented 200 Outsider Art works, mainly from Eastern Europe. Spread out among three simultaneous exhibition venues, the exhibition involved the Estonian cities of Tartu, Valga and Viljandi. However, these exhibitions were complementary and conceptually related to each other and formed a coherent and meaningful whole.

Pavel Konečný, a scholar on and collector of Eastern European Outsider and Folk Art since the 1970s, curates exhibitions and publications (including on Italian creators, of whom he is a passionate discoverer) and for some years has been organizing the international 'Art Brut Film' exhibition in Olomouc (Czech Republic) where he lives.