

Outsider Art Attracts Curators, Will Collectors Follow?

January 28, 2015 by Marion Maneker



Henry Darger, *Are Seized by Pursueing [sic] Glandelinians, n.d.* Carbon transfer and watercolor on paper. 19 x 48 ins. Courtesy Carl Hammer Gallery.

Christie's was supposed to hold a panel discussion last night about the burgeoning market for Outsider art. The panel was sponsored by the Outsider Art Fair but one of the strengths of Outsider art is its confluence with Contemporary art. Painters like Jean-Michel Basquiat, who was self-taught, fit into the strict definition of the field. But curators are also reaching beyond conventional understandings of Contemporary art to include more works that would be considered Outsider:

When curator Massimiliano Gioni appropriated the utopian concept of self-taught artist Marino Auriti's Palazzo Enciclopedico — a panoptic, non-elitist examination of international art practice — for the 55th Venice Biennale, viewers thrilled to the presentation of so-called outsider artists, those who make work without the training of the art-school system, alongside known market stars, most of whom flaunt fine-art degrees.

Two years later, Gioni's implementation of Auriti's vision is regularly being traced as the spark for the current interest in a (sometimes eschewed) genre that has been

quietly championed by a loyal following for better part of the 20th century.

In addition to the breakout in Venice, the Philadelphia Museum of Art mounted *Great and Mighty Things: Outsider Art from the Jill and Sheldon Bonovitz Collection* in the spring of 2013, while currently, curator Lynne Cooke of the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., is organising a yet-to-be-named exhibition, examining the relationship between self-taught art and modern and contemporary work.

The lock, however, might be the gift of 57 works of outsider art made by the Atlanta-based Souls Grown Deep Foundation last November to New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art, considered to be perhaps the ultimate encyclopedic collection of global art work.