

New York City

The 25th Outsider Art Fair

by Julie Schlenger Adell

Celebrating its 25th year, the Outsider Art Fair drew record crowds January 19 through 22 at the Metropolitan Pavilion, a venue that is easy to get to on West 18th Street in Manhattan. Owned and managed for the last few years by Outsider art dealer Andrew Edlin's Wide Open Arts, it has become a must-see among the many shows and auctions held during Americana Week in New York City.

One of the reasons? The Outsider Art Fair has heart and soul.

The show coincided with inauguration week-end, and visitors were invited to read from some of President Obama's speeches, as the fair acknowledged "his leadership and extraordinary service to the country." A portion of the proceeds from the sale of folk art quilts exhibited at the fair was given to God's Love We Deliver, a New York City-based social services organization, and

The Outsider Art Fair has heart and soul.

children were encouraged to "draw their city" at tables set up at the fair's entrance, which freed up their parents to view the art.

And the art? Emerging as a field in the 1940s primarily because of artist Jean Dubuffet's research, Art Brut (raw art)—visionary works by self-taught creators on the fringe of mainstream society—has catapulted into the mainstream. The best works command prices in the hundreds of thousands of dollars, auction houses hold dedicated sales of the genre, and museums continue to expand collections.

"The fair retains a sense of discovery," stated dealer Fred Giampietro in a telephone interview a couple of weeks after the show. The New Haven, Connecticut, dealer said he made 35 sales during the event and 11 afterward. "I give Andrew [Edlin] credit. He's kept it as pure as possible. It's a focused show, and it's been growing the last few years. Clearly it got all the press in New York," Giampietro said, referencing the front-page coverage in the *New York Times* art section, which eclipsed that of the Winter Antiques Show.

"It was a tremendous show," noted Chicago dealer Carl Hammer, who is a pioneer in the field and continues to discover new talent. "We sold seventy-five percent of the artists we brought," he said, adding, "Overall, the show looked better this year. The curation was tighter, and the installations were crisper and cleaner." Hammer allowed that he's a purist when it comes to Art Brut and Outsider art, pointing to some dealers "who need to practice restraint and not bring in Sunday artists." In other words, "Dealers can't be cleaning out their closets." He stressed, however, that "The fair looked a lot better this year."

For Andrew Edlin, this edition of the fair was "the best ever." The celebration of its 25th anniversary "was a great hook, and people celebrated and reflected on its history and its place in the broader art field," he said. Of the 60 dealers who participated, nine were from the original show.

As a dealer, Edlin said he feels "compelled to bring out the highest quality and the most prominent names to put our best foot forward," and thus he showed works in his booth by Eugene von Bruenchenhein, Domenico Zindato, Guo Fengyi, and Adolf Wölfl.

Edlin bought the fair from show promoter Sandy Smith of Sanford L. Smith & Associates almost five years ago. Ever the show manager, Smith visited the Outsider fair a couple of times over the weekend and remarked, "Andrew has done an extremely good job. He's expanded it far beyond what I could have done. He's a dealer in the field and knows everyone. His wife is the curator of Art Brut at the American Folk Art Museum." The museum will feature more than

80 works by Eugen Gabritschewsky (Russian, 1893-1979) in an exhibition to be held March 14 to August 20, 2017, and at the same time it will hold the first museum exhibition in the United States for Italian-born Carlo Zinelli (1916-1974). Both presentations have been curated by Valerie Rousseau, Edlin's wife.

The fair has a vetting committee comprising "the most sophisticated dealers who participate in the show," explained Edlin. The committee members are anonymous, he said, and they assess the quality of the work dealers are bringing and make sure the works "fit the bill...self-taught to a large degree. There aren't rules etched in stone," said Edlin, but rather "guidance on how to retain the fair's flair and originality. There are more dealers coming from the contemporary side," he noted, "and their values are crisper and cleaner and less salon style."

The Outsider Art Fair will return to New York City in January 2018. In October 2017 the fair returns to Paris, celebrating its fifth anniversary in the City of Light.

Further information can be found online (www.outsiderartfair.com).



Marianne B Gallery, New York City, showed works by Robert Sundholm (b. 1941), whose colorful paintings celebrate New York City and its neighborhoods, which is ironic because Sundholm's life has been filled with sadness and despair. Sundholm was an orphan, a hustler, an alcoholic, and illiterate until age 32, but his paintings show a different side of the artist—the loneliness, pain, and neglect he experienced. Then he met a woman while working as a counterman at Schrafft's restaurant who became his patron. Marianne Belardinelli and her husband, Daniel, an artist whose work was also exhibited at the fair by Bourbon-Lally, Port au Prince, Haiti, devoted their booth to Sundholm's art, and several sales were made. Prices were in the \$500 to \$1000 range.



This William Edmondson sculpture of a figure with cape sold at Fred Giampietro's booth in the first hours of the fair. "I owned it thirty years ago, just got it back, and sold it," the New Haven, Connecticut, dealer explained. Giampietro made 35 sales at the fair and 11 afterward, he said.



James Barron Art, Kent, Connecticut, asked \$200,000 for Janet Sobel's untitled enamel on masonite, 1946-48.



Fleisher/Ollman Gallery, Philadelphia, offered these sculptures by Eugene von Bruenchenhein (1910-1983). They are made from clay that the artist found in his backyard and then fired in his kitchen oven. "He would then paint them with radiator paint or enamel," explained John Ollman. "Bake a meatloaf, bake a pot," he said with a smile, pointing out that the sculptures are hard to find. Ranging in price from \$2000 to \$8000, six of the seven seen here had sold by midday on Sunday.



This ceramic sculpture, *Rhinephant*, by Canadian artist Jordan Maclachlan (b. 1959) was available from Marion Harris, New York City. Part of the artist's "Zoo Living" series, it was priced at \$2500. Maclachlan's work "reflects her ongoing keen interest in animal husbandry and zookeeping techniques. The often hyper-realistic portrayals of animals and people can be insightful to the point of voyeurism," wrote Harris.



This untitled carved limestone sculpture of a seated girl by William Edmondson (1874-1951), circa 1940, was available at the booth of Fleisher/Ollman Gallery. Christie's sold an Edmondson sculpture of a lion at its Outsider art auction on Friday, January 20, for \$511,500 (est. \$200,000/400,000) to collector Jerry Lauren, and it was the top lot of the sale.



This hinged iron dragon, made by a blacksmith in Chester, Pennsylvania, circa 1900, possibly as a bellows, was priced at \$3200 by American Primitive Gallery, New York City.



The women of Gee's Bend, Alabama, whose inhabitants are mostly descendants of slaves, have created hundreds of quilts dating from the early 20th century to the present. Made from recycled work clothes and dresses, feed sacks, and fabric remnants, the quilts have been exhibited in museums and cultural institutions across the United States. The Metropolitan Museum of Art will hold a show this summer displaying the quilts it acquired as a gift from the Souls Grown Deep Foundation, Alabama. A booth at the Outsider Art Fair featured many other examples, and a portion of the sales went to God's Love We Deliver, a New York City metropolitan area provider of meals and nutrition counseling for people living with HIV/AIDS and numerous other diagnoses.



Carl Hammer Gallery, Chicago, one of the exhibitors at the first Outsider Art Fair, showed works by Frank Jones among others. Born in Texas in 1900, Jones didn't attend school and never learned to read or write. His mother told him he was born with a veil over his left eye, which allowed him to see into the spirit world, an African American folk belief. He was a troubled man, drank heavily, and went to prison more than once, the last time for a life sentence. His colored pencil drawings on paper were discovered by a Dallas gallerist during a prison art show. "He's the real McCoy," said Hammer. "Powerful and authentic." Hammer Gallery will have a show of Jones's work entitled *Demons within Me* from May 5 to June 30. Seen here is *Jap House*, 54, 26" x 40", drawn a few years before his death in 1969. Priced at \$15,000, it sold. Many of Jones's drawings are signed with his prison number 114591.

Sandusky Street Antiques

Open 7 days a week
in historic downtown Delaware, Ohio
30 N. Sandusky Street
740 363-1405



www.SanduskyStreetAntiques.com

- SHOW -



Artist Ross Brodar was outside the Outsider Art Fair this year. He parked a U-Haul filled with his art in front of the entrance (with permission from show owner Andrew Edlin). "I've been inside and outside," he said, explaining that his dealer didn't do the fair this year. Brodar grew up on Long Island and lives now in Brooklyn, and he explained, "I paint from a dark place. I do mostly portraits, and each one has bits of myself." The smaller portraits were priced at \$500 each. The large portraits leaning on the truck were priced from \$6000 to \$8000.



"Melrose Plantation Quilt," 1970, 79" x 55", made by Clementine Hunter (1886-1988), was priced at \$40,000 by Gilley's Gallery, Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Hunter's oil on panel *Picking Cotton with Cotton Scale Used for Weighing Sacks*, 16" x 23½", had an asking price of \$12,000. It sold.

Steve Moseley's message in a bottle reads, "On the 7th day, God rested at the track. He won the superfecta and God saw that this was good." It was tagged \$1500 by Lindsay Gallery.



Sarah Jane Heming (right) and her daughter Maisie Jane Coburn of MiddleJanes, Sag Harbor, New York, displayed works by Mark Heming (1907-1999), their father and grandfather, respectively. Heming painted faces and never worked from models or photographs but rather from memory. His works of art, oil on canvas or paper, ranged in price from \$1500 to \$7500.



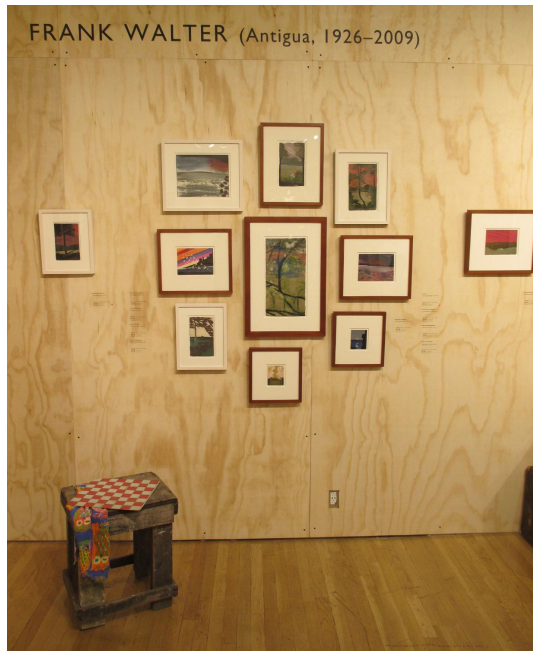
Solange Knopf's *Big Bang* (above), 2014, mixed media on paper, 21" x 28½", sold at the booth of Cavin-Morris Gallery, New York City. So did *Zasnuby* (left), 1966, pastel on paper, 34¼" x 24½", by Anna Zemankova. The gallery was one of the nine original dealers. "We emphasize new discoveries that will still be here in twenty years," explained Randall Morris.



Nancy Josephson's glass beaded *Lady Damballah* was available for \$8500 at the booth of Lindsay Gallery, Columbus, Ohio.



Kids were invited to "Draw your City" while their parents strolled the fair.



FRANK WALTER (Antigua, 1926–2009)

Artist Frank Walter will represent Antigua and Barbuda at this year's Venice Biennale. Hirschl & Adler Modern had a booth dedicated to Walter. "This year was a particularly strong edition of the fair. The twenty-fifth anniversary gave it a luster and seriousness evident across the floor," said Tom Parker of Hirschl & Adler. The gallery "sold a nice handful of Walter's works to new collectors," said Parker. Prices ranged from \$4000 to \$40,000.



Oscar Azmitia, born in New York in 1978, has Asperger syndrome. He was homeschooled and began attending Pure Vision Arts in New York City about ten years ago. He likes to paint on found objects, such as coins and vintage record albums. Seen here is a work painted on a record album, priced at \$400. Pure Vision was founded 15 years ago by the Shield Institute, a not-for-profit human services agency that supports New Yorkers with developmental disabilities.



Rhinoceros, 1983, by William Hawkins (1895-1990), enamel on masonite board, 40" x 48", was available at the booth of Ricco Maresca Gallery, New York City, with an asking price of \$50,000.



George E. Morgan (1870-1969) painted *Railroad Station, Gardiner, Maine*, in August 1962. He was almost 92 years old and in a rest home in Gardiner. The oil on board, 11 3/8" x 14 3/8", was available for \$6500 from Steven S. Powers Works of Art & Americana, Brooklyn, New York.

Attention
Vermont Week Riley Rink Dealers

Kris Johnson and Steve Sherhag are planning to have the Old Riley Rink Show which will be renamed

The Vermont Pickers Market.
It will be a one-day show on Sunday 10/01/2017.

We currently have the Okemo Base Lodge and will continue to look for a larger venue.

Please contact Kris Johnson at 610-207-9505 or email me at info@texjohnsonantiques.com for more information.

Celebrating our 27th Season

A True Antiques Shop ★

The MEWS at Brewster ANTIQUES ★

★ COUNTRY MOUSE ANTIQUES 19thC Primitives, Stoneware, Quilts	★ WILLIAM NICKERSON ANTIQUES 18th & 19thC American Furniture
★ MARSH HAWK ANTIQUES Chocolate Moulds, Tinware & Wireware	★ PLEASANT VALLEY ANTIQUES American & European Art Glass
★ BETSY HEWLETT LESSIG Early American Pattern Glass	★ WILLIAM H. WIBEL ANTIQUES Fine Art, Nautical, Folk Art

★ The MEWS re-opens to coincide with BREWSTER IN BLOOM SPRING HOURS:
Friday, May 5th - Monday, May 8th at 11AM. FRI-MON 11-4

★ 2926 Rte. 6A, Brewster, Cape Cod, MA ★ 508-896-4887 ★
www.the-mews-at-brewster-antiques.com