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1/28/2015 @ 9:49PM | 1,274 views

Hot Market: The Outsider Art Fair Opens In New York

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The outsider art market is booming, and novice and experienced collectors alike will be able to relate to the stories of the self-taught group of artists who make up the genre. From January 28 to February 1, the New York edition of [The Outsider Art Fair](http://www.outsiderartfair.com/) (<http://www.outsiderartfair.com/>), which has been around for nearly two-dozen years, will set up shop in New York's Center 548. The 2015 Outsider Art Fair will be the largest ever, with some 50 galleries — The Ames Gallery from Berkeley, Calif.; Chris Byrne from Dallas; and Tokyo's Gallery Kogure are a few — from around the world exhibiting. I spoke to

Rebecca Hoffman, the fair's director, to ask her about outsider art, the programming, and tips for collectors who are interested in exploring the fair.



Larry John Palsson (1948-2010), *Untitled*, n.d.,
acrylic on art board
11.25 x 14.5 inches
(Courtesy J. Compton Gallery)

Tell me about this year's Outsider Art Fair.

This is our 23rd year. We're excited. We have more dealers than ever before at 50 galleries from all over the world. We started a new campaign this year where we've created project spaces, allowing for smaller galleries to participate in the fair. I'm really excited for a Bushwick gallery by the name of Jackie Klempay (<http://www.jackieklempay.com/>) who is showing the work of Jerry the Marble Faun. Jerry the Marble Faun is best well known for being the gardener in the 1975 documentary *Grey Gardens*. He was also a taxi cab driver for 20 years and worked for the royal family of Saudi Arabia. Other notable dealers this year are Rebecca Hossack (<http://www.rebeccahossack.com/>) from London, who is showing Aboriginal works, I'm really excited for Cavin-Morris (<http://www.cavinmorris.com/>) to be showing never-before-seen photographs of Vivian Maier (<http://www.vivianmaier.com/>). I'm really excited for Arte del Pueblo (www.artedelpueblo.com) showing Jonathan Demme's Haitian art collection.



Jerry The Marble Faun, Pairs (Big Edie and Little Edie), 2009.
Limestone and moss
13 1/2 x 19 x 6 1/2 inches
(Courtesy Jackie Klempay)

Can you explain what outsider art is for those who aren't familiar with it?

Outsider Art is a broad umbrella term that encompasses a vast range of self-taught and non-academic work. It is artwork created out of a need to communicate through visual means and thus is extremely powerful and tends to strike visceral responses in its viewers.

What are some highlights of this year's programming?

We had planned on having two panel discussions leading up to the Fair – one at Neuehouse on Monday night exploring Paranoia and Creativity moderated by Anne Doran. The other was scheduled for Tuesday on the Burgeoning Market at Christie's moderated by Robert Manley. Due to the snow, these have been postponed. Dates will be announced shortly. However, Friday evening, we do have a screening program of Outsider Films, *Down the Rabbit Hole*, curated by Jeffrey Bowers from Vice and Vimeo and Mike Plainte from the Sundance Film Festival.



Henry Darger, *Are Seized by Pursueing [sic] Glandelinians*.
19 x 48 inches overall (image is detail of one panel)
carbon transfer and watercolor on paper
(Courtesy Carl Hammer Gallery)

The Outsider Art market has grown a lot in the past few years. Why is it becoming more popular with collectors?

The growing interest in this field blossomed over the past few years with the inclusion of Outsider Artists in the 2013 Venice Biennale, the 2013 Carnegie International as well as the Hayward Gallery's *Alternative Guide to the Universe*. In the last year alone we have seen auction records for two of the field's greats — Henry Darger, fetching over three-quarters-of-a-million dollars at Christie's Paris in December of 2014 as well as earlier last year, a Augustin Lesage fetched over half-a-million dollars in Paris. Steeping out of the auction market, the Souls Grown Deep donation of 57 works of Southern outsider art to the Metropolitan Museum of Art is quite momentous for the field.



*Martín Ramírez, Untitled, (Stag on mound with fireworks), c.1952-53.
graphite, tempera and crayon on paper
32 x 19 1/2 inches; 81.3 x 49.5 cm
(Courtesy Ricco Maresca)*

Do you have any tips for collectors who are interested in collecting outsider art?

We have the broadest range of work on view this year at the 23rd edition of the Outsider Art Fair — there is something for all of our visitors, whether you want to start collecting at the top with well-known names of the field like Henry Darger, Martin Ramirez, Bill Traylor and more, or discover someone new — the work will speak for itself

Last year you had a talk on Jean Michel Basquiat. Are more outsider artists breaking into the mainstream?

Yes. We have seen a greater overlap between outsider art and the contemporary art world — through inclusion in blockbuster international shows to institutional collections to gallery exhibitions and much more. Contemporary artists have always looked to and been inspired by the work of outsider artists — the freedom, power, and ability to move it's viewers from such an authentic level. The boundaries between the two are continually changing.

The Outsider Art Fair is January 29 through February 1. For more information, visit [outsiderartfair.com](http://www.outsiderartfair.com) (<http://www.outsiderartfair.com/>).
