



From *Yomitime* (Japanese-language newspaper published in New York City), issue dated May 2, 2014.
Translated from the original text in Japanese.



Shoko Kanazawa at work on her calligraphic art.
Photo courtesy of Megumi Ogita Gallery, Tokyo.



Shoko Kanazawa, *Dream*, 2013.
Photo courtesy of Megumi Ogita Gallery, Tokyo.

Prodigious Visions, Unique Techniques; Many Works Made With Great Sincerity; Outsider Art Fair

By Manami Fujimori

As May begins, and auctions and art fairs get under way, more than ever, New York's art scene is flourishing.

Among other things, for starters, there is the Outsider Art Fair [May 8-11, 2014]. A long-established fair, which actually started in 1993, normally it took place at the end of January, but this year it has been scheduled to coincide with the appearance of such other fairs as Frieze and NADA.

With regard to the art world and the significance [of the outsider art field] within the expanding market, it may be said that it is extremely hot right now.

To put it in a few words, outsider art is art that is made by people who do not have formal art educations and who are not well-known. It is also called "art brut" or "self-taught art." Numerous are those [self-taught artists] who have mental or emotional disabilities [or] who are deaf and work alone to create artworks. Speaking of contemporary artists [of this kind] in America, whose lives were marked by misfortune, there was Henry Darger, about whom a film was made, and the Mexican immigrant Martín Ramírez, whose work was presented in exhibitions at the American Folk Art Museum [in New York].

With outsider art literally being that which exists "outside" the art world and established art history, so far the portion of [the art world's] galleries that have specialized in it and of specialized museums that collect and present exhibitions of it has not been very large. Nevertheless, in recent years, the number of major contemporary-art galleries that have been picking up outsider art — this tendency has been noticeable.

Even recently, at last, Maccarone Gallery, which handles cut-



A button-covered work by Momoka Imura. Photo courtesy of Yukiko Koide Presents, Tokyo.



A written-all-over calendar-sheet work by Kunizo Matsumoto. Photo courtesy of Yukiko Koide Presents, Tokyo.

ting-edge [work by] young [artists] has just presented a show of the psychedelic plant pictures and pots of the self-taught artist Eugene Von Bruenchenhein.

Moreover, at last year's Venice Biennale, many outsider artists' works were introduced. From the start, mixed up and placed side by side in an exhibition with those of contemporary [trained] artists, [the question of] which ones were "in" or "out" didn't even come into consideration.

In fact, whatever your definition of art may be, it's likely that no one would look at the meticulous, organic drawings of Ramírez, [whose compositions] appear to spread out like the wood grain, or the objects wrapped up in wire, made by the anonymous, so-called Philadelphia Wireman, and not say, "Superb!" Extraordinary visions and unique techniques! At the fair, many are the works one will encounter that have been made with tremendous sincerity by artists who have been called "visionaries."

This year, 48 galleries will take part in the fair. Chicago's Carl Hammer Gallery, Philadelphia's Fleisher/Ollman Gallery, and, from New York, Ricco/Maresca Gallery, Luise Ross Gallery and Andrew Edlin Gallery — all of these galleries with established, specialists' reputations in this genre will be present.

Two galleries from Japan, which will be participating, cannot be overlooked. One is the pioneering Yukiko Koide Presents, which was the very first to introduce the work of Henry Darger and Bill Traylor, and outsider art to Japan starting at the beginning of the 1990s. Having already taken part in the fair nine times [in the past] and striving to introduce foreign audiences to Japanese artists, this time Koide will show the work of Tomoatsu Takase, Yuichi Saito, Kunizo Matsumoto and Momoka Imura. Although she is mentally handicapped, with great passion, Imura has made the creating of beanbag-like objects, which she covers with sewed-on buttons, her specialty. Matsumoto, who likes to write with abandon, completely covers with writing any sheet of a calendar or other piece of paper that he sees.

The second Japanese gallery, which is taking part in

the Outsider Art Fair for the first time this year, is Megumi Okita Gallery, from Tokyo, which will showcase a single artist in an exhibition in its booth. It will show numerous calligraphic works by Shoko Kanazawa, a prodigy who has Down syndrome. She picked up a brush at the age of five and received guidance from her mother, a calligraphy artist. "Me," "Dream," "Live Together" — overwhelmingly, powerfully, dynamically she soars when she draws the characters for these words. Indeed, what will the reaction of American viewers to such work be? Various kinds of reactions are anticipated, to be sure.

At this year's fair, in addition to the participating galleries, two very interesting special events will take place. From their titles alone, the talks "Lost in Translation: Jean-Michel Basquiat, Self-Taught Artist" and "Henry Darger: 40 Years Later" sound endlessly interesting. It's daring to adopt Basquiat as an outsider and to get closer to the contemporary art market. It appears that, on the part of [the fair's sponsors] the ambitious effort to do just that is clearly evident.

2014 Outsider Art Fair

Thursday, May 8 to Sunday, May 11, 2014
Center 548, 548 West 22nd Street, Manhattan

Telephone: 212-337-3338

One-day admission: \$20.00
Four-day admission: \$50.00

www.outsiderartfair.com