

New York City

The Outsider Art Fair 2020

by Julie Schlenger Adell

Collectors at different levels were given an opportunity to view and buy art—paintings, sculptures, mixed media, ceramics—at the 28th edition of the Outsider Art Fair, and they did so with gusto.

The four-day show, held January 16-19 at the Metropolitan Pavilion on West 18th Street, has been managed for the last eight years by art dealer Andrew Edlin's Wide Open Arts, LLC, and the organizers continue to improve it. This year, for example, the floor layout was tweaked to improve traffic flow and render better exposure to the 65 booths, large, medium, and small corner ones. The restaurant was moved from the front of the space to the back, which gave patrons more space to eat, drink, and hang out longer.

"The change in the layout definitely helped," said Rebecca Hoffman, fair director. "The aisles are more open, which gave people more space, and more sales were made."

"You don't have to pretend you're an art expert here. Buy what you love."

Moreover, "there was fresh energy," she noted, pointing to two curated spaces: "Relishing the Raw: Contemporary Artists Collecting Outsider Art," curated by Paul Laster, and "The Hummingbird Paints Fragrant Songs: Sara Flores and Celia Vasquez Yui," co-curated by Brett Littman, director of the Noguchi Museum, Long Island City, New York, and Shipibo Conibo Center, West Harlem, New York City. Sara Flores and Celia Vasquez Yui are mother and daughter, and they live and work in a region of the Peruvian Amazon.

"The bar is being raised," said dealer Frank Maresca, a longtime exhibitor who also sits on the fair's advisory committee. "It's improved in terms of restraint," he noted, pointing to less "overhanging" of booths and more pieces being offered in frames.

"I would call it a trickle-up effect," he said. "Dealers from around the world—not giants, more mom and pop, which is okay—don't have the capitalization that the big boys and girls have, so they're doing things on a shoestring. They look around at their neighbors' booths, and they're doing a better job."

Early access to the fair began on Thursday afternoon from 2 to 6 p.m., followed by a vernissage until 9 p.m. The day was well attended, and many sales were made—ranging from hundreds of dollars to tens of thousands of dollars. The following day, usually a quiet one for most fairs, was busy. The pace continued through Sunday, which drew crowds on the final day looking to buy.

Collector Jerry Lauren stopped in to see what this year's exhibitors were offering and to talk with the dealers. "Outsider art has come into its own," the longtime collector told *M.A.D.* Two days before his visit he had purchased a very important double-sided work by Bill Traylor (1853/54-1949) at Christie's Outsider art auction for \$507,000, an auction record for the artist, bringing Lauren's collection of Traylor artwork to 21 pieces.

Commenting on the fair, Lauren said, "You don't have to pretend you're an art expert here. Buy what you love. It's a wonderful opportunity."

Carl Hammer of Carl Hammer Gallery, Chicago, a longtime exhibitor, offered works by Joseph Yoakum, Lee Godie (the bag lady of Chicago), Eugene Von Bruenchenhein, Frank Jones, Bill Traylor, and others. "Last year we sold twenty Yoakums!" The gallerist displayed a few works by Yoakum this year and had already sold two. "It is getting harder and harder to find new and good material," Hammer noted.

The Outsider Art Fair will return to Paris for its eighth edition October 22-25, to be held at Atelier Richelieu. Further information on the New York and Paris shows is available at (www.outsiderartfair.com).



True Report from Egypt by Elijah Pierce (1892-1984), carved and painted wood and rhinestones, 19½" x 21¾", was available from Fleisher/Ollman, Philadelphia, priced at \$50,000. This work, dated "1-17-1978," is a later one, said John Ollman, explaining that Pierce did another one in the 1940s. "He would do that sometimes," the dealer said.



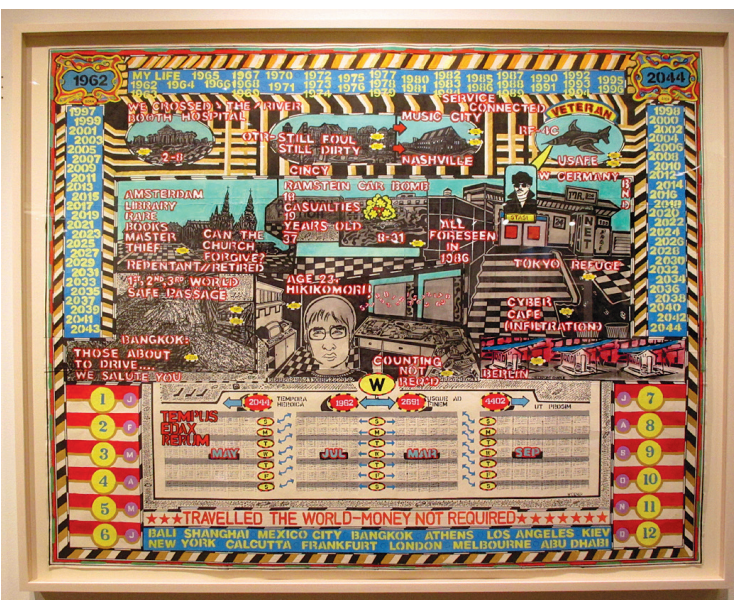
This untitled work from the second half of the 1960s by Anna Zemánková (1908-1986), pastel on paper, 34½" x 24½", was shown at the booth of Cavin-Morris Gallery, New York City. The dealers asked \$30,000 for the work.



New York City Bodega Cat #1 by Simone Johnson (b. 1971), ink and colored pencil on paper, was available from Pure Vision Arts, New York City, tagged \$2500. It is one in a series of bodega cats by the artist.



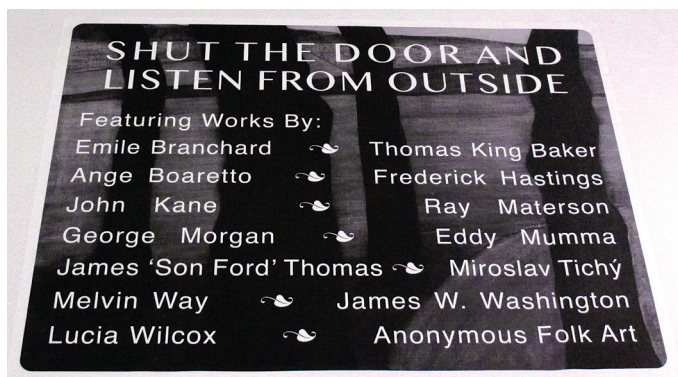
Creative Growth Art Center, Oakland, California, offered this acrylic on paper by Donald Mitchell (b. 1951). *Dmi 552*, 2019, is 30½" x 44" and was priced at \$3500.



Ricco/Maresca Gallery, New York City, sold works by Martín Ramirez, George Widener, Leopold Strobl, and others. Seen here is *Self-Portrait* (1962-2691) by George Widener (b. 1962). The 2019 mixed media on paper, 46½" x 60½", sold on opening day.



Jordan Laura MacLachlan, born in 1959 in Toronto, Canada, has over the last 30 years created the multi-part terra-cotta and mixed-media series “Ways of Living.” Seen here are a few examples of the most recent series, “Animal Vegetable Mineral,” which was featured at the booth of Marion Harris, New York City. The figures ranged in price from \$1200 to \$1500.



Welcome to the booth of Steven S. Powers of Brooklyn, New York.

Ike E. Morgan (b. 1958), an Austin, Texas-based artist who spent over 20 years in a state hospital because of schizophrenia, focuses primarily on U.S. presidents. Seen here are Morgan’s interpretations of George Washington and George W. Bush, available from SAGE Studio, Austin. Both paintings are acrylic on raw canvas, priced at \$850 each. Morgan is represented by Webb Gallery, Waxahachie, Texas.



Two works by Paul Edlin (1931-2008) were displayed at the booth of Andrew Edlin Gallery, New York City. *Say Cheese*, 1999, and *Siblings*, 1997, are both postage stamp fragments on board, 16" x 20", and were each priced at \$8500. The artist is the gallerist’s uncle.



Dealer Marion Harris of New York City introduced works this year by French/American artist Joannath Bessaci, seen here. The young man’s grandfather was a collector of Michelin maps, and he accompanied him to flea markets. Bessaci began as a painter but stopped several years ago and began “cutting” the maps he inherited. He continues to buy maps to make his art. He has created a dancer series, a politician series, and a sports series. His anatomical series can be seen on the wall behind him. Prices ranged from \$2500 to \$6500.



Duff Lindsay of Lindsay Gallery, Columbus, Ohio, sold this teapot pipe with applied body putty by Morris Ben Newman (1883-1980) to a museum. The gallerist brought a dozen paintings by Newman to the fair, and half of them sold within the first three hours, he said.



Jeanne Brosseau, born in the Penobscot, Maine, area in 1952, uses her drawings as therapy from long-suppressed memories of sexual abuse by her father, explained Thomas Parker of Hirschl & Adler Modern, New York City. “She’s a new discovery for us.” Seen here is *The Gossips*, 2018-19, colored ink marker on paper, 12" x 8½", priced at \$6000. “Her works are at an inflection point when therapy art becomes fine art,” said Parker. “On a visceral level and an artistic level, they are undeniably beautiful.” Brosseau’s works ranged in price from \$4000 to \$6000. Some sold.



Artist Donna Rosenthal (b. 1950) comes from a family of store display designers and jewelers. Seen here is *50’s Love*, crocheted metal, 17" x 11" x 2", priced at \$3500 by Koelsch Gallery, Houston, Texas. Rosenthal, who is from New York, crochets dresses and coats from big spools of metal—silver, copper, gold, and brass. “Silver is the softest, gold is harder, and brass is the hardest,” she explained. She also works in paper.



Dark Trees by Emile Blanchard (1881-1938), painted circa 1930, 36" x 24", was available from Steven S. Powers of Brooklyn, New York, for \$24,000.



Tierra del Sol Gallery, Los Angeles, California, offered this 2003 acrylic and ink on paper by Michael LeVell (b. 1964), untitled (66), 14" x 15", priced at \$1300.



This walnut and cherry table, 28" x 19" x 27", carved by an unknown artist, was available from Tops Gallery, Memphis, Tennessee, for \$2200.



Lucy Gross, on the left, and Katie Stahl of SAGE Studio, Austin, Texas.



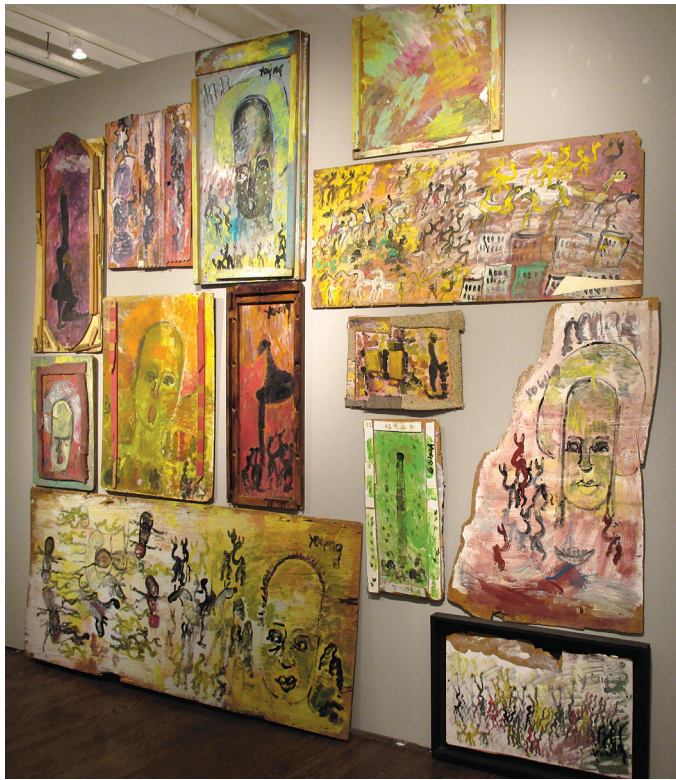
The curated space at the fair "Relishing the Raw: Contemporary Artists Collecting Outsider Art," exhibited works by Outsider artists collected by contemporary artists. Those lending work from their collections included Polly Apfelbaum, Maurizio Cattelan, Julian Schnabel, Cindy Sherman, KAWS, and others. Seen here is *No. 877, May 39, 1960* by Eugene Von Bruenchenhein (1910-1983). The 24" x 20" oil on board from 1960 is from the collection of Maurizio Cattelan. The space was curated by critic, editor, artist, and lecturer Paul Laster.



Alyson Vega, a textile artist whose work is shown through Fountain House Gallery, New York City, in front of some of her work.



Paula Burns of Barrington, Rhode Island, has made a pilgrimage to the Outsider Art Fair for the last several years, spending the weekend viewing and buying what she loves. She was packing the car with her purchases when *M.A.D.* returned to the fair on Sunday.



A wall of works by Purvis Young (1943-2010) from the early 1970s was displayed at the booth of Hirschl & Adler Modern. The works ranged in price from \$4000 to \$35,000.

Hill Gallery, Birmingham, Michigan, asked \$4500 for *Woman in Front of House with 2 Chickens* by Eddie Arning (1898-1993). The circa 1970 work in Cray-pas on paper measures 22" x 32".



Lindsay Gallery, Columbus, Ohio, sold this mixed media on canvas by Morris Ben Newman, untitled (*Temple with "New Flowers"*), 1977-79, 32" x 29". Many of Newman's paintings sold at the fair.



Cavin-Morris Gallery has shown work by Kevin Sampson (b. 1954) for the last few years. Seen here is *Shogun*, 2020, mixed media and found objects, priced at \$4000.



Working at Home, 2000, by Thornton Dial (1928-2016) had sold at the booth of Andrew Edlin Gallery, New York City. The 36" x 48" x 6" mixed-media work is made of wire, tin, a broom, wood, fabric, carpet, rope, a windshield wiper, rubber, plastic, a tin can, a toy propeller, nails, enamel, spray paint, and Splash Zone epoxy compound on wood.



Works by Julian Martin (Australian, b. 1969) were displayed at the booth of Fleisher/Ollman Gallery, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and most sold. The works ranged in price from \$1700 to \$2300.

