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Elsewhere

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Self-Taught and Outsider Art**

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Elsewhere

The International Journal of Self-Taught and Outsider Art

Elsewhere, The International Journal of Self-Taught and Outsider Art is a refereed journal that publishes essays on all aspects of art, its histories, contexts, and debates, as they relate to the field. The journal provides a forum for serious, sustained writing on Outsider Art and its multiple manifestations from around the world: Art Brut, Self-Taught Art, Contemporary Folk Art, Fresh Invention, Art Singulier, Visionary Art. It takes a trans-disciplinary standpoint, welcoming contributions from scholars in the humanities, arts, social sciences and medicine, and is cross-cultural in approach.

Editor

Colin Rhodes

Colin Rhodes is Professor of Art History & Theory and Dean of Sydney College of the Arts, The University of Sydney, Australia. He is founding Director of the Self-Taught and Outsider Art Research Collection (STOARC), based at The University of Sydney. Rhodes' research is primarily in the areas of 20th century and contemporary art. His books include the influential *Outsider Art: Spontaneous Alternatives* (2000) and *Primitivism and Modern Art* (1994). He is the editor (with John Maizels) and major contributor to *Raw Erotica* (2013), and a regular contributor to *Raw Vision* and *Création Franche*. Rhodes is currently completing an Encyclopedia of Outsider Art for Chicago University Press, and is engaged in various curatorial and writing projects for exhibitions in Australia and the US.

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Brooke Davis Anderson is the Executive Director for Prospect New Orleans/U.S. Biennial. From 2010 to 2012 Anderson was Deputy Director of Curatorial Planning at LACMA. In this role, Anderson oversaw the Watts Towers Conservation and Community Collaboration, and the "Curatorial Diversity Initiative" a project to change the demographics in museums across the nation. From 1999 to 2010, Anderson was Founding Director and Curator of The Contemporary Center at the American Folk Art Museum in New York, where she curated countless exhibitions, authored several books and numerous articles, and led the \$1 million acquisition of the Henry Darger Study Center. She has taught at Columbia University, City College of New York, and Winston-Salem State University.

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Roger Cardinal wrote the pioneering *Outsider Art* in 1972, and has published widely on individual Outsiders, including Ilija Bosilj, Ferdinand Cheval, Ted Gordon, Karl Junker, Michel Nedjar, Guillaume Pujolle and Clarence Schmidt, as well as producing essays on such topics as Outsider Architecture, Autistic Art, Prison Art, Mediumistic Art and Memory Painting. A contributing editor of *Raw Vision*, he has curated exhibitions in Britain, France, Slovakia and America. He is currently preparing a monograph on the visionary artist Madge Gill.

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Bernard L. Herman is George B. Tindall Distinguished Professor of American Studies and Folklore at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Herman has published and lectured on quilts, art beyond the walls of the academy, foodways, historical archaeology, vernacular photography, and theoretical approaches to the study and interpretation of objects. He edited *Thornton Dial: Thoughts on Paper* (2012) and *Fever Within: The Art of Ronald Lockett* (2016). Both books accompanied travelling exhibitions. He is currently completing *Quilt Spaces*, an exploration of Gee's Bend, Alabama, quilts and quiltmakers, working on a collection of essays on *Troublesome Things in the Borderlands of American Art*, for which he received a Guggenheim Fellowship. Three of his books received the Abbott Lowell Cummings Award as best work on North American vernacular architecture.

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Jo Farb Hernández, Executive Director of SPACES—Saving and Preserving Arts and Cultural Environments—a nonprofit archives documenting art environments and self-taught art (www.spacesarchives.org), is also Director of the Thompson Gallery and Professor at San José State University. She has authored or co-authored thirty books and exhibition catalogues; *Forms of Tradition in Contemporary Spain* won the prestigious Chicago Folklore Prize in 2006 and A.G. Rizzoli's *Architect of Magnificent Visions* (1997) was one of Amazon.com's "10 Best" that year. Hernández is particularly interested in art environments and has done pioneering fieldwork on this genre since 1974. A Fulbright Senior Scholar, her groundbreaking book *Singular Spaces: From the Eccentric to the Extraordinary in Spanish Art Environments* was published in 2013 by Raw Vision and Marquand Books.

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Nerida Olson

Submissions

The International Journal of Self-Taught and Outsider Art encourages substantive inquiry on issues of Self-Taught and Outsider Art, in particular constructive approaches to the field that enrich and widen our critical awareness of it, whether of subject matter or cultural traditions. We also welcome the use of visual images to support the body of text. Articles should not exceed 10,000 words in length and shorter notices should be between 2,000 to 5,000 words in length.

Full submission guidelines can be viewed online at:
<http://sydney.edu.au/sca/stoarcjournal>

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Editorial

Colin Rhodes

The representation of Outsider Art in the media is interesting. When newspapers and the mainstream art press take it on, it is usually (at least in part) to question its taxonomic legitimacy, or to announce its move to the 'inside'. The *New York Times* critic Roberta Smith, for example, has declared, 'By now the term outsider has become close to meaningless in its elasticity.'¹ And Brendan Greaves devoted a longish article in *ArtNews* to the 'mainstreaming' of Outsider Art.² The machinations of the art market are also never far in the background.³ Outsider Art has been used to satirize artworld mores and to cynically question our attitudes as audiences for art. This was done with typical incisiveness and wit in 'Mom and Pop Art', an episode of *The Simpsons* in which Homer Simpson is declared an 'outsider artist' by artworld glitterati.⁴ Always, it seems, the dominant subject is how 'we', in-the-know consumers, 'use' Outsider Art and exploit its producers.

Cara Zimmerman's examination of the 2005 film, *Junebug* engages directly with these issues. Ostensibly a story of a dealer's pursuit of a (fictional) outsider artist, it is more than anything an exploration of the complexities of family relationship and the construction of the film's central character, Madeleine – an urbane, Chicagoan art dealer – as outsider in the (for her) displaced context of her husband's Southern family in North Carolina. The film is remarkable in its portrayal of the self-taught artist David Wark and the no less fictional portrayal of his art. The filmic construction of a body of Outsider Art by a trained artist, Ann Wood is central to Zimmerman's analysis.

The relationship of 'outside' and 'inside' is continued in Leni van Goidsenhoven and Arnout de Cleene's exploration of the inclusion of putatively 'outsider' art in major art exhibitions by the prominent Belgian curator, Jan Hoet (1936-2014). They are particularly interested in the emergence of artists with intellectual and learning disabilities – a process that Belgium has led the way in over the last four decades – and issues around inclusion and equity that notions of 'outsider art' can tend to undermine, through emphasis on separation and difference. In view of this, the authors outline a history of theories of Outsider Art as a journey toward the possibility of a discourse of inclusivity. Subsequently, they expand their critique through an analysis of a single artist, the Italian Antonio Brizzolari (b. 1941). Though he has produced work from a psychiatric institution, *La Tinaia* for many years, Brizzolari was a graduate of the Art Institute of Porta Romana and an emerging figure in the Florentine contemporary art scene of the 1960s. Like some others, such as Franz Pohl (1864-1920) and Louis Soutter (1871-1942), Brizzolari is a figure who 'crossed over', so to speak from the professional artworld to 'outsider' status, by virtue of severe mental illness, thereby further problematizing taxonomies of Outsider Art.

Though different in most ways, the artists Selby Warren and Albert share more recognisably regular outsider credentials. Both are self-taught. Both were driven to produce visual images by a compulsion that made art arise from social and cultural contexts in which such activity is not to be expected. Both committed themselves to a practice over many years without recognition to speak of before being 'discovered' by artworld 'insiders' and their work introduced to broader audiences. Both have a feeling for architecture that produces images of buildings that are remarkable for the organic, living qualities they evince. The two come from strikingly different contexts, however: Albert grew up and lives in suburban London, while Warren was a bushman, born and bred in a remote part of New South Wales, Australia.

In 'An Australian Tribe of One', Roger Shelley addresses issues of definition and reception in the art of Selby Warren, including his encounter with the Australian artworld and popular media late in life, and the ways in which he dealt with a subsequent evaporation of interest in those quarters. Warren was a visual chronicler of the life and stories of an Australia that was already almost lost by the time of his death in 1979. As a result his output is rich in allusion to time and place, as well as being richly rewarding as accomplished painting. Shelley recognises this and here provides detailed iconographical readings of a number of key works, thereby adding to the richness of our understanding of both the artist and the contexts out of which

he worked.

Like Selby Warren, the American artist Johnathan Kendall was what Australians would term a *larrikin* figure; that is, an uncultivated, rowdy but good hearted person, who acts with apparent disregard for social or political conventions. Mark Gabriele's account of Kendall's work here reveals a character committed to the production of art in the service of religion and spiritual celebration, while living a life that was often dissolute and shadowy; in many ways similar to the promethean character of Goldmund in Hermann Hesse's 1930 novel, *Narziss and Goldmund*.

The voice of the artist is no less important in Outsider Art than any other. Previous issues of *Elsewhere* have included interviews with artists. Here we offer something slightly different. Domenico Zindato makes minutely detailed colour drawings, at once abstract compositions and teeming essays in densely-realised figuration. A single image, chosen by the artist is presented here, accompanied by his own meditations on the work.

¹Roberta Smith, 'Where Outsiders Come in from the Cold.' *New York Times*, 8 January 2009 <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/09/arts/design/09outs.html>, visited 16.1.2016

²Brendan Greaves, 'The Error of Margins: Vernacular Artists and the Mainstream Art World.' *ArtNews*, October 2015 <http://www.artnews.com/2015/10/07/the-error-of-margins-vernacular-artists-and-the-mainstream-art-world/> visited 16.1.2016

³James Tarmy, 'How a Self-Taught Artist Can Sell for \$250,000: Outsider Art goes mainstream.' *Bloomberg Business*, 9 January 2016 <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2016-01-08/outsider-art-goes-mainstream> visited 16.1.2016; and Alanna Martinez, 'What's the Breakout Market of 2016? Insiders Bet on Outsider Art.' *The Observer*, 14 January 2016 <http://observer.com/2016/01/whats-the-breakout-market-of-2016-insiders-bet-on-outsider-art/> visited 16.1.2016

⁴'Mom and Pop Art,' dir. Stephen Dean Moore, *The Simpsons*, ep. 222, first aired 11 April 1999



Figure 1. Ann Wood, *Dragon*

Junebug and the Creation of an Outsider Artist

Cara Zimmerman

Streaked and splattered acrylic paint on torn and feathered cardboard, *Dragon* (figure 1) is a conflation of human and fantastic, and violent and glorious. A coiled red dragon with large, bright-white fangs, seven heads, and ten horns attacks splayed Union Civil War soldiers who writhe in various stages of undress and distress. There is no ground line, and gravity is implied though positioned corpses and a disproportionately large computer monitor. On the right side of the piece there are three figures that do not interact with the bloody scene. One, an angelic form, haloed in light, kneels in the upper right corner, while the bust of a man smoking a cigarette emerges behind her, oblivious to her aura, and a serene portrait of Confederate soldier Stonewall Jackson is framed within the dragon's coil. The work lacks true pictorial depth, avoids traditional linear perspective, and is formed on a piece of found material, without nuanced paint application and colour gradation. Its construction revels in naïve interactions with artist materials and techniques. Yet, despite this, there are hints of sophisticated formal rendering: foreshortened soldiers inadvertently create depth on the picture plane, and Stonewall Jackson's facial features reveal the artist's ability to use precise and controlled brushwork.

Dragon is one of dozens of pieces by the trained artist Ann Wood who was commissioned to make work for the 2005 independent film *Junebug* (written by Angus MacLachlan, directed by Phil Morrison). Created to represent the output of the movie's fictional outsider artist David Wark (Frank Hoyt Taylor), Wood's often-clunky and anachronistic works play with stereotypes of the "look" and construction of self-taught or outsider art. However, as will be argued here, a particular aesthetic alone cannot bestow "self-taught" status upon a work—the personal narrative of the art maker is integral to this process. Whether the *Junebug* paintings are regarded either as outsider art or commissioned objects depends on the story surrounding their construction. When considered as the output of the fictional artist, Wark, the paintings have both the aesthetic and history

required to "play" the part of outsider art. On the other hand, when considered as works by the real artist, Wood, the pieces are conscious props in a film set. This clear difference in perception demonstrates the importance of—and dependence on—creation stories as to how objects are read. To understand how Wood's artworks are able to suspend viewers' disbelief and become outsider art within the confines of *Junebug* it is necessary to study their life before, during, and after their appearance in the film. This, in turn, forces us to consider how construction narratives affect the ways objects exist and are received within the larger outsider art world.

Junebug's plot centres on Chicagoan newlyweds Madeleine (Embeth Davidtz), an outsider art gallery director, and George Johnsten (Alessandro Nivola), and their trip to visit his family in a rural Southern community in North Carolina. Madeleine meets her in-laws for the first time at the beginning of the film, and over the course of the script begins to understand her new husband's past and the unsettled relationship between his relatives. George's mother Peg (Celia Weston), father Eugene (Scott Wilson), and brother Johnny (Ben McKenzie), remain questioning of and removed from Madeleine, while Ashley (Amy Adams), Johnny's naïve, pregnant wife, serves as a glimmer of cheer in the household, as well as a character foil for career-minded Madeleine.

Documenting the strained relationship between family members and Madeleine's role as an outsider within George's small-town clan, the film looks at authenticity in familial relationships and affections. This line of consideration is furthered by its subplot, in which Madeleine makes repeated visits to outsider artist David Wark (figure 2), whom she hopes to represent in her gallery.¹ Wark's personal eccentricities and his narrative-driven artworks accentuate the themes of outsidership already circling within the film, and as *Junebug* advances, Wark's role as an outsider in the local community in which George's family seems so embedded parallels Madeleine's situation as an outsider within the Johnsten family. Insights into both Madeleine and Wark emerge, but neither character is admitted into the fold of family (for Madeleine) or mainstream society (for Wark). They slowly become familiar, but never integrated.

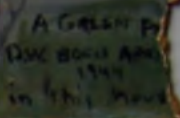
Wark, an untrained eccentric artist, creates work to adorn his home, articulate his ideas, and spread his personal religious doctrine. Deeply faith-driven and filled with racist and violent visions, he considers



Figure 2. Art dealer Madeleine Johnsten talks to self-taught artist David Wark in his home. Still from *Junebug*, 2005, directed by Phil Morrison, 0:08:53



Figure 3. Ann Wood, Study



YOU ARE
GETTING WARM
SEE

himself a “collaborator with God ... [whose] job ... is to make the invisible visible.”² Little is revealed about Wark’s past and his life experiences, and his disabilities are never discussed, but his mindset and mental state become central to his scenes and to interpreting the character’s artwork.

The audience first encounters Wark before Madeleine does, when three art pickers visit his home and studio in a scene that establishes his outsiderhood. In Wark’s first lines he mentions a “Tweeleree Repeating Rifle” in one of his paintings. When the picker admits he hasn’t heard of that sort of weapon, Wark responds, “Well, I reckon you never have because it come to me in a vision.”³ Wark’s visionary qualities are revealed from this first dialogue and reiterated every time he describes a painting.⁴ His outsider status is then reinforced through his obliviousness to the art market. At one point, gallery director Madeleine says, “I would be your representative to the whole world ... you would only deal with me,”⁵ which articulates his removal from the art world, and highlights the popular stereotype of the exclusive, symbiotic relationship established between dealer and outsider artist.

Three of the film’s scenes are set in and around Wark’s home, a vision of hoarding and disorganization designed to elicit images of unmediated creative flow. Like the works, with their naïve qualities and found materials, this unkempt, disorganised, makeshift studio space is supposed to evoke Wark’s visionary, unencumbered creativity and support his narrative. Wark’s world is delineated by the artworks’ presence in his home and yard: his rooms are stuffed with piles of paint cans, old electronics, papers, and paintings coating shelves and propped against walls and easels; his yard is complete with large cutout figures drawn from his paintings that both stand guard over the house and proclaim the character’s presence in the film and the neighbourhood.⁶

Junebug author Angus MacLachlan provided the foundation for David Wark’s Civil War-driven artworks in his script. He concocted the Tweedledee Repeater Rifle and “Glow Ray,” an angel-like figure who came to Wark “in a dream.” He also scripted elements of specific artworks, one of which is described in Wark’s line “I couldn’t finish [General] Lee’s cock on the front, so I painted it round on the back.”⁷ But while MacLachlan had ideas for elements that should be included in the works and some of the character they should possess, he didn’t know how they would physically manifest. This is where Wood and director

Phil Morrison stepped in. Wood, who attended the Massachusetts College of Art in 1986 and 1987 and moved to New York City in the mid-1990s, was working on set design for movies and television when she met Morrison. In the spring of 2004 Morrison first approached her about creating the *Junebug* work. After their initial discussion about the film, Wood felt the movie’s creative team was making a mistake in asking a trained artist to create this “outsider” material.⁸ She didn’t think that showing Wark’s work was necessary to the film’s advancement, and even suggested that scenes could be “shot around” referenced pieces. Eventually, however, she signed on to the project. Wood knew from the beginning that channelling Wark would involve the input of many people, including the film’s writer and director, and would require extensive study of artwork. She examined work from a mixture of sources, including self-taught artists Henry Darger and Howard Finster, but also Pieter Brueghel the Elder, Pompeian murals, American Civil War photography, and even D.W. Griffith—a choice of artists and genres driven by the scripted narrative.⁹ Wark’s priapic concerns drew her to Pompeian murals, and his crowded multi-figure depictions led her to Brueghel’s genre paintings. D.W. Griffith and Civil War photography provided context for the setting and time period considered, and—most influentially—renowned self-taught artists Darger and Finster helped Wood conceive an outsider aesthetic.

Wood began the project by attempting two paintings described specifically within the screenplay: *General Lee* and *Slave Uprising*. She believed (especially given Wark’s scripted line referencing General Lee’s genitalia) that the works had to be funny to succeed. Her initial round of paintings in response to MacLachlan’s descriptions were, as she says, “a failure because they were adorable, self-conscious, everything I was afraid I would make.” Thus, in order to find Wark’s style, she chose to move away from the violent and racial subjects articulated in the script that were “so at odds with [her] experience” and spend some time creating a new technique in keeping with an outsider aesthetic—specifically, one appropriate for a Southern, white, religious male character. Thus, she developed a style for the work before tackling the scripted subjects.

Wood and Morrison agreed that the artworks should conjure a sense of psychological eccentricity consistent with the character’s unending and all-consuming obsession with his subject. In order



Figure 5. Ann Wood, *Slave Uprising*

to achieve this, Wood avoided representational imagery altogether for some time, focusing instead on how this “eccentricity” might formally look. Wood’s exploration of naïve technical effects was humorously antithetical to the idealised immediacy of outsider mark-making and practice, as were her efforts to “unlearn” scholastic understanding of perspective and tonal range. Her process almost speaks to artist Jean Dubuffet’s quest for the naïve mark within his own work, as he believed it could accentuate an artwork’s power.¹⁰ Wood’s project lacked the desire for authenticity so central to Dubuffet’s stated cause, but it did aim to capitalise on the perceived connection between naïveté and honesty.

Wood experimented with various new mark-making techniques through small, quick line drawings. Based on his personal vision for the final works—and drawing on aesthetic qualities seen in the art of Howard Finster—she says, “Phil suggested I try avoiding scale and symmetry,” and that she should construct with freer strokes. She also used materials not considered appropriate for academic artists as the base for the paintings, including reused cardboard and plywood. One of her early attempts to create an outsider style for Wark highlights some of the technical elements she found important for a self-taught practitioner (figure 3). In this image of soldiers on the move, influenced by a still from D. W. Griffith’s 1915 *Birth of a Nation*, figures are formed with loose line. In places, their bodies are merely squiggles of a brush and, outside of the context of the landscape they would not be easily read as people. Yet they still feel organic in gesture and in the smooth application of ink. The restricted colour palette forces this focus on brushwork and tone. A small house on the top right of the scene stands out for its simplicity. Unlike the rest of the piece, this building feels immediate and embraces its lack of mass. Wood uses traditional artistic methods to create illusions of rational scale and depth within the picture plane. This is abandoned in the final *Junebug* pictures. However, the stark, sketch-like rendering style used for the house emerges in the final paintings.

Wood’s stylistic transformation reveals her perception of outsider art as possessing a set of distinctive visual traits. As mandated by the script, the paintings are centred on Civil War battles, which are points of obsession for Wark’s character, and include anachronistic elements and anatomical exaggeration. However, Wood chose to create work that disregards mimetic proportion, used found materials precisely

because those elements seemed “outsider” to her. Her brushwork remains visible throughout the works, and she emphasises a thick, clunky application of paint and use of found picture surfaces as signs of naïveté. Within the works, occasional pockets of perspectival rendering and nuanced line work defy these agendas, but they are easily missed within the larger visual language on the oeuvre.

Wood’s final *Junebug* works form a coherent visual identity, and each piece fits within her larger suite of images. *Dragon*, discussed earlier, features nude and violated figures with streaks of vibrant red blood dripping from their orifices. Wood uses colour to connect the hellish red dragon with bodily fluids, an uncomfortable juxtaposition between fantasy and corporeality. Confederate soldiers slaughter their Union counterparts in *General Lee* (figure 4). Organised along the right edge of the painting, the Confederates shoot at the centrally arranged Union troops, using both their large “Tweedledee Repeater” rifles and their cannon-like penises. Union soldiers attempt to hide from bullets and lie maimed in various states of undress; as with *Dragon*, fire-engine-red blood stands out from the dull blues, browns, blacks, and greys used through the rest of the image. Disproportionately large birds and anachronistic satellite dishes complete the scene. The work is not without humour. In reference to the line about “Lee’s cock,” General Robert E. Lee, complete with an enlarged phallus and angel wings, stands to the bottom left of the work.¹¹ His massive phallus is extended around to the reverse of the painting, revealing a small vignette of an individual shooting on the verso. This element is self-consciously clever, perhaps veering this work away from outsider territory by necessity of the script.

Slave Uprising (figure 5) is the most disconcerting and corporeally disrupting *Junebug* work. Naked white men hang by their feet or genitalia, while figures with white faces and black bodies shoot or impale them, one even using his exaggerated genitals as a bayonet. A written manifesto on the *New Testament*, a free-floating, half-obscured Christmas tree, and enlarged grasping hands dominate the top section of the work; the hint of dripping blood on the top right seems the only connection between the tree and hands and the carnage depicted below. The “white face” figures within this work illustrate a moment when the content of the artwork was again dictated by the film’s script: Wark says, “I never could draw a coloured face...I never knew one personally” and



Figure 6. Henry Darger, *18 At Norma Catherine. But wild thunderstorm with cyclone like wind saves them*, mid-twentieth century, watercolor, pencil, and carbon tracing on pieced paper, 48.5 x 121.3 cm, American Folk Art Museum, 2002.22.2a (photograph by James Prinz)

therefore he does not know how to paint a black face when representing a slave rebellion.¹² Wood said that this overt depiction of racism and violence was for her the most challenging piece to create.

Wood's outsider art influences can be seen in her inclusion of certain motifs and styles easily identified with specific artists. She drew heavily from Henry Darger and Howard Finster, both prominent artists in the outsider marketplace, literature, and museums. Darger (1892–1973), a reclusive Chicagoan whose extensive body of work was discovered just before his death, is known for his 15,000-page book, *The Story of the Vivian Girls, in What is Known as the*

Realms of the Unreal, of the Glandeco-Angelinian War Storm Caused by the Child Slave Rebellion, and for his corresponding often large-scale, double-sided, panoramic landscape paintings. In his watercolours (which were thematically drawn from his manuscript), Darger depicts battles between the Vivian girls, prepubescent female figures with male genitalia, and grown-up, uniformed men (figure 6).¹³ He rendered the girls in various states of disorder and undress as they encounter adult male soldiers in orderly formation atop horses or in formal uniformed line-ups. Wood's figures similarly display this opposition of order and disorder: in her works, Union soldiers are distressed, undressed, and chaotic, while Confederates exist in



more organised, formal patterns. Wood's inclusion of male genitalia, though it references in some ways the Vivian girls, serves a distinctly different purpose. The phallic imagery in the *Junebug* pieces serves a humorous and violently masculine role—perhaps owing more to Breughel—contrary to Darger, whose figures convey hermaphroditic traits in a non-sexualised and inert manner. Another Darger form that appears in Wood's work is the serpentine figure in *Antietam* (figure 7). Its reptilian body with a human head draws from Darger's mythical *Blengin* (figure 8), a horned character that recurs through his body of work.

In a 2005 interview about the *Junebug* paintings, Wood noted, "There are some obvious similarities [with Darger's work]—the uniformed soldiers, violence and weird sexuality ... but what I love about [Darger's pieces], am inspired by, and refer to them for is composition."¹⁴ Darger's horizontal landscapes feature muted watercolour washes and graphite lines to indicate the ground, horizon, and sky. He divides his space in abstract ways. Wood similarly relies on blocks of colour to conceptualise space in her battlefields, and her simple horizontal landscape formats come to life via frenetic and colourful occupants and the patterns these figures create.



Figure 7. Ann Wood, *Antietam*

Finster (1916–2001) was a Baptist preacher known for his proselytizing paintings and constructions, as well as for his four-acre artist environment in Summerville, Georgia, Paradise Garden. Incredibly prolific, creating more than 47,000 works, he focused on message over form, aiming to spread religious doctrine; a mission that at times took precedence over aesthetic and design concerns.¹⁵ Wood's incorporation of words and biblical references within her paintings, along with her thick, clunky line and lack of foreground colour gradations, speak to Finster's work. Finster often incorporated evocative spiritual and biblical phrases in his paintings, such as, "Visions of other worlds", or "God's blessing waits for your faith"¹⁶ and in turn Wood included phrases like, "On earth as it is in Heaven" (*Slave Uprising*) and "And another portent appeared in Heaven" (*Dragon*). On a most superficial level, Wood draws on Finster's recognisable, simple block capital lettering, using the same style of print on the *Junebug* work. Wood also drew on his distortions of relative scale and frequently anachronistic compositions. Where Finster mixes Albert Einstein with angels (in "*Castles of River of Life*," #1,508 (figure 9), Wood combines oversized computer monitors with dead Union soldiers.

Formally, Finster's paintings depict figures and objects through basic marks and solid colour. Einstein's face is rendered as an even, peach surface while his accompanying angel is swathed with flat white robes that read as clothing because of a few well-placed lines. Any sense of space is implied through painterly backgrounds, not the carefully rendered foreground forms. The *Junebug* works draw on this, using flat, at times translucent, beige as human flesh and simple blue, grey, and gold strokes as uniforms. As with Finster's work, the slight gradations in the background surface provide the hint of depth absent in the foreground figures.

While Wood has acknowledged the influence of Finster's work on her *Junebug* paintings, she nonetheless professes to dislike his art, believing it is "inauthentic" in creation and vision, in part because he employed family members to help him produce works in an assembly line manner.¹⁷ However, one must question why the self-taught Finster's employment of family and friends in his artmaking is considered inauthentic, while mainstream artists like Andy Warhol have successfully relied on a very similar practice. The concern with immediacy and rawness in outsider art seems to prevent processes that reveal financial ambitions from being fully

accepted.¹⁸ Collaborative practice, seen in Finster's cottage industry, implies a conscious understanding of supply and demand models, which overwhelm the primacy of the internally driven "need" to create at the centre of received ideas about outsider art.¹⁹ Perhaps Wood sees her *Junebug* work as possessing some of the same "imposter" traits as the renowned outsider, as her process in creating the *Wark* works was one of collaboration and extensive research, and not painterly immediacy.

Along with these well-known outsider oeuvres, photography and film were consistently in the forefront of Wood's creative process. She was particularly influenced by the "broken, crumpled, and ruined" soldiers in Civil War battlefield photography, as well as the flaws on the photos that could be translated in acrylic paint. The speckles and scratches on her paintings are in reaction to these marks of early photographic processes and the subsequent effects of aging and mistreatment. In position and pose, many of Wood's dead and maimed figures appear to be taken directly from these source photos. As many Civil War photographs were themselves carefully composed, rather than unframed snapshots, they provide a wealth of interesting angles and visual fields (figure 10).²⁰ Wood's use of photographic source material is in keeping with practices of many outsider artists, as, for example, both Darger and Finster were known to draw from magazine images and photographs in their artwork. Darger, especially, was drawn to the visual culture of the Civil War.²¹ Wood did not draw from such sources to follow outsider artists specifically, but because, like them and multitudes of trained artists, she needed appropriate source images containing elements of inspiration and visuals ripe for duplication.

Wood's output cleverly references the filmic format through which it is viewed. In each of the *Junebug* works static figures, in the form of regimented soldiers or dead bodies, are intermingled with active battlegrounds, snaking dragons, and writhing victims. This combination of active and inert figures, reminiscent of actors and voyeurs, brings film projection and its viewers into each panel. For example, in *General Lee*, most of the soldiers are shooting or bleeding and suffering. However, in the upper centre of the piece, a lone, unharmed Union soldier stands behind a tree, surveying the scene around him. Amidst the movement and action, he looks on from a removed vantage point with the comfort of distance present for the cinematic



Figure 8. Henry Darger, *Human Headed Blengins*, mid-twentieth century, watercolor, pencil, and carbon tracing on pieced paper, 48.3 x 61 cm, American Folk Art Museum, 2001.16.5 (photograph by James Prinz)



audience. This figure may also refer to the removal from society and mainstream life felt by an outsider like Wark—as though he is a spectator in a regular world.

Following the release of *Junebug*, Wood received a flurry of emails and letters praising the works as “successful in the portrayal of what they were trying to be.” Reviews called Wark’s works “big, bloody, Goyaesque (or ‘Guernica’-esque) Civil War canvases”²² and “crazy battlescapes of the American civil war, a sort of Hieronymus Bosch meets L.S. Lowry, only with crude speech bubbles and monumentally large penises.”²³ Wood was surprised she received positive feedback for her creations, as she had remained concerned the works would seem like self-conscious, weak imitations of a recognised genre. Interestingly, few if any public responses address the disconnect in the works’ scripted and real backgrounds. Instead, the paintings played their parts so well that their true origin was temporarily obscured.

Viewers accept these works as outsider art within the context of the movie in much the same way they accept actors in their roles. Actors play characters; they pretend to be what they are not. The relationship of the *Junebug* paintings to the outsider art world is similar to the relationship actor Frank Hoyt Taylor has to David Wark: the pieces, while on film, deny their actual narrative in favour of another fictional one, just as the actor’s true identity is denied in favour of his character. Taylor’s portrayal of Wark does not mean the actor himself is a different person. Likewise, Wood’s works portray Wark’s output without resigning their position as commissioned objects. While audiences may not recognise the works’ origins while viewing the film, when removed from *Junebug*, they are all the more significant because of their ability to deceive. They extend the conversation beyond “art as actor” and raise fundamental questions about how we define self-taught artists.

Wood’s *Junebug* works reflect market and scholarly perceptions of how outsider art should look. Her investigation into outsider art “stars” and histories enabled her to develop a unified technique for the Wark character’s works that, through a faux-naïve style, could pass as “outsider.” However, their construction makes it abundantly clear that outsider art cannot be pinpointed solely by aesthetic, and that authenticity cannot be determined through objects alone. The works make the field’s reliance on narrative all too clear: with Wark’s story, they are one type of object; with Wood’s, they are another.

There will of course be questions and arguments around this sort of conversation. Aficionados will feel that, when removed from any narrative, the works are clearly not

Figure 9. Howard Finster, *Castles of River of Life*, #1,508, 1979, paint on cut-out plywood, 205.7 x 57.8 cm, Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Jill and Sheldon Bonovitz Collection, BST-104 (© Estate of Howard Finster)



Figure 10. Alexander Gardner, [caption: Pa. Dead Confederate soldiers in "the devil's den"], July 1863, left-hand negative from glass, stereograph, wet collodion, Selected Civil War photographs, 1861-1865, Library of Congress, reproduction number LC-DIG-cwpb-00915, <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/cwpb.00915> (This image also published as Alexander Gardner, *A Sharp Shooter's Last Sleep*, Gettysburg, July 1863, plate 40 in volume 1 of *Gardner's Photographic Sketch Book of the War* (Washington: Philp & Solomons Publishers, 1866).

NOTE: <http://www.loc.gov/collections/static/civil-war-glass-negatives/articles-and-essays/does-the-camera-ever-lie/the-case-of-the-moved-body.html>

See <http://americanart.si.edu/collections/search/artwork/?id=76449>

authentic because of their often-strained aesthetic qualities. They will notice hints of foreshortening and sophisticated brushwork that seem incongruous with the fictional artist's narrative and that create rifts between Wark's story and what his output reveals. Even if these ghosts of formal training are not spotted, some may say the pieces don't display the raw talent we have come to expect from the best self-taught artists and would never impress a sophisticated viewer. Indeed, the work may draw from both Finster and Darger, but it lacks the depth that both artists achieved through truly sustained exploration of technique and subjects over decades of practice.

Regardless, the works raise important questions worthy of further consideration. For better or worse, the field's boundaries are constantly monitored by watchdogs who ensure that the alignment between output and narrative remains unscathed. For example, New York's Outsider Art Fair has traditionally had a vetting committee that checks and rechecks the artists included in each iteration of the event, and "questionable" artists, such as Clyde Angel and Joe Coleman, are removed if their stories don't line up.²⁴ Well-known outsider artists, including Darger and Finster, are known as much for their personal stories of reclusive fantasy and religious fanaticism, respectively, as for their output. And these narratives, with all the pitfalls of stereotyping and pigeonholing, might in fact be necessary to the sustained understanding of outsider art. If one does not in some way understand Darger's inner life and troubled youth, can one truly read the art? If Finster's religious devotion and missionary zeal is stripped from his biography, do the works hold the same passionate message-before-medium meaning? However unintentionally, in their quest to form a fictional – and therefore "inauthentic" outsider artist, Wood, MacLachlan, and Morrison spotlight this fundamental connection between artist identity, output, and authenticity in the self-taught arena.

¹In this essay, I am concerned with the life of Wood's paintings and her approach to the assignment, and will not address the reasons for why MacLachlan and Morrison decided to include an outsider artist within the screenplay. For more information on the scriptwriting process and its influences, see Tom Patterson, "Conversation," *Folk Art*, 31 nos. 1 & 2 (Spring/Summer 2006): 22–28.

²Phil Morrison, Mike S. Ryan, Mindy Goldberg, Angus MacLachlan, Amy Adams, Embeth Davidtz, Alessandro Nivola, et al. *Junebug*, directed by Phil Morrison (2005; London: Eureka Entertainment, 2006), DVD, 1:16:30.

³His visionary ideas are played up when he notes that his Tweedelree repeater rifle had "Come to me in a vision." *Junebug*, 5:56.

⁴Another strong example of this is the figure of Glow Ray, a character Wark claims, "Come to me in a dream," *Junebug*, 8:16.

⁵*Junebug*, 1:18:20.

⁶These painted plywood forms bear remarkable similarity to some of the large figural cutouts in Howard Finster's *Paradise Garden* (Finster's work, and its influence on the *Junebug* pieces, is discussed later).

⁷*Junebug*, 6:15.

⁸Unless otherwise noted, Wood's quotes and opinions are taken from her interview with the author, 3 November, 2008, and from a series of email exchanges with the author, between October and December 2008.

⁹Patterson, "Conversation," 27. Humorously, D.W. Griffith's first initials stand for David Wark, showing just how influential this early director was to the creation of the *Junebug* script.

¹⁰For Dubuffet, art brut or outsider practitioners were liberated, as they did not seek art world recognition and they worked outside the confines of academic aesthetic legacies. He believed that modern artists would benefit from setting aside their cultural baggage and embracing this inhibition. For more information on Dubuffet's approach, see Mildred Glimcher, ed., *Jean Dubuffet: Towards an Alternative Reality* (New York: Abbeville, 1987).

¹¹*Junebug*, 6:15.

¹²*Junebug*, 1:17:08.

¹³Darger's "grown-ups" are portrayed as white male figures, derived either from soldier or cowboy images in popular magazines or colouring books. For an in-depth introduction to Darger's work, see Michel Bonesteel, *Henry Darger: Art and Selected Writings* (New York: Rizzoli, 2001).

¹⁴Dana Stevens, "The 'Outsider' Art of 'Junebug,'" *New York Times*, September 30, 2005, http://www.nytimes.com/2005/09/30/movies/30bmovi.html?_r=0

¹⁵For more information on Finster's biography and work, see "Oral History Interview with Howard Finster," June 11, 1984, Archives of American Art, Washington, DC, <http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/interviews/oral-history-interview-howard-finster-12492>

¹⁶These lines are both visible on *Visions of Other Worlds*, #3,056 (1983), Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Jill and Sheldon Bonovitz Collection, BST-115.

¹⁷This process of assembly line creation is outlined by Ann Oppenheimer:

"People have been saying that I'm not doing my own paintings anymore, but that's not true," Finster said. "The boys get everything ready for me. They make the cut-outs, sand them down and put on the first coat of paint, according to my patterns. I've taught them exactly what to do, and they do it." (Ann Oppenheimer, "The Paradise that No One Wants," *Folk Art Messenger*, 7, no. 3, Spring 1994, <http://folkart.org/mag/howard-finster-1>).

¹⁸Joe Coleman's ostracism from the outsider art community is another example of how artists who wish to profit from their work and commercialise it are less accepted by collectors of self-taught and outsider art. For more information, see Jeff Huebner, "The Made Up Life and Real Death of Clyde Angel," *The Chicago Reader*, 1 October, 2009, <http://www.chicagoreader.com/chicago/the-made-up-life-and-real-death-of-clyde-angel/Content?oid=1205382>

¹⁹This need to create despite a limited, or no audience, appears in the narratives surrounding Henry Darger, Martín Ramírez, Adolf Wölfl, and other well-known "classic" outsider artists, whose works are seen as "unpolluted" by the market or desire

for attention.

²⁰Famed Civil War photographer Alexander Gardner was known to rearrange corpses for dramatic effect in his photographs, and his team often used prop guns, blankets, and other objects to enhance their compositions. For more information see Amy Kostine, "A Terrible Reality": Alexander Gardner's Photographs of the Dead," lesson plan, Middle Tennessee State University with the Library of Congress, http://library.mtsu.edu/tps/Alexander_Gardners_Photographs_of_the_Dead.pdf

²¹The 2010–11 American Folk Art Museum exhibition, "Henry Darger: The Certainties of War," looked at the artist's large collection of war memorabilia, including images relating to the Civil War. The Civil War also heavily influenced his manuscript, around which his most famous images were formed. For more information see Bonesteel, *Henry Darger*, 7–35.

²²David Edelstein, "Bugging Out: In Praise of the Tantalizing Beauties of *Junebug*," *Slate*, August 2005, http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/reel_time/2005/08/bugging_out.html

²³Peter Bradshaw, "*Junebug*," *The Guardian*, April 13, 2006, <http://www.theguardian.com/culture/2006/apr/14/5>

²⁴For more information on why Coleman and Angel were excluded from the Outsider Art Fair, see George Petros, "Joe Coleman," *Juxtapoz*, no. 47, November 2003, <http://georgepetros.com/writings/jxtpz/coleman.htm>, and Huebner, "The Made Up Life and Real Death of Clyde Angel."

Brizzolari's Dismantling of The Romantic Outsider Myth: Inclusive Strategies Seen from a Belgian Perspective

Leni Van Goidsenhoven and Arnout De Cleene¹

During the 1940s Jean Dubuffet introduced the label *art brut*. What still rang out in the following two decades as a peripheral cry from the avant-garde scenes, swiftly manifested itself in the 1970s and '80s as an established artistic vein. Specialised museums were founded and art fairs were organised. The French term *art brut* prepared the way for an Anglophone variant, *outsider art* (introduced by Roger Cardinal in 1972²) and an outsider canon began to form around names like Adolf Wölfli, Willem van Genk, and Jules Leclercq. Nowadays there seems to be a continuous preoccupation with, and attention to, outsider art at contemporary art events (among the most recent are the 2013 *Venice Biennale: The Encyclopedic Palace* and Art Fair FIAC, Paris).³ Together with its rapid artistic recognition, outsider art began to acquire its own (artistic) historiography and academic studies on this dynamic field flourished. Simultaneously, in sociological discussions, among others, the subject of exclusion and inclusion began to prosper, while anthropologists and ethnographers within the structuralist paradigm devoted attention to the subject of myth. Seen from a contemporary perspective, the changes that have marked outsider art's place within the broader art world, and the evolutions the conceptualisation of "outsider art" underwent itself, seem to have developed simultaneously with the renewed interest in the subjects of inclusion and myth.

In what follows, we elaborate on this development and interaction, which can be traced on multiple and interdependent levels. Firstly, the gradual revision of the definition of "art brut" and the introduction of "outsider art" loosened up Dubuffet's originally strict criteria and made it possible to integrate artists who were not deemed relevant at the outset, into the

realm of outsider art. This rethinking of outsider art can be said to relate to inclusive (social) strategies. Secondly, the presentation of outsider art has evolved significantly: the institutional paradox that was immanent in the definition of *art brut* (as an anti-institutional art) has softened its edges, making it possible to experiment in museums and exhibitions with novel ways of showing an art previously deemed to be (and presented as) isolated. Thirdly, the definition of the creative context in which works of outsider art surface (the autodidactic aspect, the spatial, social, or cultural isolation of its maker) has been refigured, allowing consideration of "atelier"-based creation and collaborations between "outsider" and "professional" artists. When it comes to these three aspects, the evolution of outsider art has been documented thoroughly.⁴ Against this background, we will focus first on the way Belgian initiatives gave a voice to these changes. While this evolution cannot, of course, be regarded as exclusively initiated by Belgian projects, it can be argued that Belgium often played a leading role. In particular, the work of curator Jan Hoet demands our attention.

Secondly, we also explore ways of approaching outsider art as a viewer. We will present an interpretation of an outsider artwork by Italian artist Antonio Brizzolari, on show in the exhibition *Middle Gate Geel '13* (Belgium), curated by Jan Hoet, that can be said to reflect these same changes. With this elaboration, we want to question some "classical" assumptions that still linger in the way outsider art is generally regarded, and the way we think about inclusion. We want to show the possibilities of interpreting Brizzolari's work as an outsider artwork that is (at the same time) highly reflexive: not only does it question our assumptions about what art is (an effect that has often been credited to outsider art), but also, and foremost, it initiates a problematisation of its own status as an outsider artwork. It is in the light of this interpretative endeavor that the perspective of "myth" appears fruitful. We will rely foremost on Roland Barthes' approach in *Mythologies* (1957)⁵ —a perspective that goes to the heart of the issues raised above, the possibilities and problems of "inclusion" when it comes to outsider art, and the interpretative experiment we offer of Brizzolari's work in the context of *Middle Gate Geel '13*.



Figure 1. Antonio Brizzolari (1941, Italy), *Untitled*, acrylic on canvas 257 x 224 cm, © MADmusée collection

The Outsider Bricoleur (And a Mythical Kind of Thinking)

The name of structuralist anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss is perhaps the first name that comes to mind where “myth” is concerned. Moreover, his name accompanies many seminal accounts and definitions of art brut and outsider art.⁶ For some time, Lévi-Strauss and Dubuffet exchanged letters on the subject of art brut.⁷ These, and the admiration both figures had for one another, given an indication of the place of art brut in the context of postwar French thought and vice versa, an interaction that has been described meticulously by Kent Minturn.⁸ Parallels with Lévi-Strauss’s framework can be traced in (and since) Dubuffet’s early accounts of art brut. His original definition of 1945 has relatively strict features and a distinctive romantic ring to it, describing art brut as: “works executed by those unscathed by artistic culture in which mimesis has little role in the way that the artist draws everything (subject, choice of material, the creative process, ways of expressing an idea, rhythms, etc.) from their own depths and, unlike intellectuals, not from the conventions of classical or fashionable art. Here, we participate in an artistic process which is completely pure, raw, entirely reinvented in all of its phases by the artist, from his impulses alone.”⁹ Clear parallels between Dubuffet’s understanding of art brut and Lévi-Strauss’s theory are visible in the latter’s book *The Savage Mind*.¹⁰ Here, Lévi-Strauss reflects on “savage thinking,” which “is neither the thought of savages, nor that of primitive or archaic humanity, but thought in a wild state, distinct from cultivated or domesticated thought...”¹¹ The resemblance with Dubuffet’s idea of “savagery” is pertinent: neither Dubuffet nor Lévi-Strauss were primarily interested in that what crystallises into formal ideas, but in the stages (instinct, caprice, violence, etc.) prior to it.¹²

Lévi-Strauss famously characterised the world of “primitive” people as “mythical.” Typically, he located “mythical thinking” not so much in the stories that order the “mythical” worldview, but rather in certain patterns of thinking. These peoples think mythically, said Lévi-Strauss, because they have an intense and personal relationship with the objects in their environment. He named their specific type of interaction with objects *bricolage*—a concept difficult to translate that refers to the idea of “do-it-yourself.” The *bricoleur* (in contrast to “the engineer”) uses whatever is “at hand” and engages with preexisting “odds and ends” or “leftovers.”¹³ As a *bricoleur*, the

“savage” “speaks’ not only with things ... but also through the medium of things: giving an account of his personality and life by the choices he makes between the limited possibilities.” The *bricoleur* “always puts something of himself” into the object with which he interacts.¹⁴ Both Lévi-Strauss and Dubuffet (and their like-minded contemporaries) recognised this mythical thinking in art brut.¹⁵ Like Dubuffet’s *artiste brut*, the *bricoleur* stands apart and isolated from the temporal evolutions of the culture and society that surrounds him. Both create objects stemming from mental operations that are timeless, expressing a universal (and at the same time highly personal) truth. Moreover, in collections of art brut and outsider art we find many works that can be characterised, quite literally, as *bricolage*: artists like André Robillard, Auguste Forestier, and Jean Lefèvre not only “tinker” with used objects, but also establish a mythical bond between object and hobbyist that seems to be the characteristic *par excellence* of art brut and outsider art. The outsider-*bricoleur* is mythical by virtue of the expressiveness that characterises his work, as often can be heard when outsider art is spoken about.

The Natural Appearance of Outsider Art

Approaching art brut from Dubuffet’s and Lévi-Strauss’ point of view, as stemming from mythical kinds of mental operations, reveals some of the crucial presuppositions of its original conceptualisation. Here we want to introduce another seminal twentieth-century work on myth, which seems fruitful in approaching art brut or outsider art, and has the potential of highlighting other aspects of the intertwining of outsider art, myth, and inclusion.¹⁶ We turn to another contemporary of Lévi-Strauss and Dubuffet, the French literary theorist, linguist, semiotician, and philosopher Roland Barthes and in particular his *Mythologies*. Here Barthes defines myth as a type of speech: “what must be firmly established at the start is that myth is a system of communication, that it is a message.”¹⁷ This statement parallels Lévi-Strauss’ approach to myth, and more precisely, his idea about how “a structural understanding of general systems of signification ... could then also be related to ... societies.”¹⁸ Barthes considers this in *Mythologies* and argues that “... all human practices in society are mediated, that is they are always already contained within systems of signification”.¹⁹ More specifically, he suggests that some existing signs acquire an added layer of meaning that becomes taken for granted: “... myth



Figure 2. Jan Hoet, © Hans Van Geel

is experienced as innocent speech: not because its intentions are hidden—if they were hidden, they could not be efficacious—but because they are naturalized.” Since a myth presents a “naturalised”²⁰ meaning that we experience as logical, untainted, and unproblematic, the task of the mythologist is to make this added layer of meaning (in words, images, objects, or human actions) explicit.

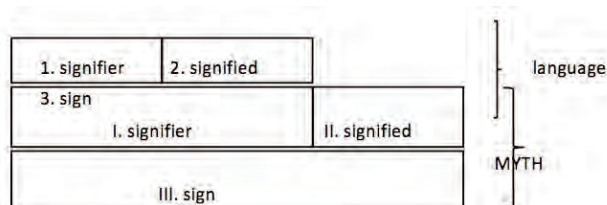


Figure 3. R. Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. A. Lavers (New York: The Noonday Press, 1991), 113.

Seen from Barthes' perspective, we could say that art brut/outsider art, in addition to being a “genre” or “label” (a name that refers to a number of artworks), functions as a contemporary myth. In broad strokes, it can be said to work as follows: as the antithesis of the “cultural arts,” art brut is seen as an unconventional art form without precedents: works and artists do not place themselves within an artistic tradition, nor do they reflect on the cultural reality. Moreover, they remain unaffected by any kind of artistic ambition. Outsider artists do not regard themselves as an artist and are only so-called because they have been accorded that name by others. The outsider artwork resists the hegemony of art discourse (although, ironically, it was precisely this discourse that brought outsider art to attention). With expressiveness as the central mytheme, such accompanying romantic notions as spontaneity, authenticity, the raw and crude, the missing influence of the cultural and artistic world, its place outside history and the absence of economic motives, all flourish. In short, the myth of outsider art states that it is art at its most natural: unspoiled by any outside influence, rising directly from the psychic depths of its creator. Seen from this perspective, the attraction exercised by outsider art through the past decades is based on a naturalisation of the natural: when we see an outsider artwork, we think of it—quasi-automatically—as a rough and direct expression of the inner world of its creator.²¹ The self-evident expression of the outsider artist becomes, as myth, its self-evident meaning. Outsider art is a natural art, both with regards to its mythical content (Lévi-Strauss) as to its mythical structure (Barthes).

This strict romantic view of the archetypal *artiste brut* was nuanced in the past few decades. Rigid criteria were revisited in the course of time, not least by Dubuffet himself (the creation of a “collection annexe,” for example, made it possible to pay attention to artworks with characteristics other than those adhering to his strict criteria for art brut).²² Nonetheless, art brut, and outsider art in its wake, still rely heavily on the aforementioned (“mythical”) perspective. A romantic notion of the subject, the emphasis on the expressiveness of art brut, and the ahistorical and autonomous qualities of the artworks continue to function as the foundation and valorisation of art brut and outsider art. Even in contemporary exhibitions and art events that take on an inclusive stance and highlight the parallels between outsider and “insider” art (and thus take a critical point of view towards the original definition of art brut), it remains a tempting interpretational frame.²³

The Belgian context and perspectives on inclusion

As discussed above, several characteristics of outsider art have been critically questioned in the past few decades. This theoretical reflection also manifested itself institutionally.²⁴ In the presentation of outsider art in exhibitions and museums, cross-pollination with “insider art” has become quite common at present. Next to that, the number of specialised ateliers dedicated to the support of artists with mental diseases and of artists with learning and developmental disabilities mushroomed. As such, what had arguably been the prime focus of outsider art—the artist who is said to be mentally ill—broadened to include artists previously neglected, most notably to artists with learning and intellectual disabilities. Belgium has played a striking role in both trends.

In 1979 Créahm (Liège, acronym of “Créativité et Handicap mental” [Creativity and Mental Disability]) was founded by Luc Boulangé. It was conceived as an atelier where artists with learning and developmental disabilities could develop their artistic talents in performance and fine art. Créahm (which has since established additional ateliers in other places) does not primarily focus on the therapeutic value of artistic creation, but on establishing an environment in which the artists can focus on the artistic creation itself. In this spirit, Créahm brings contemporary professional artists and outsider artist together in a project-oriented way.²⁵ Créahm quickly



Figure 4. Kunsthuis Yellow Art (Geel), © Hans Vangeel



Figure 5. Atelier Kunsthuis Yellow, © Hans Van Geel

evolved into an inspiring example in the European context when it comes to these “inclusive” projects.²⁶ Its cooperation with institutions such as MADmusée (Liège) and art)&(marges (Brussels), specializing in the presentation of outsider art, provides a national forum for presenting the results of these activities. Besides Créahm, Belgian organisations such as Wit.h (Kortrijk), Kunsthuis Yellow Art (Geel), La “S” Grand Atelier (Vielsalm), and others have adopted a comparable perspective, although they use different methods and focus on a different clientele. Each atelier has its own perspective on the equilibrium between the artistic and the therapeutic, but all of them tend to focus on artistic criteria. These organisations frequently organise workshops and projects where collaborations between outsider artists and contemporary, “professional” artists are the starting point. This multiple or co-authorship reflects an important alteration inside the paradigm of outsider art.²⁷

In Belgium, there is no lack of places where outsider art—such as the artworks made in the above-mentioned ateliers—can be shown and seen. Three of the most remarkable (that also have international allure) are Museum Dr. Guislain (Ghent), MADmusée (Liège) and art)&(marges museum (Brussels). Their presentational policies have proven to be broad-minded. The Museum Dr. Guislain, founded in 1986 as a centre of expertise for mental healthcare and housed in Belgium’s first asylum, presents a permanent collection on the history of psychiatry and a separate collection of outsider art.²⁸ Besides the presentation of these vast permanent collections, since the 1990s the museum has staged temporal art and thematic exhibitions such as *Twins* (2002), *Sick* (2007), *The Game of Madness* (2008), and more recently *War and Trauma* (2013) and *Dark Chambers. On Melancholia and Depression* (2014). These cultural-historical exhibitions (that address subjects related to psychiatric illness) present a combination of historical objects, outsider art, and contemporary art. For instance, work of Henry Darger can be seen next to an antique psychiatric handbook; works of Willem Van Genk and Albrecht Dürer can hang alongside each other.

Located in the centre of Liège in the French-speaking part of Belgium, the MADmusée (Musée de l’Art Différencié), founded in 1998 and recognised as a museum in 2008, focuses on research, education, and diffusion of art made by people with learning and developmental disabilities. It houses an international

collection that currently boasts some 2,300 pieces. A large part of the works in the collection were created in a workshop context—the artists of Créahm, amongst others, are well represented at MADmusée. The focus on the workshop and atelier context is remarkable—especially when seen from an international and historical point of view: the inclusion of artists with learning and developmental disabilities, and the focus on atelier-based creation within the framework of outsider art has long been seen as problematic. MADmusée organises contemporary art exhibitions, both thematically as centred on one or more artists.

Another major Belgian institution is the Brussels-based art)&(marges museum, founded by Françoise Henrion in the mid-1984. Just like MADmusée, art)&(marges museum has played a pioneering role in bringing attention to the artistic qualities of works made by artists with learning and developmental disabilities. In its rich history, the museum has organised and participated in projects that bridged the gaps between the margin it represents and the broader art world. In the context of Bruges, Cultural Capital of Europe (2002) it assembled outsider artists and professional artists and presented their co-authored project-based work. A more recent project, *20+20*, integrated works of the museum’s collection into twenty different cultural places, while later bringing twenty pieces from the collections of those cultural places to the art)&(marges museum itself and presenting them alongside works from its own collection. It is this constant ambition to open the dialogue between inside and outside—an ambition typographically made clear in the “)&” —that has characterised art)&(marges’ trajectory the last few decades.

The changes outsider art underwent, and as reflected in the Belgian context, are simultaneous to a broader sociological concern for (and maybe even a social evolution situated around) the concept of “inclusion,” which, as the successor of “integration,” is a term that has increasingly come into vogue since the late 1980s and the early 1990s. It refers to a (utopian) societal framework within which everyone (without parameters around alleged “types of otherness”) should be treated with respect and given equal opportunities.²⁹ Since the 1960s, western culture has increasingly envisioned community as inclusive. Up to a certain point, it could be argued that “the other” (a general term that refers to different kinds of marginalised groups) has been given a (more) central place in a society as a result of emancipatory

dynamics in the second half of the twentieth-century.

The inclusive thought nevertheless has its own pitfalls. Linda J. Graham and Roger Slee argue “that limited notions and models of inclusion, such as those realized through resourcing mechanisms that ensure the objectification of individual difference, result ... in an ever complex and insidious exclusion.”³⁰ As a consequence, it has been argued that inclusion can lead to the diminishing or even vanishing of difference. One could state that the contours of what constitutes otherness fade. Because the inclusion project lays its focus on placing “the other” (more) in the middle and next to “the normal,” the emphasis on commonality leads to the relativisation of that which is different. As a result, the notion of inclusion seems to back itself into a corner. The result can be a flattening rather than an acknowledgment of differences. It seems that the concept (and dynamic) of inclusion risks ending in a deadlock.³¹

As Lennard J. Davis proposed, it is perhaps more fruitful to reverse the question and inquiry about “otherness” and “disability” by not focusing so much on the construction of “the other” as on the construction of normalcy.³² Therefore, the question is not about what we can do better, but how we can think differently about inclusion as a prime focus.³³ Likewise, such a critical perspective can be fruitful when confronted with the contemporary way of dealing with outsider art.

From Open Mind (Closed Circuits) to Middle Gate Geel ‘13

The Belgian institutions concerned with outsider art can be framed in a larger international context. Next to the surfacing of specialised museums, in the past three decades a variety of temporary exhibitions and independent projects appeared worldwide and showed outsider art within a wider artistic and cultural-historical context, including *Parallel Visions* (1992, USA, Los Angeles County Museum of Art), *Les Maîtres du Désordre* (2012, France, Musée du Quai Branly), and the *Biennale of Venice: The Encyclopedic Palace* (2013, Italy). Again, Belgium offered early on its own projects, such as *Open Mind (Closed Circuits)* (1989, Belgium, Ghent) and *Y.E.L.L.O.W.* (2001, Belgium, Geel).

A crucial figure in this context is Jan Hoet (1936–2014) (figure 2) —in Belgian popular discourse often referred to as “the art pope”—who played

an important role in the Belgian and by extension European contemporary art world. He is credited with introducing modern and contemporary art to a large and broad Belgian public, was involved in the foundation of two museums (mARTA Herford in Germany and S.M.A.K. in Belgium), and acquired international recognition with *Chambres d’Amis* (1986, Ghent), *Documenta IX* (1992, Kassel), and *Over The Edges* (2000, Ghent) —exhibitions that experimented with novel ways of presenting artworks, often infiltrating public spaces.

In many projects Hoet presented outsider art, for which he relied (explicitly) on his own biographical background. His father was a psychiatrist-neurologist, working and living with his family at the psychiatric domain in Geel. Often, psychiatric patients resided in the family house—a literal form of inclusion that continues a long-lasting tradition of the city of Geel. His father was also an art collector. Art and psychiatry were thus all present early on in Jan Hoet’s life. His fascination for the parallel between art and psychiatry appears several times and on different levels throughout his career: he employed people with mental health issues jobs within his museums, allowed his parental home in Geel to be transformed into an art-atelier for patients, and made several exhibitions that gave important roles to outsider art, such as, *Y.E.L.L.O.W.* (2001), *Ad Absurdum* (2008), *Loss of Control* (2008), *Ich Sehe Was, Was Du Nicht Siehst* (2010), and *Middle Gate Geel ‘13* (2013).

Hoet’s *Open Mind (Closed Circuits)* (1989, Ghent) was one of the first exhibitions that presented outsider art in combination with professional art. Art made by psychiatric patients such as Oswald Tschirtner, Heinrich Anton Müller, Friedrich Schröder-Sonnerstern and Willy Maes were presented in dialogue with modern and contemporary artists including Francis Bacon, Max Beckman, Jan Fabre, and Jackson Pollock. The subtitle, *(Closed Circuits)*, refers to a statement by Jean Dubuffet, who said that each artist-brut is a “closed-circuit,” in (an idiosyncratic) dialogue with him- or herself alone.³⁴ Hoet’s exhibition takes Dubuffet’s romantic statement as a starting point, to ironically question and criticise it by presenting the “monologic” artworks next to other artworks and stimulating their (open-minded) dialogue.³⁵

Middle Gate Geel ‘13 was curated in 2013 by Jan Hoet just before his death at age 77. This “home town” exhibition was conceived around a threefold thematic



Figure 6. Antonio Brizzolari (1941, Italy), *Untitled*, acrylic on canvas, 257 x 224 cm, © MADmusée collection

kernel: myth, psychiatry, and art. The concept of “myth” generated the first rough ideas about the content of this project. With “myth,” Hoet wanted to incorporate a broad range of subjects, ranging from religion and rituals to magic, as well as non-western art. Gradually this scope grew and different levels of meaning became visible by linking myth to psychiatry and art. The exhibition set out to analyse the mutual interaction between mythical or magic-religious art, outsider art, and “professional” art. The exhibition did not want to emphasise the differences between this broad range of objects, nor did it try to present them as equal and interchangeable. *Middle Gate Geel ‘13* wanted to do more than just “compile” a number of works that somehow refer to the three main themes. It had no intention of providing clear-cut answers—it wanted to disturb popular and dominant beliefs about what art (and myth, and madness) is.

The exhibition included 240 art pieces and 140 artists, including Adolf Wölfli (Switzerland), Pablo Picasso (Spain), Auguste Forrester (France), Paul Klee (Switzerland), Siebe Wiemer Glastra (The Netherlands), Günther Uecker (Germany), Paul McCarthy (United States), and Jules Leclercq (France). It took place at four different locations in Geel. One of these was Jan Hoet’s formal parental home—now the Yellow Art atelier. Several (international) artists—Jon Pylypchuk (Canada), Vaast Colson (Belgium), and Ronny Delrue (Belgium)—were invited to engage in residencies and worked with the (outsider) artists of the Yellow Art Atelier. The history of Hoet’s hometown added a crucial layer to the exhibition. In a way, the small city was one of the major pieces on display. Geel is a unique place when it comes to the history of psychiatric care and more specifically family care. It had served as a pilgrimage site from the thirteenth-century onwards, founded by the myth and relics of Saint Dimpna (the patron saint of the mentally ill). Since that time, the former monastic order of the *Augustientjes* and the inhabitants of Geel have taken care of people with mental problems. Patients were (and still are) integrated in families’ daily lives and in the city’s activities. Geel’s home nursing system still enjoys a special status in the field of caring for the mentally disturbed. The integration of psychiatric patients in families used to be frowned upon. Today, home nursing is considered a progressive way of treating patients. Geel’s home nursing system is considered a valuable model. Dialogues and the shared experiences of patients and non-patients abound in Geel. *Middle Gate Geel’13*, with its

emphasis on the relation between outsider and “insider” art, stood firmly in this geographical and historical context and intensified this dialogue.³⁶

As such, *Middle Gate Geel ‘13* is an “inclusive” exhibition that seems to correlate with the question and dynamics of inclusion on a societal level. It raises the question of whether and how insider and outsider art relate to each other, as well the question of how inclusive strategies in an artistic context relate to inclusion in society. Does the exhibition present a utopian idea about the coexistence of inside(r) and outside(r)? Or does it take up a critical stance towards (current) dominant social relations to “the other”? It is clear that an exhibition including both insider art and outsider art contains a complexity and a problematic that is similar to that of social inclusion, although the artistic context has its own characteristics and a straight equation cannot be made. A visit to the exhibition can both increase the contrasts between insider and outsider and minimise the differences. On the one hand, we can see an outsider artwork, set against the background of professional art, as “the other” par excellence, but on the other hand, we can also emphasise the similarities, separated from all biographical information. We can leave the exhibition convinced that outsider art is essentially different from other art, just as we can leave with the understanding that outsider art is essentially the same. *Middle Gate Geel ‘13* does not prevent us in any way from approaching the artworks in one of these ways. It does however refrain from formulating an explicit and definitive answer. Rather, it poses questions and throws a critical light on each answer we might give.

The Mantle of Antonio Brizzolari at Middle Gate Geel ‘13

This critical stance towards the theme of inclusion in relation to outsider art is manifest throughout the exhibition, though it is especially present at one particular moment: viewers encounter a red cloth—bedding, clothing, or flag, perhaps? —lying in a bunch on the floor. As it happens, the cloth invites us to engage in a specific kind of exhibition experience; one that leaves the complexity of outsider art and of its (inclusive) presentation intact. The cloth seems to have been forgotten, carelessly, and aimlessly cast aside in a pile. In the arbitrariness with which it fills the space, the cloth seems, literally, to resign itself to the status of (mere) object. Our confrontation with it changes when we see that it has been painted upon.

A face in side profile adorns the pinkish surface. That the cloth has a maker—Antonio Brizzolari—and is placed on a museum floor radically alters its status.³⁷ It is no longer mere object robbed of its proper function (to clothe, cover, protect, and so on). As a piece of artwork its potential for meaning is burst wide open.

Before we go too far down the trail of interpretation, the work's meaningful multiplicity takes on limits: Brizzolari, we learn from various sources, can be regarded as an outsider artist: he works in the Italian (outsider) atelier *La Tinaia* and his work is among others preserved in the outsider-collection of MADmusée. Nevertheless, some could argue that Brizzolari does not fit into the strict criteria once used: he had an artistic education, was firmly embedded in the Italian cultural scene, teaches art courses, refers to modernist and contemporary artists in his works, and takes up a critical stance towards certain art-theoretical and esthetical points of view.³⁸ As a (potential) outsider artwork, the cloth absorbs a tradition, an anecdote, and a biography. The anecdote in question is that Brizzolari wore this painted cloth while at work in the Italian special atelier, *La Tinaia*, which grew out of the Psychiatric Hospital V. Chiarugi in Florence, and which has experimented with artistic therapy since 1959. We see, through the anecdote, an intimate connection between artwork and artist: Brizzolari's painting adorns the cloth and, simultaneously, the cloth adorned Brizzolari.

Brizzolari will not be the only one to get wrapped up in all this. In a letter, Brizzolari includes notes on how to exhibit the cloth: he explicitly asks that the cloth not be hung as a painting, but that it be laid on the ground and offered to visitors as a mantle, a cloak. As viewer, we are asked to participate in looking at and, in turn, wearing the artwork as clothing. What happens if we do as Brizzolari and the cloth ask of us and drape ourselves in the mantle? The wearing of the cloth is an integral part of the artwork. It is no longer the artist Brizzolari that makes the artwork, no longer the viewer who observes the artwork from a safe distance. Rather, the artwork pulls viewers into itself.³⁹ It transforms the visitor simultaneously into an artist and makes him or her part of the artwork. With the cloth draped over our shoulders, we occupy the place of Brizzolari and repeat his theatrical gesture.

Brizzolari's cloth is "mythical" in several ways. It seems at first to refer to a classical mythological significance of the mantle as a sign of protection or power. It also testifies, from the standpoint of Levi-

Strauss' *bricolage*, to the intense, mythical bond between maker and object. Brizzolari is known for his extensive use of found materials: he "draws on anything he has at his disposal at the time of inspiration, and he uses many different tools; his canvases are the walls and the furniture in his rooms, the bed sheets signed ASL stolen from clinics, cardboard picked up on the streets, paper notebooks, clothes, bags, hats and even parts taken from car bodies".⁴⁰ The anecdote that Brizzolari wore the cloth emphasises the expressiveness that is often said to be the main characteristic of outsider art.

In wearing the mantle, these mythical aspects are made even more explicit, they become something *excessive*. Resting on the shoulders of the spectator is an outsider artwork that blatantly appeals to its own myths. By demanding the spectator to pull it on, the cloth makes the viewer aware of the romantic myth that outsider art forms as a genre and a label. The cloth is not just an "ordinary" cloth or a "simple" piece of clothing, but also a symbol of the expressiveness of outsider art. The significance of the cloth as a piece of fabric or as a garment seems to vanish when we see it as an outsider artwork. The call to wear it as a garment nevertheless recalls to us its significance as a "simple" object rather than a work of art. A tension arises between the cloth as used object and the cloth as outsider art. Since both functions are observable at the same time, the mantle exposes the various layers that give it its meaning and makes explicit the way in which the outsider art label gives the mantle a mythical content.

Adorned in the cloak, the spectator is asked to move into Brizzolari's world. It invites us to understand "the other" (just as the inclusive project in society tells us to do). But rather than the visitor (and thus the art world) opening him—or herself to outsider art, it is Brizzolari's work that—literally—includes the spectator. The cloth envelops us as spectators. This inversion of inclusion thematises inclusion itself. Brizzolari's mantle asks us to do more than just signify "the other," confirm or deny its otherness (or equality). The act of wearing the mantle urges us to take up a critical position in relation to both the outsider artwork that envelops us, and the exhibition housing it. It calls on us to understand "the other" but, more importantly, it simultaneously makes us aware of that problematic ambition.

The mantle's invitation to enter the anecdote makes us aware of the fact that the myth of the outsider artwork and the anecdotal theatricality of the outsider

artist depend on our role as spectator. We are not only clothing ourselves in the outsider artwork, but also in the myth of that outsider artwork. We are complicit in producing a myth, but, in putting on the cloak, we also make ourselves aware of this role. Just as Brizzolari's garment questions its own status as an outsider artwork and thematises the idea of inclusion, so too does it decentre the spectator. As a romanticising visitor, we stand with the cloak around our shoulders, newly a part of the artwork, and level with its creator. We play a comparable role as the outsider-artist Brizzolari. In the wake of the blurring of the distinction between artist and spectator, "outsider" and "insider" are thus rendered problematic categories. As such, Brizzolari's mantle concisely presents the critical ambition of *Middle Gate* by bringing "myth" and "inclusion" to act upon one another.

Mythologists

Critical attention directed toward outsider art since the 1990s notwithstanding, several mythical stereotypes remain prominent. One of these is evident in the fact that outsider artworks, unlike contemporary and (post)modern art forms, are rarely if ever interpreted as (self)reflexive. The essence of the outsider artwork seems to be anchored in its expressiveness. While, for the last several decades, outsider artworks could be described as related to their (often popular) cultural and artistic context, it seems nearly impossible to hold up the claim that an outsider artwork thematises its own status as (outsider) art. This is precisely why Brizzolari's contribution is important. This particular work requires an approach that differs from the usual way of looking at outsider art. In a manner similar to contemporary and postmodern art, it plays with the different ways we can interpret the work. Brizzolari's cloth thematises the classic conceptualisation of outsider art and mythologises its own status. At the same time, it problematises this myth by the simple and inventive act it requires of the beholder. A myth, according to Barthes, functions only when it creates unknown added significance. Brizzolari makes us face the myth and in doing so demythologises the cloth.

The importance of Brizzolari's work goes beyond the purely artistic. The question touched upon by the mantle is one of ethics. Brizzolari shows himself to be not so much a personification of the myth of the outsider artist, but a reflexive, critical mythologist who takes outsider art as his subject even as he

occupies a socially liminal space. By wearing the mantle, viewers are able to walk in none other than Brizzolari's footsteps and adopt the same critical role of mythologist. This leads to an inclusive gesture that takes inclusiveness itself as its subject. As participatory mythologist, rather than as spectator or artist, we dispose of the self-evidence of outsider art and its possible modes of presentation. In this way, artist and spectator, as mythologists, both *become* outsider, not so much through the classical outsider-criteria of psychological, social, or cultural isolation, but through the fact that we, shrouded under the mantle, place ourselves *outside the myth*. As mythologists we are doomed to an ambiguous desire: "We constantly drift between the object and its demystification, powerless to render its wholeness. For if we penetrate the object, we liberate it but we destroy it; and if we acknowledge its full weight, we respect it, but we restore it to a state which is still mystified".⁴¹ It is the tension between admiration and reflection and the uneasy desire to reconcile both that plays out in the work of Brizzolari. The act of putting on the mantle is precisely what invites to (dis) mantle outsider art, the social, and artistic notion of inclusion, and us as a spectator.

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²R. Cardinal, *Outsider Art* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1972).

³At *Documenta 5* (Germany, 1972) Harald Szeemann (1933–2005) showed contemporary artworks (e.g., Georg Baselitz and Christian Boltanski) side by side with works of Adolf Wölfli—an act that is regarded and conceived by the art world as the most important caesura in the history of the *Documenta* thus far.

More recent crossovers between contemporary art and outsider art at relative commercial art events are: *2013 the Biennale of Venice and FIAC/OAF*. At the *55th International Art Exhibition* (1 June–24 November 2013), *The Encyclopedic Palace [Il Palazzo Enciclopedico]*, curated by Massimiliano Gioni and organised by the Biennale of Venice took place at the central Pavilion and the Arsenale. Outsider Art was the central theme of the exposition, which featured over 150 artists from 38 countries. Paris' high-profile *Contemporary Art Fair (FIAC)* coincided in 2014 with the Paris edition of *Outsider Art Fair* (Hôtel Le A in Paris, 23–26 October 2014), which allowed an intense cross-pollination between contemporary art and the field of outsider art.

⁴See L. Peiry, *L'Art Brut* (Paris: Flammarion, 2010); Colin Rhodes, "Les Fantômes Qui Nous Hantent: En Écrivant *Art Brut* et *Outsider Art*", *Ligeia: Dossiers Sur L'Art*, 53–54–55–56 (2004): 183–195.

⁵R. Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. A. Lavers (New York: The

Noonday Press, 1991).

⁶For example, M. Thévoz, *L'Art Brut* (Geneva: Skira, 1975).

⁷Minturn, K., "Dubuffet, Lévi-Strauss, and the Idea of Art Brut", *RES Anthropology and Aesthetics*, 46 (2004): 247.

⁸K. Minturn, "Dubuffet, Lévi-Strauss, and the Idea of Art Brut," *RES Anthropology and Aesthetics* 46 (2004): 247–258.

⁹The original French definition can be found in J. Dubuffet, *Prospectus et Tous Écrits Suivants. Réunis et Présentées par Hubert Damisch*, vol. 1 (Paris : Gallimard, 1967–1995), 201–202. The English translation of the definition can be found on: http://www.dubuffetfondation.com/artbrut_f_ang.htm, accessed February 10th 2014.

¹⁰C. Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson 1966) [*La Pensée Sauvage*, 1962].

¹¹*ibid.*, 219.

¹²See, for example, Minturn 2004, 257.

¹³Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*, 19.

¹⁴*ibid.*, 21.

¹⁵See for example M. Thévoz, *L'Art Brut* (Geneva: Skira, 1975). Lévi-Strauss himself draws a link between "naïve art" and the postman Cheval, a canonical outsider artist: "[l]ike 'bricolage' in the technical plane, mythical reflection can reach brilliant unforeseen results on the intellectual plane. Conversely, attention has often been drawn to the mytho-poetical nature of 'bricolage' on the plane of so-called 'brut' or 'naïve' art, in the architectural follies like the Palais Idéal du Facteur Cheval ..." (Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*, 17).

¹⁶The work of Lévi-Strauss and Barthes on myth is compatible. Nevertheless, Barthes provides a different emphasis compared to Lévi-Strauss that is fruitful in the context of the discussion of outsider art.

¹⁷Barthes 1991, 107.

¹⁸G. Allen, *Roland Barthes (Routledge Critical Thinkers)* (London/ New York: Routledge, 2003), 60.

¹⁹Allen, *Roland Barthes*, 60.

²⁰Barthes, *Mythologies*, 130.

²¹In this perspective, it would be interesting to study the striking occurrence of metaphors stemming from "nature" in the discourse on outsider art. Often, outsider art is described in terms of volcanoes, rivers, natural materials... In the recently published book on Brizzolari, for example, Brizzolari's preference for the colour red is presented as a consequence of his rational passion: "it is fire, the lava of the volcano, blood, life" (A. Natali, "Come in uno specchio. As in a mirror," in *Antonio Brizzolari. A Quasi-self-portrait*, ed. E. Bottinelli (Firenze : Mandragora, 2014), 16).

²²Lucienne Peiry, amongst others, draws attention to the changes art brut underwent through time, whereby she distinguishes a more classical art brut period (before the 1960s) and a period wherein Dubuffet's original and strict definition was broadened (Peiry, *L'Art Brut*). For further reading, see Rhodes, "Les Fantomes Qui Nous Hantent", 183–195 and C. Rhodes, "An Other Academy: Creative Workshops for Artists with Intellectual Disabilities", *The International Journal of the Arts in Society* 3, no. 1 (2008): 129–234.

²³Dubuffet nuanced the strict definition of art brut in the second part of his lecture *In Honor of Savage Values (Honneur aux valeurs sauvages*, 1951). The idea of the "collection annexe," also called "Neuve Invention" was a further step in the loosening of the original criteria. See: R. Cardinal, "Toward an Outsider Aesthetic," in *The Artist Outsider and the Boundaries of Culture*, ed. M. D. Hall and Eugene W. Metcalf, Jr. (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994), 20–43 and Colin Rhodes, "Les Fantomes Qui Nous Hantent," 183–195.

²⁴In a sociological field analysis, Julia Ardery argues that a lack of economic motivation emphasises the "purity" of outsider

art and makes it a valued commodity precisely for that reason (J. S. Ardery, *The Temptation. Edgar Tolson and the Genesis of Twentieth-Century Folk Art* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998)). Gary A. Fine, in turn, analyzes the function of "authenticity" in the discourse around outsider art (G. A. Fine, *Everyday Genius. Self-Taught Art and the Culture of Authenticity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

²⁵Numerous workshops, creative courses and therapies are organised in the Belgian healthcare sector. At the same time, the artistic world regularly calls on minority groups and outsider artists. Among them are theatre makers (Lola Arias, Lotte van den Berg), choreographers (Jérôme Bel) and fine art artists (Vaast Colson, Ronny Delrue, and Jacques Charlier) who create performances or visual art in collaboration with marginalised groups.

²⁶See Rhodes, "An Other Academy," 131.

²⁷For further readings on this topic, see Rhodes, "An Other Academy," 129–234 and C. Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London: Verso, 2012). Claire Bishop's *Artificial Hells* does not include a reflection on outsider art specifically, but questions how art criticism can negotiate with and reflect upon interactive and social-cultural artworks where co-authorship and minority groups are at the centre.

²⁸Since 2002, the Museum Dr. Guislain also houses the Stadshof Collection, the most important Dutch outsider art collection, which was previously on show in Zwolle (The Netherlands).

²⁹L. J. Davis, ed., *The Disability Studies Reader*, 4th ed. (New York: Routledge, 2013); L. Vislie, "From Integration to Inclusion: Focusing Global Trends and Changes in the Western European Societies," *European Journal of Special Needs Education* 18, no. 1 (2010): 17–35.

³⁰L. Graham and R. Slee, "An Illusory Interiority: Interrogating the discourse/s of Inclusion," *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 40, no. 2 (2008): 280.

³¹A negative view on inclusion "has arisen ... from confusion about what is involved, frustration at the climate of accountability within which inclusion is supposed to take place, guilt at what hasn't been achieved and exhaustion from efforts which have seemed futile. It is little wonder that inclusion has been viewed as an impossibility ..." (J. Allan, *Rethinking Inclusive Education: the Philosophers of Difference in Practice* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2008), 153).

³²Davis, *The Disability Studies Reader*, 1.

³³*cf.* Allan, *Rethinking Inclusive Education*.

³⁴*cf.* Minturn K., "Dubuffet, Lévi-Strauss, and the Idea of Art Brut," 258.

³⁵For more info see: J. Hoet and R. Hoozee, *Open Mind (Closed Circuits)* [Exposition Catalogue] (Milano: Editoriale Fabbri, 1989).

³⁶This approach of house nursing has aroused interest around the world. In Michel Foucault's *History of Madness* [Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique], for example, Geel is mentioned as one of the examples of the tragic (and in Foucault's frame highly idealised) place madness occupied in Western pre-Cartesian society. See: M. Foucault, *Histoire de la Folie à L'âge Classique* (Paris: Gallimard), 20.

³⁷Antonio Brizzolari's work can be found in the collection of the MADmusée (Liège, Belgium). Recently, a book was published about the artist: E. Bottinelli, ed., *Antonio Brizzolari. Quasi Un Autoritratto - A Quasi-Self-Portrait* (Firenze: Mandragora, 2014).

³⁸Antonio Brizzolari can be considered as a "border figure" (*cf.* Dubuffet's *collection annexe*). He works in the Italian specialised studio, *La Tinaia*. With psychiatrist Franco Mori as its founder, *La Tinaia* was created in 1964 and has put artistic expression

at the very heart of its rehabilitation centre for psychiatric patients. For more information, see <http://www.latinaia.org/index.html>. Brizzolari also works outside of the atelier, and performs on the street, see for example Ferruccio Spinetti and Petra Magoni, "Quam dilecta," YouTube video, 7:37, posted by "autunno," 3 December 2008, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PHRWU4GNzMU>. His status as an outsider artist could be questioned, depending on the criteria one wishes to use. However, it is precisely this ambiguity that makes the artist even more relevant for the thesis we unfold in this article.

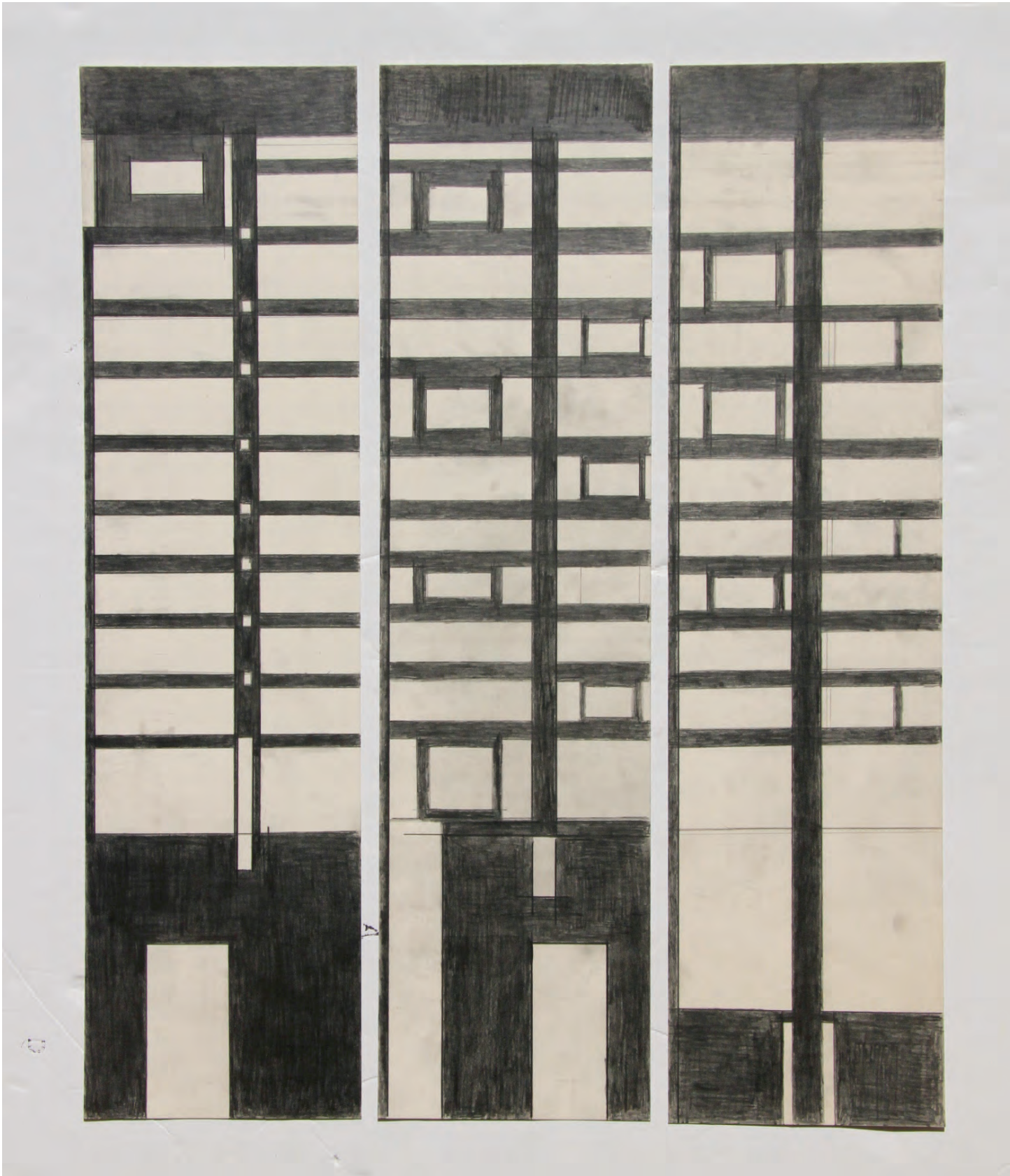
³⁹The choice for an article of clothing is not coincidental. Brizzolari is passionate about clothes and their performative aspect (changing aspect, reflecting personality). He even invented a theory, dressism (or *vestitismo* in Italian), which guides him in his choice of clothes. He frequently "changes his clothes many times a day, up to ten times.... He really wears everything: from ear-flaps to furs, leggings, even felt gloves from the Second World War. He chooses colours carefully and matches them in a very original way" (A. Natali, "Come in uno specchio. As in a mirror," 21).

⁴⁰A. Natali, "Come in uno specchio. As in a mirror," 6–21.

⁴¹R. Barthes, *Mythologies*, 159.

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Albert. Places of Safety. Places of Freedom

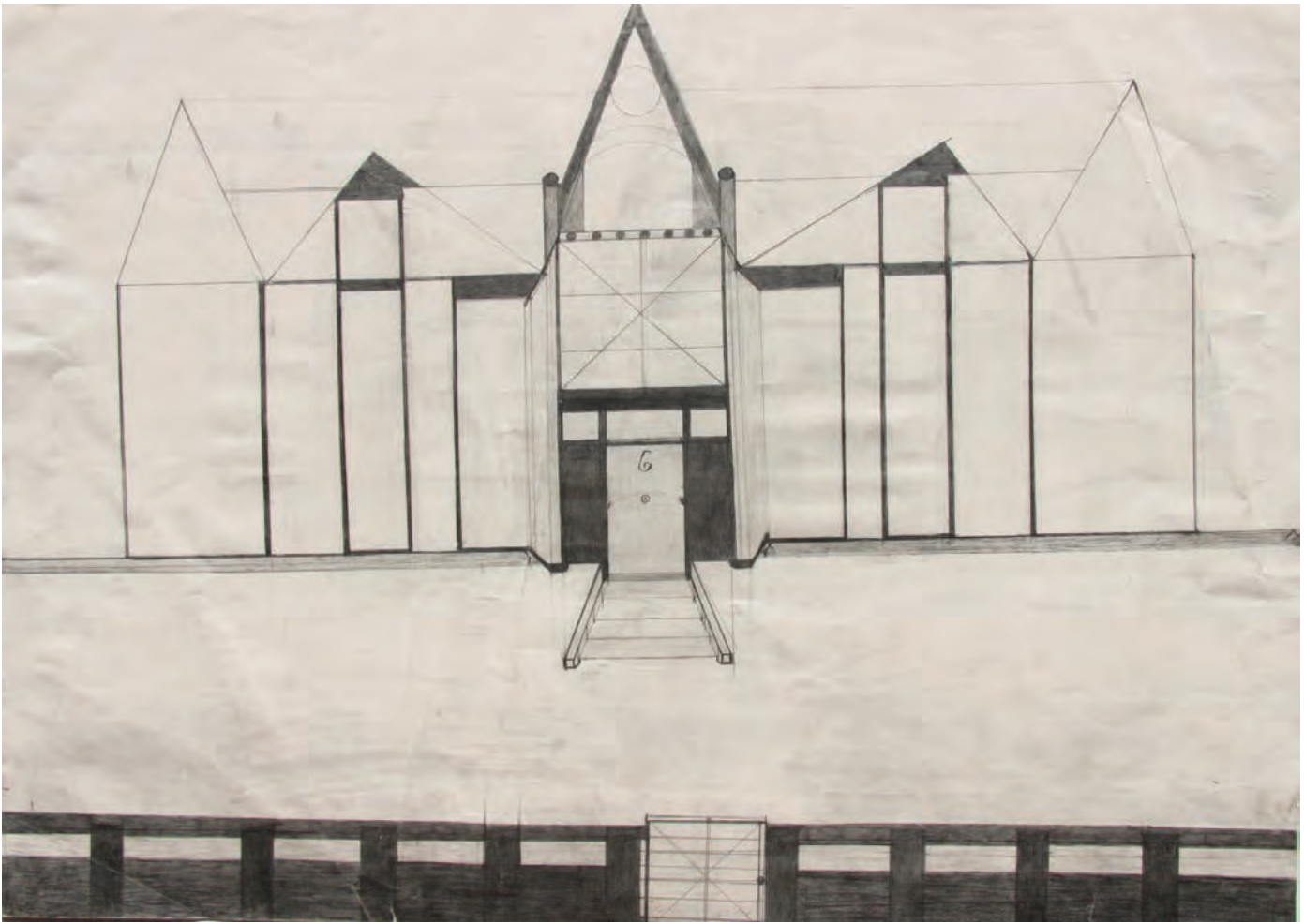
Colin Rhodes

Having suffered from depression for thirty years, Albert tells us that drawing buildings made him feel more whole. “I can see some comfort and warmth,” he says, “A place of safety. I feel a transformation in me if I put myself in one of the drawings. I feel like I’m protected by the walls.”

Safety is rarely to be found in vast expanses of openness. To be alone in the middle of an ocean or a grassy plain is most likely to be vulnerable, lost, and unsettled. Yet we often expect those who have had their freedom curtailed to envision liberation as boundaryless space. Not so. It is not so much confinement that crushes the sense of wellbeing as that of forced and monitored confinement.

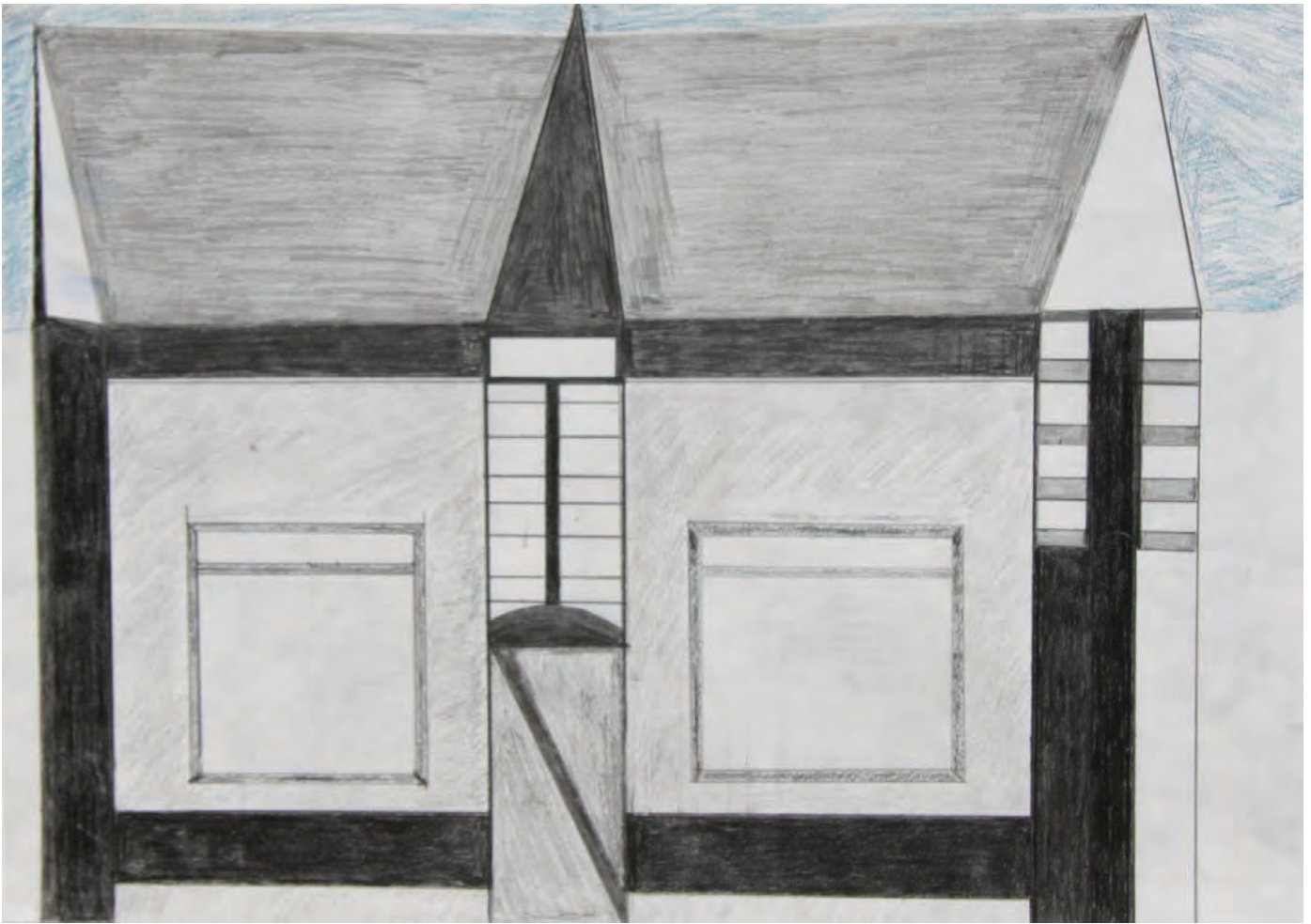
If you have spent a third of your life in secure hospitals, as Albert has, it should come as no surprise, therefore, that his gently powerful, iconic drawings might feature dwellings. Though they appear in a rich variety of guises, from simple, vernacular houses to jewelled palaces, always they share these things in common: they are places of safety and tranquility.

High, gated perimeter walls are characteristic features of his drawings. These are inevitably placed at the bottom of the sheet, spanning the width of the picture space and thereby forming a symbolic barrier to the viewer’s entry into that space. Yet Albert is emphatic that such devices are not a reflection of his years of confinement. He explains, “I just see a fence round a building as [giving] just a bit more privacy. I don’t look at them as closed in, so you can’t come out, but they’re there for protection. Always protecting something.” As many artists do, when pressed on a subject, he eventually explains the walls and fences away in aesthetic terms: “I like doing them. There’s no need to do them and there’s not anything behind them as such.”



Albert's childhood years were tough and lonely. Yet image making was important from early on. He talks about "passing time away drawing" as a young child: "Only four or five years old. Keeping quiet and not driving my parents potty." So, perhaps the practice of drawing was in some ways self-protective from the start. In his teenage years, he says, "I was just drifting, you know. But I wasn't going to get anywhere. Just floating. At seventeen or eighteen I was going through a bad patch. I was drinking far too much as well." These were the life circumstances that led ultimately to prison (briefly) and to secure hospitals (for nearly fourteen years), where he started again to draw in earnest, nearly a decade ago. Now living and working in the community, free to come and go as he pleases, Albert works most days in a specialist studio, where he has his own workspace. He says, "I've been drawing for years, but not really anything like I do now. As a child I was always drawing. I never thought it was worth anything, but I liked it. It just brought me some sort of pleasure. Every so often I just kept on doing it. It sort of grew and grew." Albert's drawings remind me of the buildings in

Italian Early Renaissance paintings. Like them, his structures exist in a kind of airless space, which is undefined yet somehow real. They are tangible as in a dreamscape; at once both eidolons and permanent, eternal things. Similarly, they share a kind of multiple perspective rendering. Each individual element of a building usually displays correct linear perspective, but the whole is an accumulation of views from different positions, which results in viewers being able to see the impossible. Or rather, Albert shows viewers in a single, two-dimensional image, the most important aspects of his three-dimensional subject; something a single point perspective rendering, such as a photograph, cannot do. For example, a façade will characteristically be drawn in full frontal view, yet the two ends of the building are also visible. The pitch and slopes of roofs are also just as likely to form their own perspective views. This is partly a result of Albert being self-taught as a draftsman, but more importantly it is the sign of the organic growth of his images. For in spite of their strict, linear construction, his drawings are profoundly intuitive. He explains, "Images just come out of the blue." The style of



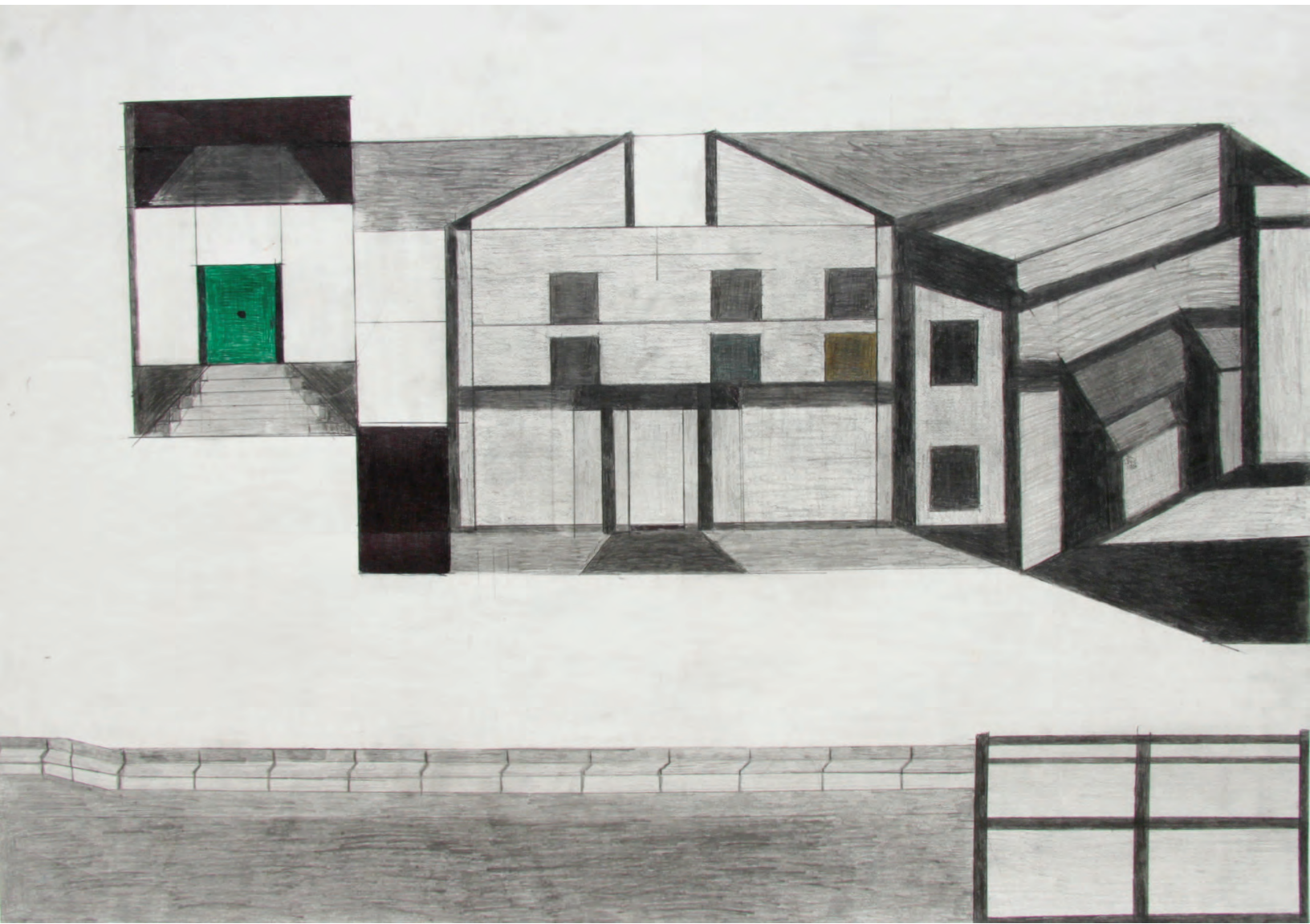
buildings, he says, comes from his imagination. He has no predetermined picture in mind as he draws because, he believes that is like “closing yourself off” before you have begun. And being closed in is anathema to his purpose. As he reminds us, “Anyone can come out [of the drawing]. There has to be an opening. A pathway by which I can come out. I’m not trapped, otherwise that would disturb me.”

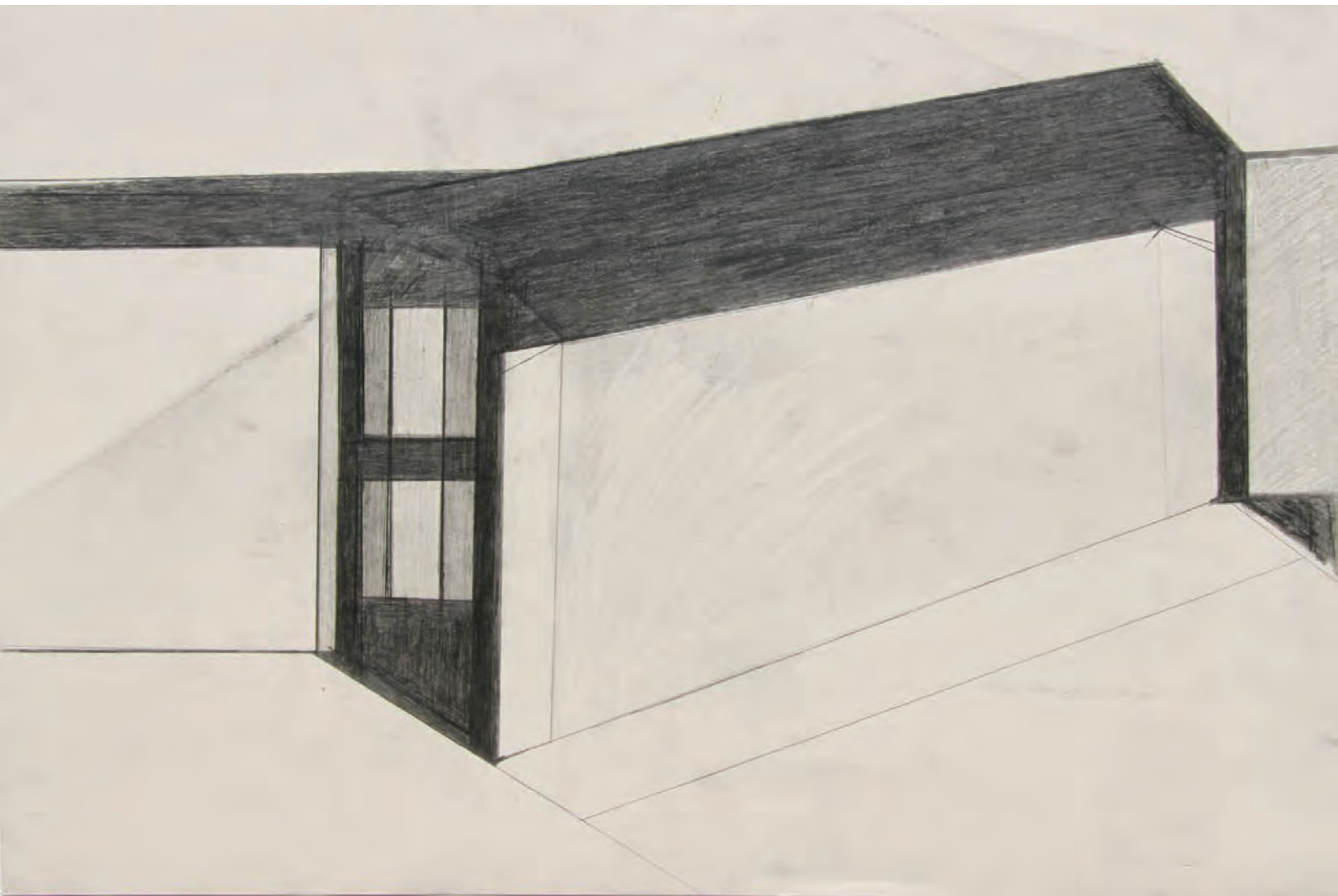
His search has been for a method that he feels competent with and imbues in his buildings a sense of physical and emotional protection. He explains, “I always knew I was never no good with freehand. It wasn’t my style. I was interested before in buildings, but I couldn’t do it with freehand. So I thought, I’ll try to use a ruler and get my lines straight. This is more me. I’m more comfortable with it. I can’t always get it dead right but then I’m no expert.” This last comment is much more an indication of Albert’s tough view of himself than any reflection on the quality of his work. He is his own severest critic, comparing himself negatively with the likes of nineteenth century British artists John Constable and J. M. W. Turner, or the

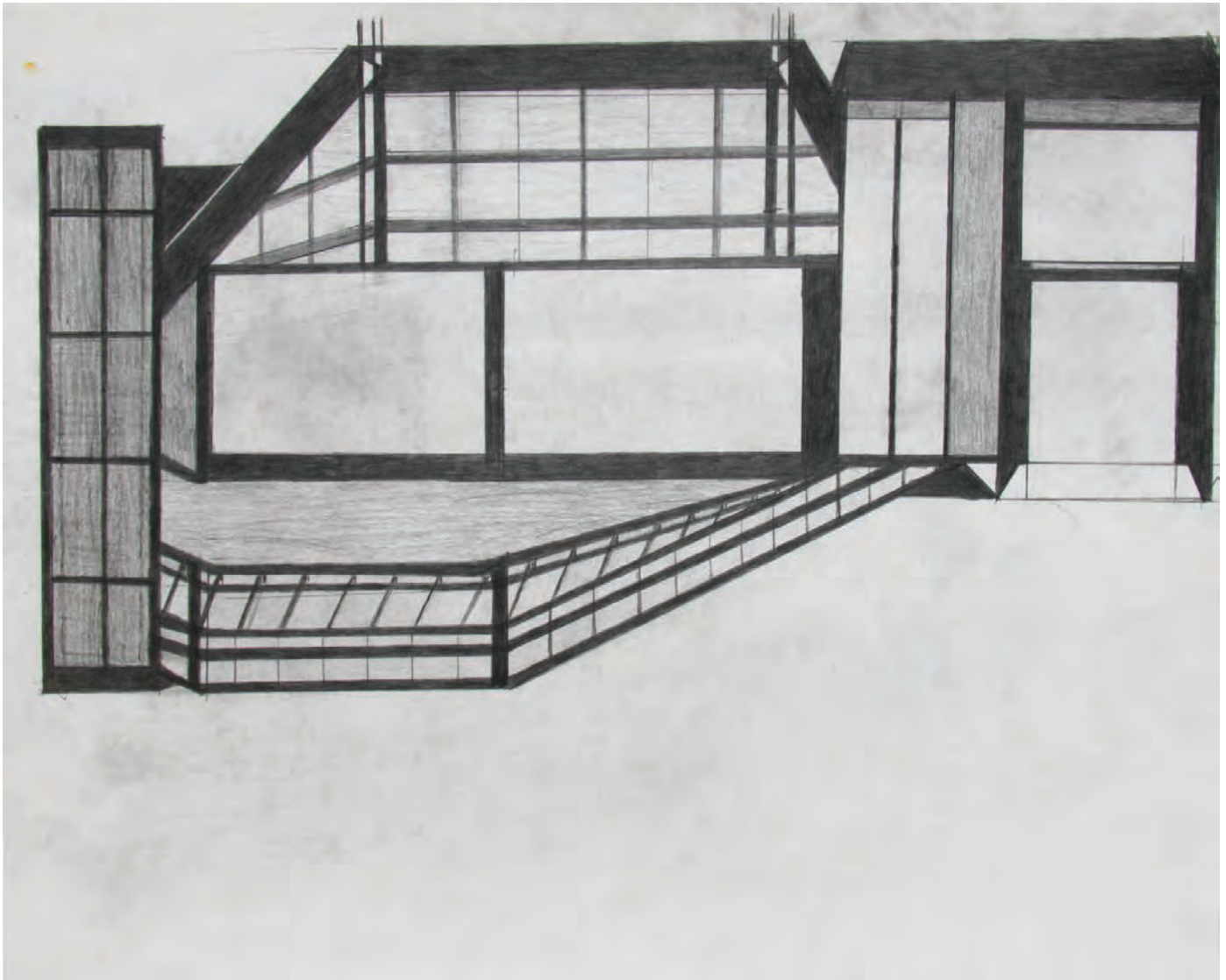
seventeenth century Dutch master Rembrandt. Yet his practice is not inferior to theirs, but of a completely different order. If we are to compare Albert’s drawings visually with any other art it is surely with Constructivism or De Stijl (though these are art movements of which he is completely unaware). His creative approach is Romantic though, and his emphasis on intuition and beginning the work every time as though from fundamentals brings him closer to artists like Paul Klee.

Albert’s drawings look deceptively simple, with their linear frames, broad tonal planes, and generally monochrome palette. They are, though, intensely subtle and physical. Each one, he tells us, “takes a long time; hours, weeks.” The conditions for drawing must be right: “I have to be in a quiet place and I have to be focused, otherwise it goes wrong and [the drawings] get a little uptight.” He focuses, as he says, “on the one problem at a time; or on one section of the drawing.” He talks about getting lost in the drawing: “I forget about my worries and my trials, and put my whole self in the drawings for a short time,









though I have to come back to reality.” The evidence of this long, intense engagement can be found in the numerous erasures, moved lines, scuffs, and creases on the sheet. Each finished drawing bears the marks of maturation and a journey.

Albert grew up in Thornton Heath, architecturally a predominantly Victorian town in South London, not far from Norwood, which the French Impressionists Camille Pissarro and Alfred Sisley painted in the early 1870’s. Once a distinctly separate town, Thornton Heath was long ago engulfed by the urban sprawl of London’s massive expansion, and rendered anonymous to the outside eye like so many other suburbs. Yet one knows the formative places of one’s life intimately, and although he has not lived there for many years, there are echoes of some of Thornton Heath’s more striking buildings in Albert’s work, such as the railway station, library, St Alban’s

and St Paul’s Churches, and the postwar Southwark Parish Directory. His are not renditions of particular sites, however. Rather, architectural details bubble up through memory as Albert allows himself to be guided by his creative forces. For as he says, revealingly, “The building is me, in a sense.”

All drawings reproduced here are untitled and not dated, pencil and coloured pencil on paper. Images courtesy Henry Boxer Gallery, London.



Figure 1. Selby Warren, *The Black Stump Hotel*, c. 1966, acrylic on board, 54 x 50 cm, private collection

An Australian Tribe of One

Roger Shelley

The naïve painter is a solitary primitive, a tribe of one.

– George Melly, 1981

In his discerning way, George Melly introduces the phrase, “a tribe of one”¹ to sum up succinctly the position occupied by many “naïve” or “primitive” artists in their societies when they are first discovered. Though they might be readily accepted by their communities on a social level, their art-making is an individual and solitary activity, which is often misunderstood by many in those same communities when revealed. In this article, I will address the life and practice of one such artist from Australia, Selby Warren (1887–1979). When he was discovered by the late Garth Dixon in 1971, Warren had been painting and drawing for most of his long life² though he had produced much more work after he semi-retired from a life of manual work in 1963.

Dixon, an art lecturer at the Mitchell College³ in Bathurst, New South Wales, was returning to Bathurst from a fishing trip with his friend, Karl Schaerf when they stopped off at The Black Stump Hotel in the small village of Trunkey Creek. They saw a painting behind the bar (probably the one shown in figure 1)⁴ and found out that the painter’s name was Selby Warren. Dixon later visited the artist’s home in the village. He was overwhelmed by the number of pictures hanging on all the walls and stacked wherever they would fit in the small house.

Like many artists, Warren simply *needed* to paint. This is something he seems not to have questioned, and unlike most artists, it seemed that he did not paint for an audience or a market. He apparently accepted that his pictures would not be viewed or commented upon by others and he showed them to few people other than his immediate family. His granddaughter, Jessica recalls: “As far as I know, he painted because he found joy in it and liked that you could capture a moment in time with them and it is my belief this is what he liked about painting, the freedom of the way he expressed his memory of the

past and day to day events.”⁵

However, the fact that a painting was propped behind the bar of his local pub, where it was seen by Dixon and Schaerf, would indicate that Warren must have given it to the publican to put on open display (even if, by the time they saw it, the picture was mostly hidden behind bottles). This suggests that Warren was not averse to his works being shown to the public and that he probably simply didn’t know how best to get them in front of viewers. He had no knowledge of the artworld and had no one to advise him on ways he might expose his art to a broad audience. It was not until Dixon, who had appropriate connections, introduced his work to a city art dealer that it was finally exhibited in public in 1972. Rudy Komon was at the time one of Sydney’s most successful gallery owners and it was to him that Dixon introduced Warren’s work.

Warren on the Public Stage

Once his work was shown, there seems little doubt that Warren enjoyed the attention. He even talked openly of himself as an “artist,” something he had never previously done, and grew his hair down to his shoulders “because he thought that was what artists did.”⁶ In a television interview he gave during his first exhibition in Sydney, Warren said: “Well, I didn’t realise until somebody came that knew something about the game, in the form of a man called Mr. Dixon or Professor Dixon, and he said, ‘this is the greatest I ever looked at.’ He said, ‘it’s wonderful.’ He said, ‘it’s fantastic.’ So that started me on the, ah, art business—and here I am.”⁷

Within his Trunkey Creek community, Warren was treated as an oddity; and tough old bush men like him just weren’t expected by their peers to spend their spare time painting pictures. The prevailing attitude was that such a pastime was more appropriate to women.⁸ His art-making was the brunt of jokes and horseplay by the locals. Yet, as Warren’s paintings were being exhibited in Sydney in 1972, those same locals worried that Warren was being taken advantage of by “city-slickers.”⁹ They defended Warren and his work whenever strangers came to the township (even today the Trunkey Creek locals are wary of strangers from the city who they view with suspicious caution).¹⁰ Despite their hesitancy about whether Warren was being used by Dixon and Komon, a contingent of Trunkey Creek residents showed their support by travelling down to Sydney

for the opening of the first exhibition at the Komon Gallery in Sydney's trendy suburb of Woollahra in 1972.¹¹ One of the Trunkey contingent, observing the crowd making its way up the hill at sundown to the opening at the gallery, remarked: "Look at them, will ya? Just like a mob o' chooks goin' in for a feed o' pollard."¹²

Dixon gave Warren artists' materials such as boards, oil paints, brushes, pastels, oil pastels, and fibre tip pens. Before this, Warren's paintings were made using homemade brushes and enamel house paints, acrylic paint, watercolour, crayons and coloured pencils on any materials accessible to him, which included paper, cardboard, tin, glass, and wood. He embellished some of his earlier works with dirt, sand, grass, mica or anything else he had on hand. *Koalas*, for example, has grass clippings and sand added for texture. After he was "discovered," Warren added less decoration to his paintings as he had done previously and sometimes produced paintings that seem to lack the spontaneity of his earlier works. Though aware that providing artists materials to Warren might in some ways change his work, Garth Dixon believed that, "if there was a risk it was worth taking" in order for "the durability and quality" of Warren's output to be "maintained."¹³

Warren assumed that his paintings would continue to be exhibited by Komon more or less indefinitely and he had difficulty understanding why they were shown only three times, at exhibitions in Sydney, Melbourne, and Brisbane during 1972 and 1973. He understood neither the gallery scene nor the art market. Komon had in his stable some of the pre-eminent and established Australian artists of the time—John Olsen, Fred Williams, Clifton Pugh, John Brack, Leonard French, and Robert Dickerson. They were individually demanding, commanded much higher prices and sold better than Warren. Moreover, Warren had no appreciation of the time lag (and effort) involved in planning and presenting shows. His expectation was that exhibitions would occur every few months and he became disillusioned when these didn't materialise.¹⁴

Warren's brief emergence from obscurity occurred late in the flowering of public interest in self-taught artists that had begun in Australia in the late 1940s and which ended around 1980. Several years before Warren flickered into focus in the public gaze several galleries, including Komon's, Kim Bonython's, and Gallery A. All showed Australian self-taught artists,

albeit only very occasionally. These included Sam Byrne (1883–1978), James Fardoulis (1900–1975), Charles Callins (1887–1982), Irvine Homer (1919–1980), and Pro Hart (1928–2006) amongst others. Warren was painting contemporaneously with these artists, but because he had not yet been discovered by the artworld, remained unknown.¹⁵ Yet, because of his naïvety about the market, and perhaps because of his belief in his own artistic abilities, Warren did not understand that the public's interest in the type of art he produced was fading. The embrace of self-taught art as part of the move towards the development of a vernacular Australian culture independent of external influences had, in the minds of much of the Australian artworld, achieved its purpose and so self-taught art and its producers became of less consequence.¹⁶ As interest in self-taught art dwindled it was, to an extent, replaced by an Australian art form new to the market, contemporary aboriginal art, which was promoted and controlled, as had the work of the *naifs*, by anglo artworld figures.¹⁷

Due to his comparatively "late" arrival on the scene, it could be argued that personally Warren was less influential in setting the scene for cultural change than those of his contemporaries exhibited before him during the 1960s. Whilst in chronological terms this might be true, the art Warren produced was representative of the bush and the life it encompassed—and was exactly what the cultural warriors of the time had been seeking. Also Warren, being completely self-taught, demonstrated a characteristic simplicity in his work that was held to reflect a time of individualistic innocence in Australia; a representation of the "true" national spirit. It was this ineffable essence that the artworld wanted to capture and express in its own works. Trained, professional artists, in their attempts to express a natural Australian cultural bedrock, sought to emulate the simplicity expressed by artists like Warren and his self-taught cohorts.

In the 1940s, the Australian artist, Sidney Nolan (1917–1992) developed a brightly coloured, figurative style, which combined a simple, childlike treatment of the body, with an emphasis on frontal composition.¹⁸ He was influenced not only by the works of European modernist masters like Paul Klee, Raoul Dufy, Pablo Picasso, and Paul Cézanne that he had seen at the 1939 *Herald Exhibition on English and European Contemporary Art* in Melbourne, but also by the self-taught French painter, much beloved of the Fauves, Henri Rousseau (1844–1910), who

painted in a naïve, “primitive” manner.¹⁹

Warren did not influence Nolan, since he became known well after Nolan had gained fame and had settled in the United Kingdom. Nor was Warren influenced by Nolan’s work, since he had no knowledge of even such a celebrated contemporary Australian artist, yet, a similarity in style between the two is evident. The underlying difference in the approaches of the two artists was that Nolan was consciously attempting to *return*, as he saw it, to basic first principles. In common with many of the great, professional artists of the twentieth-century, Nolan was trying to “unlearn” the lessons of his training.²⁰ Warren, on the other hand, actually occupied that “unlearned” place, painting *from or out of* basic first principles; being untrained “there was nothing to unlearn, nothing to hamper his urge to communicate directly through images.”²¹

A Cultural Cringe²²

Australia’s sense of national identity was different in the first half of the twentieth-century to its earlier incarnations. Before 1914, for example, Australia had no voice in shaping its own foreign policy. As part of the British Empire, this was decided by the Mother Country. After the First World War, though, Australia assumed a place in the mainstream of international affairs outside of imperial boundaries through its claim to national status. Its national identity was secured, at least at the political level.²³

At a cultural level progress was slower. Before the 1920s there was scant public consciousness of a specifically Australian art. However, an art industry had been developing from the 1910s, but it was one which had transferred the values of the British system (recognised roles, practices, organisation, and institutional forms) partly under the guidance of the home-grown Impressionist, Tom Roberts (1856–1931).²⁴ Dealers were promoting and selling local work and state galleries and institutions were buying and commissioning art. The art market continued a steady expansion until the Great Depression of 1929. Prices for Australian art were low in comparison with their European contemporaries.

Another element in this developing art scene was the improvement in colour printing technology. In Sydney, Ure Smith (1887–1949) published 29 art books in a period of eight years after 1916, the year in which he had launched the first national art journal, *Art*

in Australia, which became, according to Warren Moore, “the main force in the development of the art of this country.”²⁵ The journal and the art books of this time were dedicated to the mainstream. Landscape was particularly popular and in the 1920s its regional character was stressed, rather than it being presented as a national metaphor for the “real” Australia as was later the case. These post-war landscapes often didn’t contain people and represented a pastoral utopia conveying the apparent emotional need of urban people for a vast, empty land (in contrast to the industrial/urban utopia common in European and American art of the time).²⁶ The absence of people in the paintings indicated a renewed claim to the “bush ethos” by the urban populace.²⁷ Likewise, the heroicized story of the ANZACs²⁸ “bridged the gap between (pioneering) past and (urban) present by giving to the people of the city the right to the qualities of the outback.”²⁹

Warren and Australian Contemporaries

It is interesting to compare Warren’s experience and painting style with other Australian naïves who were his contemporaries, yet completely unknown to him (and him to them). Of several possible artists³⁰ I have selected four: Sam Byrne, Charles Callins, Irvine Homer, and Mathilda Lister (1889–1965). Each of these artists was mostly self-taught and all represented primarily the Australian bush in their works other than Callins, who painted more seascapes than landscapes. Like Warren, they were all “discovered” by a member of the artworld: Sam Byrne by a Broken Hill art teacher, May Harding, and later the artist, Leonard French; Charles Callins by the art historian, Dr. Gertrude Langer, and then the Johnstone Gallery in Brisbane and, later, Gallery A in Sydney; Irvine Homer was initially assisted by the painter, William Dobell and then by Dobell’s friend, Gil Docking, Director of the Newcastle Art Gallery³¹; and Mathilda Lister was supported in her endeavours by her artist neighbour in Hill End, Donald Friend and by Russell Drysdale who, along with Margaret Olley, David Strachan, and Jeffrey Smart, amongst others, all painted in the township with Friend. Hill End is a small town north of Bathurst in New South Wales. Like Trunkey Creek it was a goldmining centre in the late 1800s and has since dwindled to being almost a ghost town. In the 1940s it was chosen as an artist colony due to its reasonable proximity to Sydney, where the majority of the artists lived, and because of its rugged beauty and its historical interest.³²



Clockwise from top left: Figure 2. Sam Byrne, *Rabbit Plague Round-Up Into Old Mine*, 1964, oil and enamel on composition board, 47.5 x 60.5 cm, private collection; Figure 3. Selby Warren, *Rabbit Hunt*, c.1970, oil on cardboard, 63 x 51 cm, private collection; Figure 6. Selby Warren, *Farm House*, c.1970, watercolour on paper, 19 x 14 cm, private collection; Figure 5. Charles Callins, *Captured Reflections from Cyclone Ted*, 1977, oil on board, 61 x 91.5 cm, private collection; Figure 4. Selby Warren, *Four Horsemen*, 1973, oil on board, 64 x 50 cm, private collection



Figure 7. Selby Warren, *Wild Horse Yard*, 1965, oil on board, 63 x 51 cm, collection Ray Hughes Gallery

Sam Byrne's paintings mostly depict Broken Hill where he worked as a miner until retiring in 1949 and taking up painting in his late sixties. A comparison of two paintings by Byrne and Warren, both made around 1970, *Rabbit Plague Round Up Into Old Mine* and *Rabbit Hunt* respectively (figures 2 and 3), shows works very different in style and execution. Byrne's painting is more controlled and seems less spontaneous than Warren's. It could almost be from a comic-strip. Byrne painted in oils on prepared board, materials that were suggested to him as appropriate by his teacher, May Harding.³³ Warren's work is on cardboard and uses acrylic and watercolour. It was painted before he was given "proper" art materials by Garth Dixon. Both pictures are historical "memory" paintings insofar as they represent events from an earlier time. After their introduction from Europe, rabbit plagues often devastated the Australian bush and these pictures refer to a particularly serious plague in the late 1920s and early 1930s. At that time Byrne was an employee in the Broken Hill

mines and Warren was a rabbit trapper, amongst his other manual jobs. These are paintings of remembered experiences both men had when they were in their forties. The works display the vibrant colours used by many self-taught artists. Warren's is more Expressionistic in style than Byrne's, which is formulaic, with numerous rabbits painted as if by template and horses and riders being almost identical. I am aware of only one painting by Warren where it would appear he has painted four horses and riders using some form of template or by tracing, *Four Horsemen* (figure 4).

Charles Callins had been a printer in Northern Queensland for much of his working life. Born in the same year as Warren, he began painting after retiring in 1947. He had spent a lot of his spare time sailing and fishing and the bulk of his works are of the sea and coast. However, one painting, unusual in subject and style in his oeuvre, *Captured Reflections from Cyclone Ted* (figure 5) is interesting to compare



Clockwise from top left: Figure 8. Mathilda Lister, *Finding the Holtermann Nugget*, Hill End, Bathurst, 1955, oil on board, 58 x 92.5 cm, private collection; Figure 12. Selby Warren, *Man*, 1971, oil on board, 61 x 41 cm, private collection; Figure 13. Selby Warren, *Abstract*, c. 1965, enamel on glass, 53 x 18 cm, private collection; Figure 11. Selby Warren, *Hut and Trees*, c. 1966, oil pastel and crayon on tin, 75 x 35.5 cm, private collection; Figure 10. Irvine Homer, *Bush Scene*, 1974, oil on board, 39 x 54 cm, private collection





Figure 9. Selby Warren, *The Sleeper Cutters*, 1970, acrylic on cardboard, 121 x 90 cm, Reed collection, Melbourne



Figure 14. Selby Warren, *Mother & Child*, c. 1965, watercolour on cardboard, 34 x 30 cm, collection Garth Dixon

with Warren.

Cyclone Ted struck the Northern Queensland coast in January 1977 causing two deaths and considerable damage.³⁴ Unlike many of his seascapes, which have repetitive, busy waves, Callins' Cyclone Ted painting is uncluttered and simple in structure. Callins lived in Cairns, in far north Queensland at the time of the cyclone and chose to paint reflections caused by the event rather than any drama or mayhem that ensued. Whilst it is possible that the painting has some foreboding of things to come to those experienced with cyclonic weather, it appears as a serene image to the untutored eye. The application of thin almost translucent, pale paint is not dissimilar to nineteenth-century Japanese woodblocks in its effect. In the right hand lower corner is a small square house, similar in type to several painted by Warren. Callins represents the roof from at least four viewpoints, in a way that means the artist is seeing the house from the street simultaneously with an aerial view, not unlike this house in Warren's *Farm House* (figure 6), with its equally impossible perspective.

Many self-taught artists' works demonstrate similar difficulties in attempting to portray linear perspective. Warren and Callins appear to try to use linear perspective but are unsuccessful because they simultaneously include the sides of the building and its roof. If anything the perspective seems to be working in reverse.

Though seemingly paradoxical, with sufficiently small shapes such as a cubic die, it *is* actually possible to view four sides at the same time. The combined visual perception from two viewpoints, one for each eye, presents the observer with a simultaneous view of four faces of the cubic die, a paradoxical picture that cannot be produced, for example, by conventional photography.³⁵

Warren, Callins, and others of their kind were unaware of this paradox. Like painters prior to Filippo Brunelleschi's rediscovery of linear perspective around 1420,³⁶ self-taught artists' attempts at perspective are often bizarre. Because the theory and practice of linear perspective was something many naïves failed to know about or understand they unconsciously continued to represent it in peculiar and what were archaic ways.³⁷

While it shares the broad striped elements of Callins' Cyclone Ted painting, Warren's *Wild Horse Yard* (figure

7) is quite different in touch and expression. Though it is impossible to ignore the remarkable handmade frame, the picture itself is far less ephemeral-looking than Callins', with heavier brushstrokes and thicker paint. Yet it has a certain delicacy to it, in part due to the feature of a small pot plant balanced on the lower fence which draws the viewer's eye. Both paintings have palettes limited to only three or four colours, though Warren's are richer and more earthy, suiting the subject of a wild horse yard, while Callins' are softer, echoing the "reflections" of his title.

The third comparison is with Mathilda Lister, whose work is probably the most like Warren's in style if not in quality. She was the only daughter of William Lister Lister (1859–1943), who was in his time a well-regarded *plein air* landscape painter. Despite her artistic pedigree, it seems Mathilda chose not to follow her father's profession (nor, for that matter, his odd practice of using his surname twice) and did not begin painting in earnest until she was encouraged by Donald Friend and his coterie of artist acquaintances in Hill End.³⁸ Lister's paintings mainly depicted the early days of gold mining at Hill End, though she also painted religious subjects, some of which she unsuccessfully entered in the Blake Prize for Religious Art in Sydney in the late 1950s.³⁹

Lister's *Finding the Holtermann Nugget* (figure 8) is full of activity. Miners run towards a huge golden nugget,⁴⁰ which is being held by a man in the left centre of the composition. In the background are a rider on a white horse and a dray pulled by white and brown horses and other miners presumably rushing toward the nugget. Lister clearly had no problems with aerial perspective, unlike Warren and many other self-taught artists. The figures, on the other hand, are less convincing in their relative sizes. Warren's *The Sleeper Cutters* (figure 9) has little action in it, with the main figures and horses stationary. Even the dog near its kennel is resting. The tools of the sleeper cutter's trade are carefully laid out on the left of the painting. Yet the scene is vibrant, in part due to the smoke and snatches of blue sky above the trees at the top of the painting. Warren's mark-making is more assured than Lister's, though his handling of perspective is highly eccentric, with the horses being far smaller than the two men, though apparently in the same plane. Interestingly, Warren often made the most important parts of a composition proportionally larger than necessary to emphasise them. This was by no means a method unique to him. The use of hieratic proportion is, for example, common in both





Opposite: Figure 15. Selby Warren, *Uncle Bill & Sebastian*, 1971, oil pastel on cardboard, 35 x 26 cm, private collection above: Figure 16. Selby Warren, *Sydney Harbour Bridge*, 1972, acrylic on cardboard, 69 x 39 cm, Ray Hughes Gallery



Clockwise from top left: Figure 17. Reverse of figure 16; Figure 19. Selby Warren, *Alma House Trunkey*, 1972, acrylic on paper, 44 x 32 cm, private collection; Figure 20. Selby Warren, *Winston Churchill*, 1967, acrylic on wood, 43 x 26 cm, Ray Hughes Gallery; Figure 18. Selby Warren, *Dancer*, 1972, acrylic and crayon on board, 24 x 15 cm, private collection



Mediaeval European paintings and twentieth-century naïve art.

The final comparison is between two near contemporary paintings, Irvine Homer's *Bush Scene* (figure 10) and Warren's *Hut and Trees* (figure 11). Unlike Warren and the others discussed here, Homer commenced painting for medical reasons. An epileptic and always a sickly person, in his thirties he developed spondylitis, an incurable and painful form of degenerative arthritis. A doctor recommended he take up painting as a recuperative pastime. Homer did so and initially decorated plates and small boxes after seeing an article in the *Australian Women's Weekly* on European folk art. An early customer was the artist William Dobell who encouraged Homer to paint in oils on board.⁴¹

Like Warren, Homer was poorly educated and had spent most of his working life undertaking manual jobs in the bush. He settled in Newcastle, in New South Wales for many years, but near the end of his life moved to Broken Hill in the far west of the state and remained there until his death in 1980. At 61 he was the youngest to die of the generally long-living artists discussed here.



Like Warren, Homer characteristically depicted memories of his often-difficult life growing up in the country.⁴² The images by both men represent a dry paddock, fences and small houses, and out-buildings. The left foreground of Homer's scene is dominated by an impossibly massive gumtree. The painting style in thin oil on board is almost wistful with its gentle brushstrokes, only the yellowness of the land reminds the viewer of the barrenness of the landscape. A river or lake in the lower foreground reflects the main, red building and the fence posts. Warren's painting is much more tightly composed. Three compact trees in the foreground do not overwhelm the composition, with the oddly represented shed on the right being just as stridently important to the composition. The style of painting is much rougher than Homer's partly due, I think, to the work being in oil pastel and crayon on a sheet of tin, its sharp edges 'framed' by red ducting tape (which, interestingly, matches the red on the structure on the far right of the painting). Warren's is the more compelling and, I believe, more successful work, certainly not as pretty as Homer's but more adventurous in style and intent. Both paintings represent memories of things seen by each artist years earlier. By 1970 Homer, aged





Previous page (top to bottom): Figure 21. Selby Warren, *W. Dobell*, acrylic on card, 37 x 28 cm, Kudinoff collection, Melbourne; Figure 22. Selby Warren, *On the Road to Goulburn*, 1968, watercolour on card, private collection; Figure 23. Selby Warren, *Stag*, 1973, watercolour on card, 19 x 16 cm, private collection above: Figure 24. Selby Warren, *Kellarn Wistishire*, 1972, acrylic on card, 64 x 47 cm, private collection

51, was wheelchair bound and living in suburban Newcastle.⁴³ He had been out of the bush for about twenty years, which might explain the gentle way in which he records his memories of it in this work. In 1966 Warren was 79 years old and had only been in a position to concentrate on painting for a year or two after semi-retirement from his hard life of manual work. Perhaps his memories were of recent experiences and are presented in a more raw and harsh manner because of this.

The four artists discussed in relation to Warren all came to art later in life. Byrne took to painting after retiring from a long period of regular employment. Painting became something to fill in the spare time he now had. Callins, having also retired from full-time work, saved a lady from falling off a boat and decided to record the event in a drawing. He enjoyed the drawing experience and turned to painting. Homer, with his physical frailties, took up painting as a form of rehabilitation.⁴⁴ Lister seems to have taken up painting as a pastime when groups of modern artists descended on Hill End from the city. She might also have painted in deference to her late father, Lister Lister.

Each of these painters was, to varying degrees, financially comfortable when they turned to painting in their later years. Byrne received a company pension upon retirement. Callins also retired with a pension and Homer, though less physically fortunate than the others, did receive disability pensions. Lister inherited from her father and was financially well off. Warren, on the other hand, did not work in steady or reliable employment at any time in his life. When he turned to painting after his semi-retirement, he received a meagre government old age pension, which he needed to supplement during his most prolific period of art making, from 1963 to 1972, spending those nine years delivering mail to settlements along the Bathurst to Crookwell road.⁴⁵ His persistence as a painter was, from a financial perspective, less explanatory than it was for the four mentioned artists. The others had enough money to cover their costs of living while making their art, Warren did not. While all five artists benefitted from sales of their works after being discovered by members of the art establishment, none benefitted financially quite as much as Warren. But his emergence onto the art scene was about a decade later than the others.

By this time, self-taught or naïve art had become frequently emulated and utilised as style by

professional and amateur artists alike, and hence might often have seemed a contrived, parochial idiom, becoming less fashionable with critics and curators.⁴⁶ Though he was lauded by the popular press at the time, Warren's appearance came at the tail end of anything approaching broad interest in naïve art in Australia.

Warren's Frames

The idiosyncratic homemade, duct-tape "frame" on *Hut and Trees* (figure 11) is a characteristic aspect of Warren's method of framing many of his works that is worthy of further analysis. Warren habitually fashioned homemade frames from a variety of often-unlikely materials; several of these frames might be considered works of art in their own right. Some were simply rough pieces of wood, but others were carefully carved and decorated. He sometimes decorated them with mica, feathers and sand, or moulded them with clay and even dough. Besides wood, Warren utilised a wide variety of materials for his frames including the aforementioned electrical ducting tape (invariably red in colour) and found objects. On at least one occasion, he used part of a domestic window frame with the glass still intact (figure 12) to frame a portrait which has been cut to fit the glazed area. It is interesting to note that Warren roughly painted part of the sawn off window frame in white, perhaps in the hope that the unpainted parts of the frame would be ignored by the viewer.

In *Abstract* (figure 13), Warren actually painted on the glass of the rear window from the canvas roof of an old car that he had owned.⁴⁷ This picture used the whole retrieved window, with its metal surround working as its frame. *Mother & Child* (figure 14) was painted on a piece of cardboard shaped so that curved slats from the back of a wooden kitchen chair could be attached to form the painting's frame. With his self-made frames, Warren usually nailed the painting itself to whatever is used to frame it. A number of paintings that have lost their frames (either by misadventure or purposely) have holes left after the rough removal of a frame as with *Uncle Bill & Sebastian* (figure 15).

In the case of *Sydney Harbour Bridge* (figure 16) we see a frame that was been constructed from rough pieces of unmatching wood tacked together by Warren. The frame was then crudely painted. The back of this frame (figure 17) shows Warren's somewhat unconventional methods of assembling some of his frames – the reverse of the picture

displaying a structure of roughly fashioned struts and supports in found timber, reminiscent in many ways of modernist collages. Many of Warren's self-made frames, though primitive in manufacture, actually served their purpose well (figures 18 and 19 are such examples). In each case the decoration of the frames is meant to enhance the paintings by using the same colours (and materials) in both the picture and its frame, so that decoration and representation are fused.

Found objects were regularly used by Warren for framing works, as in the portraits of British statesman, *Winston Churchill* (figure 20) and one of Australia's most celebrated artists, *W. Dobell* (figure 21). The frame for *Winston Churchill* is formed by a damaged artist's palette onto which the portrait was painted and then had pieces of weathered, reclaimed builders' lumber nailed on to the palette to frame it. The portrait of Dobell is fitted into what was probably an Art and Crafts picture or mirror frame, or perhaps a decorative wardrobe or cupboard door centrepiece. Both these frames succeed as appropriately impactful surrounds for the two paintings.

In other attempts to frame his works Warren was arguably less successful. In, *On the Road to Goulburn* (figure 22), for example, the frame is fashioned from carefully applied, then painted, baking dough. As might have been expected, with time lumps of the dough have simply dropped off. As mentioned above, Warren was somewhat offhand in the way he treated some of his pictures. As well as nailing the frames onto the works (and vice versa) he also cut and shaped them after completion to fit a found frame or an object to be used as a frame. *Stag* (figure 23) was quite ruthlessly cut to fit a small, dark, and ugly professionally made wooden frame. The extant pieces removed from the painting were used by him as backing for the frame, which was only large enough to accommodate the cut out stag. Warren even cut through his own signature at the bottom right of the picture. It would appear, then, that to have the painting fit a too-small frame was of greater importance to Warren than displaying the work as originally completed. Frames were either considered of particular importance to Warren, or perhaps he was simply pragmatic in his approach to framing, in the make-do-and-mend of the bricoleur—if it didn't fit, make it fit.

Having considered a few examples of his self-made and found frames, what do they tell us about Warren

the artist? I believe that Warren knew that paintings were usually framed, probably from seeing examples of framed prints in the Black Stump Hotel and in friends' homes. Having no manufactured frames readily available to him,⁴⁸ he improvised, making do with whatever he found to put the finishing touches to his works.

Warren made things with his hands all his life. He created and decorated wooden boxes in which to keep his belongings; he made a highchair for a granddaughter; and he erected two houses including Hill 90, his home in Trunkey Creek.⁴⁹ However, in addition to the practicalities of making them, I think Warren placed an aesthetic significance on the frames he created. Why else decorate many of them? Some were carved (if crudely) for no obvious reason other than to "beautify" them, as in *Alma House*.

Most of the paintings that were not framed, either in self-made or found frames, were completed by Warren *after* his discovery by Dixon in 1971. Warren painted many pictures to meet a need (he perceived) to produce works for sale by the dealer, Rudy Komon. Komon put quite a few of the later paintings in plain, professional gallery frames for display. Warren himself was given discarded frames by Dixon⁵⁰ and he often used these for his later works, though he did continue to make his own frames for some paintings. Warren's self-made frames are extraordinary objects. They are the work of an artist who not only understood that an attractive frame could dress up a painting, but also reflected his need to add a further aesthetic statement about the work. The frames enhanced a picture's beauty and impact. Despite many of them being rough and ready, they are integral to the best of Warren's paintings.

Memories and Nostalgia

No inventory of Warren's complete output exists, but the number of paintings he created probably exceeded 500. Several of these were sold at the three exhibitions organised by Dixon and Komon between 1972 and 1973. Others were sold from the gallery that Warren himself set up in Trunkey Creek in 1975, while some others were simply given away by the artist to anyone who liked the works.

When he died in 1979, the remaining paintings were passed to his children, Joyce, Thelma, Keith, and Alan. About 50 paintings are still held by Thelma's daughter, Teresa. Approximately 200 that had



Left to right: Figure 25. Selby Warren, *Old Man of Stone*, Scotland, c. 1964, acrylic on card, 46.5 x 33.5 cm, Kudinoff collection, Melbourne; Figure 26. Photograph of the Old Man of Storr, Isle of Skye (photograph by David Iliff, License: CC-BY-SA 3.0, <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/deed.en>)

belonged to both Alan and Keith are now in the hands of two private collectors in Sydney and some others are held in smaller private collections. The number of known extant works is about 300.⁵¹

Warren's output can be separated into eight main themes: Australian historical narratives; men at work; poems and ballads (which he also recited and sang whenever he was given the opportunity); transport, old and modern; animals and nature; places, both historical and contemporary; portraits of people he knew and celebrities; and, perhaps surprisingly, abstraction. These themes included a few pictures of "exotic" fauna such as lions, bears and monkeys. He sometimes also painted foreign places, probably inspired by reproductions he saw in magazines.

Warren is perhaps best described as a memory painter⁵² and, although the majority of places he recorded were of Australian subjects, some that were not, reflecting the popularity of Britain's countryside and villages among Australians of his day.⁵³ This was reflected in the contemporary popular media of the day. A major source of coloured photographs that would have been seen regularly by Warren was *The Australian Women's Weekly*, a magazine avidly read by his wife, Alma.⁵⁴ That Warren's parents were of French and English stock and his first wife, Jessy Howard (1895–1950), was of Scottish lineage was also relevant. Warren would have listened to his and Jessy's parents talking about their European ancestry. His impetus to paint English or Scottish scenes was likely due to the jogging of earlier memories by seeing a contemporary magazine illustration. One

such painting is *Kellarn Wistishire* (figure 24), whose title consists of two nonsense words—a result of the artist's near illiteracy—but likely referring to the UK village of Killeen in either Worcestershire or Wiltshire. Similarly, his *Old Man of Stone* (figure 25), depicts the Old Man of Storr, a rock formation on Scotland's Isle of Skye, which was the birthplace of his maternal grandmother, and almost certainly derived from a magazine photograph (cf figure 26).

In attempting to understand an artworld outsider like Warren it is important to recognise that he seems to have been content to paint for himself, accepting that he would probably never be famous or even recognised by others around him as an artist. Individuals in today's media-driven, often self-obsessed culture might find it difficult to understand that someone would paint with no real expectation of displaying or even discussing work with others, let alone selling it. The idea of the professional artist was not one that Warren readily understood.

We might ask what it was that drove Selby Warren to paint views of Trunk Creek that he did not anticipate showing to or sharing with the other residents of his little township, including those whose houses and businesses he represented in his works? Why paint a picture of a bushranger being chased by three troopers and writing on it "missed again," or paint a scene titled "Brother Ben" (his own rendition of a poem popular at the time)? What inspired him to produce portraits of an Australian Prime Minister and his wife? Warren's paintings offer some clues towards answering these questions and to understanding what motivated a self-taught artist like him to spend many hours producing works that were created, at least before 1971, apparently for the artist alone.



Figure 27. Selby Warren, *Trunkey Creek*, 1972, oil on board, 123 x 68 cm, private collection

Before his discovery by Garth Dixon, Warren's paintings were unknown except to a very few. Warren told Dixon that he was trying to represent his subjects realistically in paint and, with the simplicity of a child explaining its art, he explained that he believed his works achieved that goal.⁵⁶ So, Warren considered himself to be both a good artist and a proponent of painterly realism. The fact that his fellow Trunkey Creek residents failed to recognise the quality of his work or even demonstrated acceptance of it was probably a disappointment to him, but Warren's sense of pride and self-belief may have overridden any sense of doubt and left him thinking that his neighbours were just unable to appreciate (his) good art.⁵⁷

History Painting

As fundamentally a narrative painter, storyteller, and recorder of people and place, Warren produced works that are not only aesthetically rich, but which are also repositories of historical and social knowledge. Close iconographic reading of a work can reveal much about the attitudes and histories of an older Australia nowadays almost lost to sight. In the last part of this article I will consider a number of Warren's paintings, therefore, from the perspective of what they contain as embodied historical narrative—as memory paintings; narratives as understood by a character who himself conformed to a particular Australian type: the bush man. In particular, they reveal sophisticated content *visually* that the near-illiterate Warren could not have described in written form.

Trunkey Creek (1972)

The painting of the central part of the village of Trunkey Creek from 1972 (figure 27) may represent Warren's recollection of how it had looked some years previously. In this way it may be considered a memory painting; a view supported by the colour of The Black Stump Hotel – the blue/green building at the right of the picture – which had been painted in bright colours before the 1960s, but was the same off-white colour that it remains to this day at the time Warren completed his painting.

A photograph (figure 28) of the same area of the village taken in 1937 shows its actual proportions.⁵⁸ The buildings and road numbered on the photograph are, from left to right: (1) the General Store, (2) the road, (3) the Shortland's house, (4) the Post Office, and (5)

The Black Stump Hotel. The view has been greatly compressed in Warren's painting, with the buildings made smaller and much closer together than they are in reality. This may well have been done to fit the piece of board on which it is painted and also intuitively to make a more impactful composition.

The road (2), which still lies between the General Store and the Shortland place, is apparently shown in the painting only as a narrow slash of dark grey along the edge of the General Store—though it is also possible that the road does not actually appear in the painting at all, and that the grey mark represents a driveway that runs beside the store and leads to a shed, which is also shown in the painting. The areas of land between the road on the sides of both the General Store and Shortland house are also missing in the painting. The picture space in the painting is, characteristically in Warren's work, very shallow, with the landscape seemingly tipped forward toward the viewer. Somewhat in keeping with this, Warren depicts the General Store from an aerial perspective, but the store's fuel pumps and the other three buildings are represented in a flat, front-on mode.

Warren's use of colour is fascinating. The roof and walls of the General Store are presented mostly in greys, with pale blue and green. In contrast, the two central houses are garishly orange, with ochre and green, and The Black Stump rendered in bright turquoise, affording it more of the feel of the fairground than the bar. The roadway, which at that time was unsealed, is painted in translucent dark grey over a brownish-green base with a solid, darker area in front of the petrol pumps in front of the store. As is usual with Warren, the composition is superbly balanced. At first glance this might appear to have been achieved almost by accident, but it is in fact a result of careful placement of the buildings, blocks of colour, and the use of an aerial view of the General Store, enabling its bulk and paler colour scheme to weigh perfectly against the brightly presented Black Stump and Post Office. Had Warren included the vacant land and road between the Store and the other buildings that are visible in the photograph the composition would have lost its compactness and tenseness. There is no evidence to suggest that Warren knew anything about theories of picture-making, but his characteristically tight, well-balanced compositions suggest an intuitive grasp of form and colour balance that seemingly arose out of the process of painting.



Figure 28. Photograph of Trunkey Creek taken 1937



Figure 29. Selby Warren, *Frank Gardner*, c. 1970, acrylic, oil on board, 105 x 80 cm, private collection

Commonly, representational accuracy is relinquished for compositional effect. The stairs in front of the Post Office, for example, are indicated by little more than a few whitish lines over the flat, green ground, much as the picket fences in front of both houses and their windows and doors are simple, pale outlines. However, the left picket in front of the Post Office is a solid white to match the whites on the pub and the Store. A square block of the same colour used for the two houses and outlined in the pale grey used for the roof of the General Store and the turquoise of the pub is placed strategically at the bottom of the painting. Warren sometimes incorporated abstract squares of colour, I believe, to assist in achieving compositional balance rather than to represent a specific object. His ability to balance his works is expressed in part by his use of this device.⁵⁹

By 1900 The Black Stump (at that time known as the “Commercial Hotel”) was the last remaining of six hotels that had graced Trunkey Creek in its gold rush heyday. Originally a timber structure, like other buildings in the town at that time, it was replaced by the current brick building after it was destroyed by fire in 1928. The sign currently on the front of the existing building reads: : “The Black Stump Hotel. 1928. Trunkey Creek,” though the name “Commercial Hotel” was actually retained until 1958 when its then owner, George Bright, renamed it “The Black Stump Hotel,” thinking the name was more “poetic and like the bush” than the original.⁶⁰ The new name was added to the building at this time. Warren painted several pictures of the hotel, all of them after the name change. The pub itself changes colour from painting to painting, and it had, in fact, been painted a variety of colours over the years. One local commented that it was a startling “nipple pink” for several years and that “it could’ve been blue once.”⁶¹

The house immediately to the left of the Black Stump was operated as the village Post Office for many years by Reg Williams. He eventually sold the property to Don Ridley who continued running the post office there until the mid-1960s when he moved out and set up a smaller post office next to his new home across the road. The village Post Office finally closed in 1992 when the township’s houses were given numbers and a daily delivery service provided.⁶²

The General Store was built on the foundations of the Australian Hotel, which had burnt down in 1879. Not completely destroyed, it was rebuilt as a store

later that year though this time, rather than using timber, it was constructed of bricks left over from the construction of the Trunkey Creek Police Station in the same year. The McKenzies, a prominent family in the district, had owned the Australian Hotel and then ran the store until selling it to Fred Davies, who ran it from 1921 until his death in 1984. In the painting part of Fred Davies’ name can be seen written as “F. Davi” on the front and to the right side of the Store. Fred, like Selby Warren, was one of Trunkey Creek’s true larrikin characters, and the two men were good friends.

Warren’s son, Alan, remembers Fred Davies’ store well.⁶³ The interior consisted of a very large room, with shelving about 10 feet high all around it. The old long bar from its days as the Australian Hotel was used as a counter, and hooks were fitted to the ceiling from these hung an amazing variety of objects, ranging from saddles, clothing, whips, and lanterns, to meat and other foodstuff. The old pub’s cellar was near the centre of the store and contained perishables and other items. It was accessed by lifting a large, heavy trapdoor.

Undoubtedly three of the structures in the painting were of particular importance in the life of Warren and the village. These were the General Store, the Post Office and, of course, the Black Stump Hotel. General stores in country settlements provided a wide range of goods and services. They sold food, week-old newspapers, clothing, all manner of household equipment, appliances, farm equipment (including guns and ammunition), stock feed, and fuel (petrol, kerosene, and so on). The Post Office provided a vital service to the community, not only by managing the mail, but also the telegraph and, later, telephone service. And the Black Stump was more than a place to have a drink or simple meal. It was the township’s social hub and provided a place for people to get together and discuss their world with other locals and travellers passing through. Dartboards and, later, a pool table offered entertainment, as did Selby Warren, who was well known for his boisterous singing and yarn telling.

Frank Gardner (c. 1970)

Warren’s *Frank Gardner* (figure 29) shows the eponymous bushranger, who operated in the Bathurst district before Warren’s birth in 1887, pursued by government troopers, led by Sir Frederick Pottinger (1831–1865). Though they were outlaws,



Left to right: Figure 30. Muybridge photograph, 1870s; Figure 31. Hunting print. No details available

bushrangers were regarded as heroes by many ordinary country Australians, and in New South Wales Gardiner (1829–1903) and his friend, Ben Hall (1837–1865) were particular celebrities. The bushrangers in the Bathurst area were applauded by the poor for their free lifestyle and contempt for what were thought of as the ruling classes, both in towns and on rural properties.

Warren's first wife, Jessy Howard, proudly told of how her parents and other relatives had "looked after" Frank Gardiner and his gang on several occasions.⁶⁴ They often took them in, fed and protected them from government troopers who were considered lackeys of upper-class bureaucrats from the city with no understanding of the bush and the conditions it imposed on its inhabitants. Australian lack of respect for authority of any kind, which grew from its convict past, was reinforced by the actions of the troopers, who often carried out their duties in violent, arrogant, and devious ways. In a spirit of resistance, the exploits of the bushrangers were instead glorified in conversations, songs, and poems.

Having spent only a few weeks at school when a boy, the semi-literate Warren titled his work, "Frank Gardner," though the correct spelling is "Gardiner." The artist wrote down words as he pronounced or heard them and often misspelt them in the large letters he regularly added to the surface of his paintings; sometimes as the title of the work or, as in this case, to identify the two main characters in the narrative, as well as adding two comments, "Good Boy" beneath Gardiner and "Missed Again" beside the figure of "Sir Fred"—the villain of the piece. Though the bushranger era had more or less ended by 1880, the fact that Warren painted many pictures of their exploits reflects the great interest



that bushrangers held for him and many others of his generation. Warren was steeped in bushranger stories and ballads, representing them as free spirits and rebels against authority, which greatly appealed to the artist and his contemporaries in the Australian bush.

Frank Gardner shows four horsemen at full gallop. Three are troopers wearing red tunics, giving chase to Gardiner, who is dressed in black jacket and white pants. Though Eadweard Muybridge had shown the actual positioning of a horse's legs in full gallop in photographs in the 1870s⁶⁵ (figure 30), Warren represents them in the way that was the norm in art before the advent of time-lapse photography. His horses are more akin to those in hunting scenes from the previous century (figure 31), freely available as prints, which were common at the time and a Trunk Creek local advises one hung on a wall in the Black Stump.⁶⁶ This is hardly surprising, since although he was himself an excellent horseman, Warren almost certainly knew nothing of Muybridge, and so depicted horses as he believed they moved.

While the four horses in *Frank Gardner* are at full gallop, the outlaw and, to a lesser extent his pursuers, appear quite relaxed in their saddles. Sir Frederick Pottinger, with a rifle in his hands, has "missed again," allowing Gardiner to escape once more, which supports the poor view of Pottinger held by many; that he was a hapless leader of his troop. Having inherited his titles and then squandered his father's



Figure 32. Selby Warren, *Memory of Ben Hall*, c. 1971, acrylic on paper, 36 x 31.5 cm, private collection

fortune in England he moved to Australia in 1856, aged 25. Following a couple of unsuccessful forays in business he joined the police force as a trooper. In 1860 his titles of "Baron" and "Sir" became public and he was quickly promoted, becoming Inspector of Police for the Western District in 1862. Pottinger had earlier arrested another bushranger, Ben Hall but, due to a complete lack of evidence, Hall was acquitted. It was then that Hall joined Gardiner's gang which, two months later, carried out a major gold robbery at Eugowra, the largest robbery of its kind in Australian history, which Warren celebrated in a painting. A week after the robbery, when his men surrounded a house in which Gardiner was sleeping,

Pottinger's pistol unexpectedly misfired alerting Gardiner who escaped through a window and left the district for Queensland. With Gardiner gone the gang was led by Ben Hall and continued to be a focus for Pottinger. A few months later, Pottinger was invited to a country race meeting, which was also attended by Hall and some of his gang. Pottinger failed to notice the bushrangers and became known by the unfortunate moniker "Blind Freddy" (ushering in a phrase still used disparagingly in Australia: "even Blind Freddy could've seen that"). A number of poor decisions and questionable activities eventually led to Pottinger being dismissed. In March 1865, he was on his way to Sydney to present his defence when he

attempted to board a moving coach outside an inn in Sydney's Blue Mountains. His pistol discharged, the bullet lodging in his abdomen. He was transported to Sydney where he died intestate the following month.⁶⁷ It was Hall, rather than Pottinger whose memory was celebrated by Warren, including paintings of his house and final resting place (figure 32).

Bushrangers have been the subject of many Australian artists, most famously Sidney Nolan.⁶⁸ The bushranger was an iconic figure, who exemplified elements of the Australian bush and its history. Nolan's two series of paintings featuring the most famous of the bushrangers, Ned Kelly, are his best-known paintings and were instrumental in his rise to fame.⁶⁹ A native of Victoria, Nolan chose a Victorian bushranger whose occasional use of body armour made him particularly fascinating to the public. Nolan employed a self-consciously naïve style in the Ned Kelly paintings which matched his subject. Though neither painter knew the other's work, the similarities in Nolan's and Warren's choice of subject and manner of painting are noteworthy. The crucial difference is that Nolan consciously affected a way of painting, while Warren's method was a direct result of his experimental, autodidactic approach.

Brother Ben (1968)

Warren was something of a balladeer. He often sang (usually uninvited) at the Black Stump Hotel and the songs he most liked were bush ballads. He also wrote poetry of a kind, which he insisted on reciting to pub patrons, along with poems by better known authors. He also played a violin excruciatingly. An old tape made by his son, Alan, of Warren playing the violin, reinforces the story that Alan tells that the one thing Warren's long-suffering wife, Alma, could and would not tolerate was his violin playing in their home. Warren also played a guitar and the bones. Probably the clicking of the bones was the most accomplished of all his musical pursuits.⁷⁰ Quite a few naïve or self-taught artists were very much on the margins of society. They didn't fit in at all, but Warren was obviously not one of these. His liking for being a centre of attention at the Black Stump perhaps supports a view that he would have liked to be able to impress people with his art, as he felt he did with his vocalising and playing of instruments. He just didn't know how to get his pictures successfully in front of people.

Brother Ben (figure 33) represents a favourite poem of

Warren's. Also known as *The Stockman's Tale* and *Brother Ben and I*. The poem, by an unknown author, is a dramatic and evocative work of twenty verses.⁷¹ It tells of a group of drovers sitting around a campfire listening to a story told by a stockman, Ned, who tells of an incident when camping with his brother, Ben and another stockman after a tiring day driving cattle. The stock has been settled for the night and the men are relaxing around a fire. As they start drinking Ben refuses:

But Ned! I have not touched a drop these three
long years' he said
"And you know how crazed I go when the stuff
goes to my head."
Nonsense man the night is cold you need only
have one glass
"One, one only one" the chorus chimed, as
around the grog they passed.

The drinks flow and Ben, maddened by the booze, rides off into the bush, where he crashes into a tree and is killed. His brother, Ned, forever full of remorse, never touches alcohol again. The story had particular resonance with Warren as one of his brothers, Louis, was killed when his horse bolted and hit a tree.⁷²

The painting shows the settled cattle and, presumably, Ned tending to his horse in the left foreground. From the centre to the right of the composition is Brother Ben madly galloping into the rugged hills, which are dark and ominous. The proportions of the animals are interesting. Two very large bulls are at the top of the picture. They are twice the size of other animals and Ned and Ben in the foreground. One large bull stands at an angle and other horses to the centre left are also painted at an angle. These animals add drama to the picture echoing Ben's angled ride into the bush. The painting is also an insight into the care and handling of cattle in scrubby, rough bushland. The cattle appear to be free to roam and feed, but three horses, presumably belonging to the stockmen, are carefully lined up and tethered to a log on the ground.

Another ballad that Warren painted was *The Orphan Boy and his Dog* (figure 34), which is based on another sad tale of the bush, by Laurie Allen.⁷³ It tells the story of an orphan and his dog seeking shelter and a piece of bread at a rich man's house, but it is refused. The orphan boy cries that he will freeze to death, but to no avail, and after a bitterly cold night, both the boy and his dog are found dead at the front door by the



Figure 33. Selby Warren, *Brother Ben*, 1968, enamel, acrylic on paper, 102 x 62 cm, private collection



Figure 34. Selby Warren, *The Orphan Boy and his Dog*, 1973, acrylic on paper, 72 x 56 cm, private collection

owner.

The figures of the orphan boy and his dog are situated at the centre of the composition, though they are physically small. The rich man's house is brightly coloured and is surrounded by swathes of vivid colour representing the landscape. The "feel" of the painting is not one of sadness and gloom despite the ballad it illustrates containing no lightness at all. As an interpretation of the ballad's intent, which is a strong statement against poverty, privilege, and indifference, the painting could be considered a failure. But as a work of art, it is a painting of both beauty and strength.

It is uncertain whether the house depicted in this painting is one in Trunkey Creek. Warren's son, Alan, suggests it might represent a large house on the outskirts of town once owned by a well-to-do sheep farmer, but which burned down in the 1980s. Apparently Warren and the sheep farmer did not get on particularly well as Warren considered him to be "stuck up."⁷⁴ By setting his version of *The Orphan Boy and his Dog* at the premises of someone he disliked, Warren may well have intentionally added an extra dimension to the picture. If this was the case, the question again arises as to what he hoped to achieve if he did not show it to the sheep farmer or, at least, other people in the village who might have had similar feelings towards him and thus share the satire. Maybe this reflects a private satisfaction Warren felt that in painting his belief in the truth of the matter he has recorded it, even though he was in a position of very little power in his everyday life. He might even have felt that by chronicling his impressions of the sheep farmer some sort of sympathetic magic was involved which would reinforce his view of the man.

As has been noted, Warren painted his "ballad pictures" for his own pleasure. Apart from any creative need he might have had, the impact such stories had on him and his contemporaries was profound. Telling yarns, quoting poetry, and singing bush ballads was a major form of entertainment for people living isolated lives in the Australian bush. As a bustling gold town in the late 1800s and continuing until about 1918, Trunkey Creek would have offered a range of entertainments to its people. The town had six pubs and dance halls, often set up in marquees, which travelled from town to town. These offered popular ballads and plays (which, somewhat incongruously, included Shakespeare's tragedies) performed by travelling actors. Risqué singers, dancing girls,

and acrobats were also popular. Reading was popular and those who could read were served by travelling libraries, which regularly visited townships. Fist-fights were organised for entertainment, and brothels, usually owned and run by women, were popular amongst a mostly single male population. On the other hand, for much of Warren's life mass entertainment of the kind we take for granted today did not exist.⁷⁵

Selby Warren settled in Trunkey Creek in 1927, after most of the pleasures provided for the gold-seekers had gone. The population of the town had diminished from several thousand during the gold rush to not many more than one hundred. The people made their own entertainment. The ballads and songs they enjoyed reinforced the view held of the Australian bush (particularly in the cities) that it represented the true spirit of Australia and that the people living in the bush were the "real Australians." The people thus labelled were generally conservative and nationalistic and believed in the image they portrayed. Warren, though left-leaning in his politics, was a true believer in the worth and importance of Australia, despite his experience of the place being mostly restricted to a small area of New South Wales.

Painting versions of the ballads and poems he performed and taught his children was Warren's way of setting down in permanent form something of great importance to him. As someone who found writing difficult, these images provided a record in a tangible form of not only words he loved to hear but also a memory of his youth and of times gone by. They might be seen as bits of a diary of his life.⁷⁶ As Sidney Nolan said of his famous Ned Kelly paintings: "...the Kelly paintings are secretly about myself,"⁷⁷ so Warren's paintings may have been as much about his sense of self as they were about his subjects.

While most of Warren's paintings were of subjects from his past he also painted places and people contemporary to him. They too formed part of a record of his life that he found worth documenting in the medium he knew best—paint. Perhaps, like diarists keeping their thoughts to themselves, Warren's paintings were initially considered by him to be private. But, also, like a diarist whose work is unexpectedly published and becomes popular, he was happy to accept the recognition conferred on him from exhibitions (and money) when it finally arrived.

Mr G Whitlam Aus PM (1972) and Mrs M Whitlam (1972)

Selby Warren painted many portraits. His subjects were historical figures, family members, acquaintances, athletes, television presenters, and performers; anyone whose lives were in some way important to him and who he deemed worthy of commemorating. All the portraits, no matter the size, were important to him. When interviewed for television⁷⁸ at the opening of his first Sydney exhibition in August 1972 Warren said that he “didn’t really want to sell ‘m’ because he liked ‘havin’ m around’.”

Warren also painted politicians. Not only Australians, but also foreigners, such as the American president, L. B. Johnson, who visited Australia in October 1966. Warren had a black and white TV set and particularly liked the current affairs program “This Day Tonight” on ABC television. He listened to radio broadcasts and looked at the Sydney newspapers, which arrived in Trunkey Creek about a week after publication. His wife, Alma, who was far more literate than her husband, read the Australian Women’s Weekly and local regional newspapers. All of these media provided pictures of people and places that Warren used as sources for paintings.⁷⁹

Warren was a committed Australian Labor Party (ALP) supporter. His father had been affected by the Shearer’s Strike of 1891, which is credited with being the movement leading to the creation of the ALP, and Warren himself struggled through the Great Depression of the 1930s, when unemployment reached thirty per cent of the workforce in New South Wales. He believed in the union movement and its support of working people’s rights and conditions of employment. So it is not surprising that he would paint portraits of the famous, social-reformist ALP Prime Minister Gough Whitlam, and his wife Margaret (herself a prominent spokesperson on women’s rights and social policies). Warren also painted portraits of another iconic ALP Prime Minister, Ben Chifley, who came from nearby Bathurst.

Warren’s portraits of the Whitlams were painted in 1972, the year that Gough Whitlam was elected Prime Minister of Australia, after 23 years of conservative government. Despite his time in office lasting only three years, Whitlam is regarded as a towering figure in Australian politics. In what was a polarised society Whitlam was either loved or hated by supporters and opponents. He was famously removed from office by

the Governor-General, Sir John Kerr, after a number of scandals beset members of his ministry.

Warren painted both the Whitlams at least twice. The second known portraits (figures 35 and 36) were probably painted several months later than the other two (figures 37 and 38). They appear less finished, even rushed in their execution. The frame on the second likeness of Margaret Whitlam is self-made and roughly nailed together, while the image is interesting in that the figure appears to be positioned behind a table or desk, with books in each lower foreground corner. However, this is uncertain as Warren sometimes placed “boxes” of colour in the foreground of paintings, which might have been included either to complete the compositional balance of the work or to represent actual objects.⁸⁰

In the second portrait of Gough Whitlam, the figure appears to be standing at what might be a lectern, though again caution must be taken in attempting to explain the objects and shapes surrounding the subjects of Warren’s works in figurative terms.⁸¹

Warren’s paintings of contemporary figures, whether politicians, friends, or celebrities, vary considerably in size. Many are small, being about the size of a sheet of letter paper. However, the Whitlam portraits are all comparatively large for Warren, measuring on average about 80 x 70 cm (unframed), and perhaps reflecting the importance of their subjects for the artist.

Selby Warren lived through a transitional era; he was amongst the last Australians who would remember a country that was more agrarian than industrial, with more dirt roads than sealed highways.⁸² In recording past and present times for himself in paintings and drawings, he was doing something that was highly unusual for a man of his cultural background and lifestyle. In a male-dominated, country society, rather than taking it easy, going to the pub and hunting and fishing, as did the other working men of Trunkey Creek in their later years, Warren painted pictures. He did this despite being mocked for it by his fellows. It was something he was driven to do, rather than mere lifestyle choice. Had he not been discovered by Garth Dixon he would most likely have continued painting without any thought of outside recognition. He was not motivated to create out of a desire for audience approval, or financial gain. It is impossible to know how many people in Australia like Warren have produced bodies of art that never surfaced in





Opposite: Figure 35. Selby Warren, *Mr G Whitlam Aus PM*, 1972, oil on board, 82 x 49.5 cm, private collection above: Figure 36. Selby Warren, *Mrs M Whitlam*, 1972, oil on board, 78 x 69 cm, private collection



Figure 37. Selby Warren, *Mrs Whitlam*, 1972, acrylic on board, 77 x 63 cm, private collection



Figure 38. Selby Warren, *Goff Whitlam*, 1972, acrylic on board, 76 x 61.5 cm, private collection

their lifetime, nor was discovered and brought to public attention posthumously. The nature of Dixon's chance encounter suggests that the example of Selby Warren might be the tip of an iceberg.

¹George Melly, *A Tribe of One: Great Naïve Painters of the British Isles* (Yeovil: Oxford Illustrated Press, 1981). Though Melly's work was written almost a decade after Roger Cardinal's *Outsider Art* (London: Studio Vista, London, 1972), the descriptor "outsider art" was not used widely to describe a type of art still then labelled "naïve", "primitive", or "self-taught" by many in the artworld and almost all in the media in Australia.

²Warren was 84 when Dixon first met him. He lived for another seven years, dying at the age of 91 in 1979.

³In 1989 Mitchell College became part of the Charles Sturt University. See Charles Sturt University, "25 Year Anniversary," accessed 5 October 2014, <http://www.csu.edu.au/25-years>

⁴Garth Dixon (1925-2015), who was in his eighties when I spoke to him, was unable to recall the subject of the painting in the local pub, but his younger companion that evening, Karl Schaerf, told the author in August 2013 that he remembers it being of The Black Stump Hotel itself and described a "green handmade frame decorated with triangular markings."

⁵Email to the author dated 20 July 2014 forwarded by another of Warren's granddaughters, Teresa, on Jessica's behalf.

⁶Email to author from Teresa Kudinoff (a granddaughter of Warren) dated 20 July 2014-ibid.

⁷The interview was undertaken by a journalist, Paul Murphy, and was broadcast as a short segment (3.75 minutes in black and white) on the current affairs program *This Day Tonight* on 14 August 1972 (Australian Broadcasting Corporation, Sydney © 2009). In the interview, Warren appears completely at ease in front of cameras and enjoying the experience of showing off his paintings to the presenter. His son, Alan, has advised the author (in conversations in 2010) that Warren sometimes exaggerated stories for effect. In saying that he "didn't realise until somebody came that knew something about the "game" (i.e. the art business) he was talking about exhibiting and selling paintings and not implying that he had not been involved in producing art before 1972, nor that he was unaware that what he produced was art.

⁸For discussion of the perceived place of women in Australian art, particularly in the non-metropolitan areas, see Ann Toy, *Hearth and Home*, exhibition catalogue (Sydney: Historic Houses Trust, 1988) and Kay Schaffer, *Women and the Bush: Forces of Desire in the Australian Cultural Tradition* (Cambridge and Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1988). Folk art of the kind found in Europe and America did not flourish in Australia where the majority of such work was produced by women and, though often decorative, was generally utilitarian in function.

⁹Information on his discovery and experiences once exhibited provided to the author by Garth Dixon and Dixon's son, Peter, 2010 to 2014.

¹⁰Small country communities like the one at Trunk Creek are often conservative and fearful of change of the sort thought to be represented by people from the large cities.

¹¹The Eastern Sydney suburb of Woollahra in 1972 was as different a place to Trunk Creek as can be imagined. Woollahra was inhabited by affluent, well-educated people who considered themselves to be cultured and sophisticated. Trunk Creek was a tiny bush town of poorly educated, working class people

who showed no interest in the arts (Both places remain much the same today).

¹²As recalled by Garth Dixon in conversation with the author, 2010. The quotation roughly translates as: "Look at them won't you? Just like a flock of chickens going in for a feed of bran."

¹³Stated by Dixon in conversation with the author, August 2011. Use of the word "maintained" is interesting. It would appear that Dixon (and Rudy Komon) initially believed they were onto a good thing (while it lasted), as well as wanting to assist Warren in continuing his production of art. When asked, Dixon would neither confirm nor deny that he received a commission for those works sold by Komon, though it is quite possible he did and, if so, might have had a commercial interest in promoting Warren's work and the quantity of it produced.

¹⁴Warren painted many pictures in anticipation of ongoing exhibitions. He became quite dependent on the sale of his paintings and put great store in Rudy Komon continuing to sell work. Correspondence between the artist (sometimes written on his behalf by his wife, Alma, and daughter, Joyce) and Komon, or his business manager, Gwen Frolich, is held in the National Library of Australia, Canberra (Rudy Komon Art Gallery Records, NLA-MS8327. Relevant documents cover the period December 1971-August 1977). In his letters Warren often asks Komon when further exhibitions will take place. The responses from Komon are non-committal. After the three shows in Sydney, Melbourne, and Brisbane, held between February 1972 to April 1973, Komon seems to have lost interest in Warren, though he and Frolich continued a sporadic correspondence with him until 1977, shortly before the artist's death. By this time Warren was unwell and had stopped painting. Komon was also slowing down and died in 1982. Frolich lived on until 2004. An interesting insight into Rudy Komon and his gallery is contained in Robert Raymond, ed., *52 Views of Rudy Komon* (Sydney: Art Gallery of New South Wales, 1999) in which 52 associates (including artists and clients) recall their experiences with the dealer.

¹⁵Both Hart and Byrne were painting in Broken Hill, which was a centre for naïve art similar, in some respects, to the environment of the Ashington Group (known as the Pitmen Painters) of Northern England—see Lee Hall, *Pitmen Painters* (London: Faber and Faber, 2010). A number of self-taught artists and dealers were drawn to Broken Hill which they would visit as something of an artist colony. Callins and Fardoulis painted in Queensland and, like Warren, were independently discovered by members of the artworld.

¹⁶What was known as the "cultural cringe" was changing. A distinctive Australian culture was developing, even if it remained derivative in many respects. See footnote 22 below.

¹⁷Aboriginal art, though self-taught, when first brought to public attention, was a form of traditional or "tribal" art derived from a tradition of art making many centuries old. The form of this art was handed on from one producer to another and did not represent isolated individual artistic expression. A referendum was held in 1967 which led to aboriginal Australians being recognised as Australian citizens for the first time by the dominant settler culture. This may have influenced their acceptance as true representatives of an earlier Australia with aboriginal art becoming ever more popular. To some extent this may have been at the expense of the naïve painters like Warren and his ilk who were supplanted as the major source of artistic connection with an earlier time in regional Australia.

In the early 1970s aboriginal people in remote communities were given art materials and encouraged to produce numerous works which were marketed by non-aboriginal dealers. More recent aboriginal art has, I believe, developed well beyond the "primitive" and into the current art scene. For detailed discussion

on aboriginal art, its development and promotion see Vivien Johnson, "Once Upon a Time in Papunya" University of New South Wales, Sydney, 2010; Howard Morphy, *Becoming Art, Exploring Cross-Cultural Categories* (University of New South Wales, Sydney, 2008). For a less scholarly insider's view see Adrian Newstead, *The Dealer is the Devil* (Brabdy & Schlesinger, Blackheath NSW, 2014).

¹⁸See Elwyn Lynn and Sidney Nolan, *Sidney Nolan—Australian*, (Melbourne: Bay Books, 1979): 28-29.

¹⁹T. G. Rosenthal, *Sidney Nolan* (Thames & Hudson, London, 2002), 282-297.

²⁰See Anne Grey, "Art and the Environment: New Visions from Old," in Deryck Schreuder and Stuart Ward, *The Oxford History of the British Empire: Australia's Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008): 129-130. Also, Ian Burn, et al., *The Necessity of Australian Art* (Sydney: Power Publications, 1988): 26.

²¹Colin Rhodes "Trunkey Creek Insider: Outsider Art" in *Selby Warren: Trunkey's Tribe of One*, exhibition catalogue, (Bathurst: Bathurst Regional Art Gallery, 2014), 13.

²²"Cultural cringe" was first used to describe Australia's then cultural scene by an Australian schoolmaster, Arthur Angell Phillips, in his article "The Cultural Cringe" which was published in the literary magazine *Meanjin* in 1950. See A. A. Phillips, "The Cultural Cringe," *Meanjin*, 9, no. 4, Summer Issue (1950): 299-302. More recent opinions on the "cultural cringe" have replaced the word "cringe" with "creep" to represent Australian culture's slow expansion into overseas cultural centres, thus reversing the original meaning of the phrase. See *Nick Bryant's Australia*; "Australian Cultural Creep, Not Cringe," blog entry by Nick Bryant, 31 August 2009, BBC News, accessed 15 November 2014, http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/thereporters/nickbryant/2009/08/australian_cultural_creep_not.html

²³Ian Burn, et al., *The Necessity of Australian Art*, 13-14.

²⁴Ian Burn, et al., *The Necessity of Australian Art*, 13.

²⁵Warren Moore, *The Story of Australian Art: From the Earliest Known Art of the Continent to the Art of To-day*, vol. 2 (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1934), 44.

²⁶The ideal of a pastoral way of life in Australia was not so much a reaction against the "progressive" (i.e. industrial) forces within society, as it was a reflection of Australia's historical relationship with Britain and the manner in which Australia, as part of the Empire, was locked into the development of the form of capitalism at that empire's centre. In contrast to Europe, Australia was heavily urbanised by the late nineteenth-century, which had developed prior to industrialisation and in advance of rural settlement, whereas urbanisation in Britain and other parts of Europe had occurred with industrialisation. The early port cities of Australia have always maintained their importance as the country's commercial and administrative centres. Again, unlike Britain, Europe and the US, the greatest industrialisation in Australia took place after the Second World War. See Anne Grey, "Art and the Environment: New Visions from Old," in *The Oxford History of the British Empire: Australia's Empire*, 129-130.

²⁷Ian Burn, et al., *The Necessity of Australian Art*, 24.

²⁸See: Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, *What's Wrong with Anzac? The Militarisation of Australian History* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2010) and James Brown, *Anzac's Long Shadow, the Cost of Our National Obsession*, (Melbourne: Penguin, 2014).

The ANZACs were the combined Australian and New Zealand Army Corp which formed part of Britain's colonial forces in the First World War. When Britain declared war in 1914 Australia's Prime Minister was the English born Joseph Cook (1860-1947) who reflected the prevailing attitude in his statement on Australia's entering the war: "our duty is clear-to remember that we are

Britons." The ANZAC's part in the failed attack by the British forces at Gallipoli, Turkey in 1915 has, for unpersuasive reasons, been interpreted as the event when Australia became a single national entity, which had actually occurred with Federation in 1901. The ANZAC experience at Gallipoli has also been credited as *the* event that formed Australian values and traditions as a nation. These were developed over a period of many years by politicians and others from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and not by unsuccessful Australian soldiers in Turkey. Perhaps the reality of the situation can be summed up by the fact that Australia's newly elected Prime Minister, Andrew Fisher (1862-1928) (like Cook, an Englishman), was not even advised by the British government that our troops had been sent to Turkey until 13 days after they had landed at Gallipoli. The British generally regarded the ANZACs as untrained and uncouth colonials who were simply fighting on behalf of the empire and not as any sort of separate national force.

²⁹Heather Radi, "1920-1929," in *A New History of Australia*, edited by F. K. Crowley (Melbourne: Heinemann, 1974), 395. Many of the Australian troops who were conscripted to fight for Britain in the First World War were from regional areas in Australia. The folklore that developed around them reinforced a widely held belief by city dwellers that the country and those who lived there somehow reflected the *real* Australia—that rugged, tough place "out there."

³⁰Bianca McCullough, *Australian Naïve Painters* (Melbourne: Hill of Content, 1977) Bianca McCullough lists thirty-three naïve painters, including Warren. Of these she considers five to be "border line cases," which include artists like Pro Hart who, though trained in art, appear naïve in style.

³¹Information taken from McCullough, *ibid*; biographies available on Design and Art Australia website www.daa.org.au; Gavin Wilson, *The Artists of Hill End: Art, Life and Landscape* (Sydney: Art Gallery of New South Wales, 1995).

³²Gavin Wilson, *ibid*.

³³Ross Moore, *Sam Byrne: Folk Painter of the Silver City* (Ringwood, Victoria: Viking/Penguin, 1985), 13.

³⁴See Emergency Management Australia website, accessed 5 October 2014, www.ema.gov.au (site discontinued).

³⁵See Theodor Pavlopoulos, "Reverse Perspective in Christian Iconography," *The Peacock's Tale: Essays in Mathematics and Culture*, 27 April 2011, accessed 5 October 2014, <https://pavlopoulos.wordpress.com/2011/04/27/reverse-perspective-in-christian-iconography/>

³⁶The ancient Greeks and Romans were aware of linear perspective, but this knowledge appears to have been lost in the Dark Ages before being rediscovered in Italy in the fifteenth-century. Fifteen years after Brunelleschi's work another architect, Leon Battista Alberti, wrote down the rules of linear perspective for the use of artists.

³⁷See Ton Derksen: "The Discovery of Linear Perspective and its Limitations," in *Philosophica*, 1, no. 63 (1999): 19-50.

³⁸As mentioned, Warren's home township of Trunkey Creek is almost 60 kilometres south of Bathurst, while Hill End is 85 kilometres north of the city.

³⁹Bianca McCullough, *Australian Naïve Painters*, 54.

⁴⁰The "nugget" was the Beyers and Holtermann Nugget discovered on 26 October 1872 at Hawkins Hill, Hill End, at the Star Hope Mine, owned by Louis Beyers and Bernard Otto Holtermann. Though technically not a nugget it is the largest single piece of gold-bearing rock ever found in Australia weighing 630 pounds and containing approximately 5,000 ounces of pure gold. See "Historical Finds and Discoveries," *Goldoz: Australian Shares, Mines and History*, accessed 10 November 2014, <http://www.goldoz.com.au/historical-gold-finds-and-discoveries/>

⁴¹Geoffrey Lehmann, *Australian Primitive Painters* (St. Lucia, Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 1977), 1-9.

⁴²Geoffrey Lehmann, *ibid.*, 11.

⁴³Geoffrey Lehmann, *ibid.*, 13.

⁴⁴Gavin Wilson, *The Artists of Hill End: Art, Life and Landscape*, 88.

⁴⁵Transcript of recordings made by Warren in 1974, of his life and of experiences growing up, with the help of his son, Alan. Tape transcripts prepared by Unita Knox of Trunkey Creek with the author in 2011 and held by the author.

⁴⁶Julian Bull, "Irvine Homer," *Design and Art Australia Online*, created 2009 and revised 2011, accessed 23 September 2013, <http://www.daao.org.au/bio/irvine-homer/biography/>

⁴⁷Alan Warren remembers his father owning a 1937 ragtop Chevrolet, which he drove until it irretrievably broke down in the 1950s. He believes the rear window was kept by Warren after the vehicle was abandoned. Conversation between Alan Warren and the author, October 2010.

⁴⁸Whilst it is most unlikely that the Trunkey Creek general store stocked frames, Warren would not have been in a financial position to buy them even where they were available.

⁴⁹His first self-built house on the Curragh collapsed a few years after completion but *Hill 90* still stands. He was helped by a Trunkey Creek builder with *Hill 90*, but, despite this, it apparently contains no right angles in any of its rooms. Information provided to the author by Warren's son, Alan, July 2009 and Garth Dixon in 2010.

⁵⁰Garth Dixon in conversation with the author, August 2011.

⁵¹The author has compiled an illustrated inventory of the extant paintings and drawings.

⁵²In his essay, "The Sense of Time and Place," Roger Cardinal investigates in some detail the idea of memory painting with specific regard to Grandma Moses. Roger Cardinal, "The Sense of Time and Place," in *Grandma Moses in the Twenty-First Century*, edited by Jane Kallir, (Alexandria, Virginia: Art Services International and Yale University Press, 2001), 82-83.

⁵³As late as the 1970s England was often nostalgically referred to as "Mother England" and Britain as "the old country" or "home country" by many in Australia. Between 1949 and 1974 the highest proportion of immigrants to Australia was British (1.8 million migrants) followed by Italian (391,000) and New Zealanders (260,000). See Kate Walsh, *The Changing Face of Australia: A Century of Immigration 1901-2000* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2001) and *Fact Sheet 2—Key Facts in Immigration*, (Canberra: Department of Immigration and Citizenship (Australia), 2008).

⁵⁴Teresa Kudinoff, Warren's granddaughter, in conversation with the author, July 2014.

⁵⁵Though both his parents were born in country New South Wales in the Bathurst region, Warren's grandparents were from England on his father's side and France and Scotland (the Isle of Skye) on his mother's side. Both of Jessie Howard's grandparents were from Scotland. Information provided to the author by Unita Knox, a Trunkey Creek resident and close friend of Alan, Selby Warren's son.

⁵⁶Garth Dixon in conversation with the author February 2011.

⁵⁷A number of naïve and outsider artists have been convinced of their own importance from the *naïf*, Henri Rousseau, through marginalised artists like Adolf Wölfl and Aloïse Corbaz, to an Australian artist like Sam Byrne. Each of these, and many others, were quite vocal in proclaiming the merit of their art and of themselves as artists. See Frances Morris and Christopher Green, eds., *Henri Rousseau: Jungles in Paris* (London: National Gallery of Art, 2005); Wölfl, Adolf, Manuel Anceau, Barbara Šafářová, Terezie Zemánková, Galerie hlavního města Prahy. Dům u kamenného zvonu, and Adolf-Wölfl-Stiftung.

Adolf Wölfl: Creator of the Universe. Řevnice: Arbor vitae, 2012; John Maizels, *Raw Creation, Outsider Art and Beyond* (London: Phaidon, 1996); Ross Moore, *Sam Byrne, Folk Painter of the Silver City*, (Ringwood, Victoria: Viking, 1985).

⁵⁸Photograph of Trunkey Creek, taken in 1937. Photographer unknown. From the archives of the Bathurst photographer, Frank Colzato, who provided the author with a digital copy of the picture.

⁵⁹Some paintings by Warren use such a device, usually an outlined or solid square of colour near a foreground corner of a work which appears unrelated to the subject matter but works to balance the overall composition. However, although these shapes achieve such compositional balance it is possible they are figurative objects.

⁶⁰Unita Knox, long time Trunkey Creek resident in conversation with the author, August 2014.

⁶¹Unita Knox, *ibid.*, July 2014.

⁶²Information provided by Sylvia Kilby of the Bathurst Historical Society Incorporated, by letter to the author dated 15 October 2013.

⁶³Described to the author by Alan Warren in conversation, 13 August 2014.

⁶⁴Author advised of this by Alan Warren, son of Jessie Howard and Warren, July 2014.

⁶⁵See Paul Hill, *Eadweard Muybridge* (London: Phaidon, 2001).

⁶⁶Unita Knox in conversation with the author, 2014.

⁶⁷On Pottinger, see P. A. Selth, "Pottinger, Sir Frederick William (1831–1865)," *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, accessed 1 November 2014, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/pottinger-sir-frederick-william-1515/text7195>, published first in hardcopy 1974.

⁶⁸See T. G. Rosenthal, *Sidney Nolan*; and Sir Sidney Nolan, Murray Bail, and Andrew Sayers, *Sidney Nolan's Ned Kelly: The Ned Kelly Paintings in the National Gallery of Australia*, (Canberra: National Gallery of Australia, 2002).

⁶⁹Nolan painted two major series of Kelly paintings in 1946-1947 and in 1959-1960. However, he often returned to Kelly as a subject until to his death in 1992. Nolan was directly influenced by the works of Laszlo Moholy-Nagy (1895-1946), a Hungarian painter and photographer of the Bauhaus school in his idea for the iconic images of Kelly in a flat, black, square helmet; see T. G. Rosenthal, *ibid.*

⁷⁰Alan Warren in discussion with the author 2009-2014.

⁷¹See full version at Anonymous, "My Brother Ben and I," *Australian Bush Poetry, Verse & Music Forum*, online forum comment posted 12 September 2008, accessed 14 January 2014, <http://www.bushverse.com/smf/index.php?topic=1795.0;wap2>

⁷²Alan Warren in conversation with the author, 2012.

⁷³Anonymous, "My Brother Ben and I," *Australian Bush Poetry, Verse & Music Forum*.

⁷⁴Alan Warren in discussion with the author, August 2014.

⁷⁵Information provided by Sylvia Kilby of the Bathurst Historical Society Incorporated in a letter to the author dated 15 October 2013.

⁷⁶Oscar Wilde wrote: "Memory is the diary we all carry about with us," which seems pertinent. See: Oscar Wilde, "Quotable Quote," *Good Reads*, accessed 17 November 2014, http://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/3565.Oscar_Wilde?page=8

⁷⁷Nolan quoted in: Evelyn Lynn, James Mollison, and Sidney Nolan, *Sidney Nolan's Ned Kelly Paintings*, exhibition catalogue (Canberra: Australian National Gallery, 1989), 8.

⁷⁸*ibid.*

⁷⁹Information on the Warren's TV and press interests from his son, Alan Warren, and granddaughter, Teresa Kudinoff.

⁸⁰See footnote 54 above.

⁸¹Warren's paintings sometimes use recognisable objects around the central subjects of his works. Many, though, are swathes of colour and shapes seemingly incorporated in the composition for balance and effect rather than for realistic representation of objects. In this way I think he was expressionistic in the way a child might be, his image making so satisfying to him that to produce representations that might be considered woefully unrealistic to most people's eyes was irrelevant to him. Garth Dixon advised the author in conversation (October 2010) that if asked what an unrecognisable shape represented Warren would explain it without hesitation, "just the way a child can." If he was, in fact, trying to realistically reproduce what he saw or remembered, but couldn't, this did not disappoint or concern him. His was truly an "authentic impulse," which led to paintings of startling, raw beauty.

⁸²Suggested by imagery: James Lee Burke, *Wayfaring Stranger* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2014).



Johnathan A. Kendall: Street Visionary

Mark Gabriele

Many of Johnathan Kendall's woodcarvings did not enjoy the fate of having been appreciated by their initial owners. The fact of the matter is that some people came into ownership of his work somewhat unwillingly and did not have much regard for its artistic value. On many an occasion Kendall used his artwork to pay a debt when it came time to settle the bill, or as grubstake—collateral for a cash advance in a transaction that likely never got completed. In a gesture of repayment, he gave a number of pieces to those who bailed him out of jail, and commonly bartered them for room and board as he passed through town.

A restless nomad from the 1960s to the 1980s, Kendall left an impressive legacy of his icons all across America. Complex and charismatic, he endeared himself to many who knew him while earning the reputation of a grifter and scoundrel with others.

There is little established fact about Kendall's childhood aside from what the artist said himself. He said that he was born in Ipswich, Massachusetts and raised in opulence: his father an English nobleman, his mother a Cabot (one of Boston's first families), and his grandfather knighted in the English court. Kendall credited travel throughout Europe to monasteries and cathedrals with his father as the source of his artistic inspiration, but made no mention of any formal art training. His father died when he was in his early teens. His mother ejected him from the home on his 18th birthday and disowned him.

The hard evidence of his life story doesn't begin until his twenties when Kendall began to carve. As Kendall told the tale, he carved himself homeless using the wood of a Colorado cabin to make his first crude whittlings. Left without a roof over his head, he then headed for Taos, New Mexico and from there began a never-ending journey that saw him crisscrossing from coast to coast, stopping at campgrounds, shelters, and monasteries—often on the run from the law. His carvings, generally signed on the reverse side, reveal where he was, when, and

with whom—and sometimes for whom the piece was intended.

As an artist, he was impassioned and prolific. He made religious woodcarvings of all sorts: icons, diptychs, triptychs, altar pieces, stations of the cross, and nativity sets. Well-versed in iconographic tradition, he employed conventional symbols such as the emblems of the four evangelists. At times he peppered the margin or recesses with a devil or two. He started with found wood, which could be anything from ironing boards to shipping crates and old fences. On occasion, he was even known to reclaim old wood before it had been discarded.

He typically did not work alone, but instead with partners, apprentices, or in workshops. There were three major signature epochs of his work that reflected his working relationships. The first epoch was signed "Kendall and McLeod" during which time his apprentice/working partner was Charles McLeod, to whom Kendall referred as his cousin. Kendall and McLeod worked and travelled together from the mid-1960s to mid-1970s. The next epoch was "Monks of Holy Trinity Monastery" during which time Kendall had established a workshop at Holy Trinity Monastery in St. David, Arizona in the late 1970s. He signed works this way even though technically he was not a monk.

While running the workshop at Holy Trinity Monastery, Kendall met aspirant John Kreyche, and left the monastery with him around 1980. The two began travelling and working together, signing "Kendall and Kreyche" or under the name "Termites Workshop," ultimately marrying at the Metropolitan Community Church in Tucson, Arizona circa 1986. As time went on, Kendall grew increasingly averse to signing his actual name for fear of being traced by the authorities, and so began signing under the name "Termites Workshop" almost exclusively until his death in 2004 in Espanola, New Mexico.

By personal account, Kendall was eccentric and enigmatic. He was described to me both as "inherently evil" and as "a babe in the woods," as having "a cynical attitude towards religion, acting out a deep-seated vengeance against the church" and as having "a very deep faith, love for the church, and love of the sacraments" who worked "not for art's sake, but for the sheer love of God." Characterised by some as a crafty con artist who skipped out on bills,



Figure 2. Johnathan Kendall and John Kreyche, *Adoration of the Magi*, circa 1981, polychrome on wood in multiple layers, 81 x 210 cm, La Fonda Hotel, Santa Fe, New Mexico (photograph Carolyn Wright)



Figure 3. Johnathan Kendall and John Kreyche, *Adoration of the Magi* (detail), circa 1981, polychrome on wood in multiple layers, 81 x 210 cm., La Fonda Hotel, Santa Fe, New Mexico (photograph Carolyn Wright)



he somehow managed to charm others as “a free spirit” who never really had any intention to defraud. Always broke he was nonetheless extravagant. Flighty, impulsive, and impatient, he also seems to have had a flair for the grandiose. He liked a new suit to come out of jail in style, and claimed that his Scottish Terrier was directly descended from Fala, the celebrated canine companion of Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

Although he spent a good amount of time in the company of monks, Kendall was essentially a denizen of the streets, passing through society without ever fully engaging with it. He was jailed numerous times for infractions relating to his vagrant lifestyle such as defrauding an inn keeper, passing bad checks, and skipping out on a car rental contract with the car. Sometimes Kendall was prompted to move on by restless impulse, sometimes once he had worn out his welcome, and sometimes to keep one step ahead of the police. One day in 1991, John Kreyche drove off alone and disappeared. A testament to their life on the streets, Kendall brought Kreyche’s photo around to missions and soup kitchens in an effort to locate him. The case remains unsolved to this day.

Kendall impressed all with his encyclopaedic mastery of biblical and ecclesiastical subject, and his artistic gift. *The Huntington Memorial* (figure 1) represents a landmark work for Kendall, one he would talk about for decades after completing it. This piece resides at Holy Cross Monastery in West Park, New York in the Hudson Valley. It commemorates James Huntington, who founded the Order of the Holy Cross in New York City, and hangs in his crypt. It was done around 1976 with Charles McLeod, and has suffered some damage from a fall from the wall, and steady high humidity from being partially underground.

Across the top, two small angels carry the holy cross with the phrase *pacim in terries* (sic), Latin for “peace on earth.” In the blue dome, St. Michael the Archangel holding sword and spear defeats the dragon, and is flanked on either side by the cross, palm of the martyrs, a host and chalice, and the alpha omega. The next tier contains shields of the Episcopal diocese where the Order of the Holy Cross had houses at the time this was created. James Huntington, founder of the Order is the centre figure attired in the original Augustinian habit of the Order. To the left appears the Chrysler building in New York City, where the Order was founded, and to the

right appears the monastery church of Holy Cross Monastery in West Park, New York, which is the mother house of the Order. At bottom left appears St. Helena, patron of the Order for her devotion to finding the “true cross.” At bottom centre is St. Augustine of Hippo, another patron of the Order since it was founded as an order of monks. He appears wearing the robe of a bishop, with staff and mitre, and with the “City of God” behind him, a reference to his book *De Civitate Dei*. At bottom right appears St. Dominic, founder of the Order of Preachers, since the primary work of this Order was preaching and mission. At his feet we see a dog with torch, a reference to the legend that Dominic was preceded by a dog carrying a lamp symbolising the light of the Gospel. Kendall includes a saw, mallet, chisel, and square, the tools of his woodcraft, in the arches over Saints Dominic and Helena.

It is apparent how well-studied this piece is, and the deep knowledge of ecclesiastical history that went into creating it. Kendall would say for the rest of his life that he felt the presence of James Huntington was with him as he created this piece. Randy Lutz, a deacon at St. Bede’s Episcopal Church in Santa Fe, New Mexico and one of Kendall’s working partners towards the very end of his life, made these comments to me: “When Kendall was working on saints and portraits, he would enter into a powerful mental state, which would begin with prayer and research about them. His artistic process was a prayerful, mystical communion ... very sacramental and sacred. Kendall often spoke of *The Huntington Memorial* and how he felt the presence of Huntington while he created it. His account was so vivid, to this day we cannot hear mention of Huntington’s name without also thinking of Kendall.” Another of Kendall’s working associates, David Glasgow, said that Kendall kept this transcendent process very private, tending to reveal it only to a select few, and hardly ever anyone outside of the cloth.

As an iconographer, Kendall introduced depth to a traditionally flat art form. The classic icon is made of one wood panel painted with tempera and then gilded. As Kendall developed as an artist, he began to add layers, first superimposing them flush to the back piece, and then lifting them off the back piece with pegs. This created a raised relief where the paintings of each layer could be seen behind the layer in front of it. This pioneered the medium and its expressive potential. *The Adoration of the Magi*

Figure 4. Johnathan Kendall and John Kreyche, *Adoration of the Magi* (detail), circa 1981, polychrome on wood in multiple layers, 81 x 210 cm, La Fonda Hotel, Santa Fe, New Mexico (photograph Carolyn Wright)



(figure 2), which hangs in the New Mexico room of the La Fonda Hotel in Santa Fe, New Mexico is a perfect example.

Identifiable by their crowns, the three kings visit the Holy Family in Bethlehem. Depicting the full Trinity at a nativity is nothing novel, but more commonly you might see some sort of hierarchy between Heaven and Earth, with Heaven above, and Earth below, and Christ the mediator in between. However in Kendall's layered treatment, although not outwardly apparent, we can find the dove of the Holy Spirit and the Heavenly Father hidden behind the Christ child (figure 3). Heaven is not out of reach, it is just out of sight, and divinity abides unrevealed, appearing instead as humanity. The cat with the Cheshire grin (figure 4) is what Kendall called his "whimsy" and sometimes used as his pictorial signature. Smirking, he challenges us to find the deeper meaning of this piece behind the superficial layers that a lazier eye might accept as real.

Jonah and the Whale (figure 5) was one of Kendall's favourite subjects. This one dates to the "Kendall & Kreyche" era, and hangs at the top of the executive staircase at La Fonda Hotel in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Observe the treatment of the whale—on the forward panel we see one complete leviathan lifted off the back piece, but partially obscured in the shadows underneath we see the reflections, it seems, of two more. Is this one whale or three—or perhaps a trinity of whales? From this ambiguity springs the richness of this work. Though there might be a hint of the Holy Trinity, with its lascivious grin the overall aspect of this creature is more profane than sacred. It evokes a thought of Cerberus the Hellhound, the three-headed beast that guards the gate to Hades, making sure none escape. While the Holy Trinity is a symbol that embodies the promise of resurrection and eternal life, Cerberus is a symbol that embodies the finality and irreversibility of death. A touch of Heaven and a touch of Hell, Kendall simultaneously deifies and demonises this fish about to swallow the prophet. It is a dense and poetic image that derives a good measure of its impact from Kendall's innovations in layering and dimension. The city of Nineveh represents Jonah's appointment as prophet, which he vigorously tries to evade according to the Old Testament story. Here it appears plastered all across the horizon, highlighting the inevitability of the outcome, and fulfilment of his destiny.

Often a fugitive himself, Kendall identified with Jonah. Chased by creditors and wanted by the sheriff, he might take temporary refuge within the cloistered walls of a monastery where he could always find a welcome. In order to keep one step ahead of the law, he lived a private, nameless and elusive life, even to the point of neither allowing his photo to be taken nor signing his carvings by name later in his career. Kendall largely engineered his own obscurity, artistic, and otherwise, which necessitated personal interview and detective work to be the basis of much of this article. His icons, however—Kendall's portals to the divine—are beginning to receive public attention. The first museum exhibition of the artist's work took place posthumously at the Cape Cod Museum of Art in 2007. 'Woodcarvings by Johnathan Kendall', took place between June and September 2011 at Wellfleet Preservation Hall in Wellfleet, Massachusetts. While camped out in the back yard during the summer of 1976, Kendall & McLeod had carved the front doors to Wellfleet Preservation Hall when the building was a Catholic church.

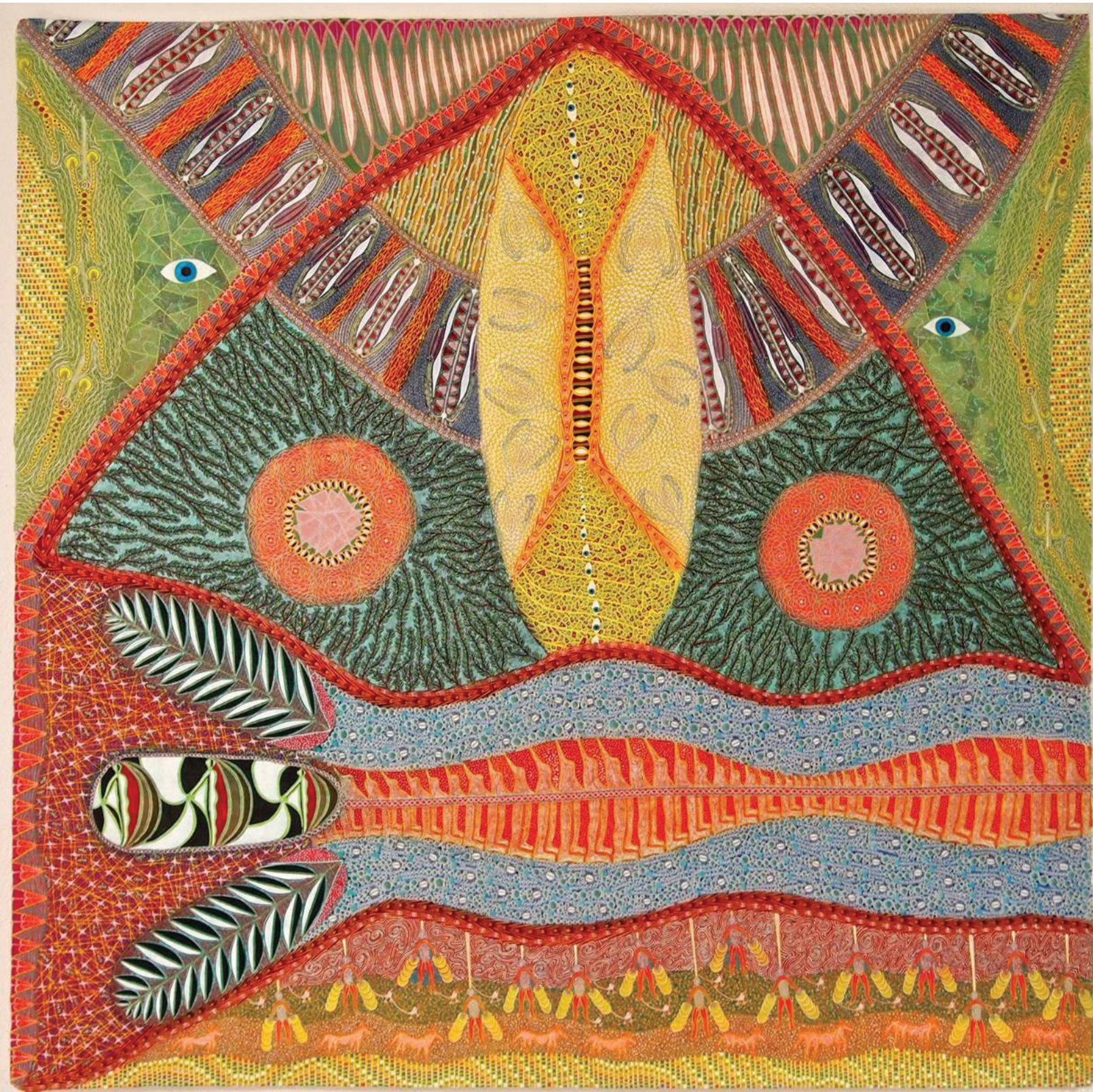


Figure 1. Domenico Zindato, *10,000 Grains of Sand*, 2014, ink on paper, 100 x 100 cm, courtesy of the artist.

10,000 Grains of Sand

Domenico Zindato

The shadow of the angel's wing covered the surface of 10,000 grains of sand. The sand was turning and revolving, composing lines, forms, patterns.

At the time the angel disappeared, a drawing was left. I was the hourglass through which the 10,000 grains of sand were flowing, dripping time through my hand to the paper-land where those grains were settling into radiant, composite, meaningful image.

It is a conversation, a transmission and a recording of things immortal. Movements to reveal time itself through the work; the making of time and the transcending of it into the focus of each dot and line, into the emanating colour tones.

The work is the union, the convergence of forces and my presence, the moving wings and the shifting sands, in a state of heightened awareness, an amplified feeling of presence, sensing everything around, being the drawing and the surroundings in a continuum.

I am learning from it while doing it, and returning that which I learn to the paper. It is a circulation of energy that keeps going on in the image and then through the viewer.

Authors

Arnout De Cleene and Leni Van Goidsenhoven

Arnout De Cleene (b.1986) works at the Dr. Guislain Museum in Ghent (Belgium) as a scientific employee. He studied cultural studies at Maastricht University and did research on outsider literature at Leuven University.

Leni Van Goidsenhoven(b.1987) is a doctoral researcher of the FWO-Flanders at KU Leuven, Belgium and was assistant of Jan Hoet and co-curator of *Middle Gate Geel '13*. She is currently preparing a PhD on autism and self-representation.

Mark Gabriele

Mark Gabriele graduated with a B.A. from the State University of New York, College at Purchase in 1982. He lives in Wellfleet, Massachusetts where doors carved by Kendall are a local folk art landmark. His appreciation of these doors inspired him to research the artist and to curate exhibitions of his work at the Cape Cod Museum of Art in 2007 and Wellfleet Preservation Hall in 2011. He has written additional articles about this artist for *Art New England*, *Folk Art of Cape Cod and the Islands*, and *A History of 335 Main Street*.

Colin Rhodes

Colin Rhodes is Professor of Art History & Theory and Dean of Sydney College of the Arts, The University of Sydney, Australia. He is founding Director of the Self-Taught and Outsider Art Research Collection (STOARC), based at The University of Sydney. Rhodes' research is primarily in the areas of 20th century and contemporary art. His books include the influential *Outsider Art: Spontaneous Alternatives* (2000) and *Primitivism and Modern Art* (1994). He is the editor (with John Maizels) and major contributor to *Raw Erotica* (2013), and a regular contributor to *Raw Vision* and *Création Franche*. Rhodes is currently completing an Encyclopedia of Outsider Art for Chicago University Press, and is engaged in various curatorial and writing projects for exhibitions in Australia and the US.

Roger Shelley

Roger Shelley is a PhD candidate at the University of Sydney. His thesis examines vernacular art in Australia why it has historically received less attention in Australia than in Europe and America. What occurred in the development of European culture in Australian that led to a short period when vernacular art was promoted and then forgotten? Shelley's particular interest is in the artist Selby Warren (1887-1979) and how his brief involvement with the professional artworld in Australia impacted on his life and how his experience compared with those of similar artists in Europe and America as well as Australia.

Cara Zimmerman

Cara Zimmerman is an Associate Vice President and Specialist in Folk and Outsider Art at Christie's. She has edited and contributed to catalogues published by the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Ackland Art Museum at UNC Chapel Hill, San Jose State University, and the University of Delaware University Museums, and is a regular contributor to *Raw Vision* magazine. She previously worked at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, and served as Executive Director of the Foundation for Self-Taught Artists in Philadelphia.

Domenico Zindato

Domenico Zindato was born in Reggio Calabria, Italy. He studied Law briefly, then Film and Theatre in Rome, before moving to Berlin in the late 1980s, where he organised multi-media installations for the city's clubs. Self-taught as an artist, his work evolved into a characteristically meditative style which fuses bold, colourful formal structures and densely packed figurative detail. He never begins a new work before completing the previous one. He moved to Mexico in 1997, and lives today in the city of Cuernavaca. *10,000 Grains of Sand* is the fruit of about three months' work. The reproductions of the work and large details here are offered as a kind of picture essay; their content will be revealed through long and intense looking.

