



EUROPEAN **OUTSIDER ART** ASSOCIATION

European Outsider Art Association  
Conference E-Quality 2019 in Stockholm  
Stockholm 24<sup>th</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup> May 2019

## Summaries Lectures

**Thomas Röske (DE)**

Prinzhorn Collection

Considerations on Quality and Equality in Outsider Art

Aesthetic quality is a main criterion for judging art, even if there hardly is any consensus about how art should be defined and what it is characterized by. Such standards can moreover be revised by coming generations; consider i.e. the devaluation and later reevaluation of Gothic, Baroque, Mannerism or Rococo art. Additionally, judging the quality of individual art-works can be complex owing to a lack of familiarity, e.g; a European critically evaluating older East Asian art. So what about the quality of so-called outsider art? Should we simply apply the same criteria as with modern or contemporary art? Or do we need a specialized “connoisseurship” to underpin our judgement? Do we possibly even have to employ separate criteria than when it comes to other art? Some might say that there shouldn’t be any distinctions; “good art is simply good art“. But it doesn’t seem to be uncomplicated when others, especially some mediators and assistants of outsider artists, avoid an open discussion about quality in this area, so that it sometimes becomes the “elephant in the room“. Why does this occur? Which apprehensions exist, what obstacles could be overcome in order to achieve complete equality in this respect? Put differently: What preconditions would be needed for setting standards of Outsider Art on an equal level to the rest of the art-world?

The lecture summarizes and tries to draw some conclusions on the results of a two-day symposium with the title „Was ist gute Outsider Art“ (What is Good Outsider Art?) which took place in the Museum Berlinische Galerie, Berlin, last December.

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**Olga Fominykh, RU**

‘ANO Outsiderville’

‘Outsider art in Russia. The role of sociocultural projects’

Historically, the support of Russian self-taught artists began with interaction with government agencies: clinical institutions and social protection organizations. Unfortunately, state social rehabilitation system in Russia leaves much to be desired. Most often, people with mental disease, outsider art artists need not only art materials for creation, but primarily material support, good nutrition, housing and solving administrative issues, social benefits and much more. Only after that social and creative self-realization is important for them.

There are more than 400 centers of outsider art and art therapy all over the world. More and more projects began to appear in Russia, but their number is still small. Some social initiatives try to pay attention and support self-taught artists outside the organized forms of art therapy and institutions.

Organization of exhibitions, publication of catalogs, preparation of Internet portals with presentation of the most outstanding works of persons with disabilities or those who experience certain difficulties of social adaptation, is an important aspect of inclusive politics, therapeutic and rehabilitation practices. Not only art therapists, doctors and psychologists are involved in this process but also specialists in social work, occupational therapy, art workers, art critics. The creative works of outsider artists, assimilated with other forms of non-professional art or exhibited separately, get access to international exhibition projects and collections.

“OUTSIDERVILLE” helps people with mental disorders and other special needs in a difficult life situation and in social rehabilitation through art therapy and creative self-realization. Separately, we support self-taught artists with creation of independent tool for material self-sufficiency by works of creative activity. We interact with art studios and art therapists of psychiatric institutions, independent outsider artists, social and cultural institutions in Russia and abroad, implementing exhibition projects and programs aimed at socio-cultural support of talented authors. At the moment, there is an extensive collection of paintings of outsider art, and we are on the verge of opening a multifunctional Museum of Self-Taught Artists in St. Petersburg, which will be the meeting point for artists and society on the basis of exhibitions, workshops, lectures, film screenings and jobs for residents of «Outsiderville».

Every year we discover more and more names. We hope that in the near future there will be more social projects, gallerists and curators who are interested in the promotion of Russian outsider art, and the world art community will fully appreciate their artworks, and will demonstrate to our specialists modern methods of popularizing self-taught artists at a high level and in the context of modern art.

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**Karen Flood and Gus Garside, UK**

**Creative Minds**

**Art and the lives of people with learning disabilities**

We will talk about the lives of learning disabled people in the UK and what helps or hinders them becoming artists and why their art is important for learning disabled people and society overall. The talk will be illustrated with an introduction to the Creative Minds project and will cover issues around public exhibitions and how the system makes it hard for most learning disabled artists to financially benefit from their work.

We will touch on issues such as creative enabling, stigma, accessibility and working together and taking our place in the wider arts world. We will talk about why and how Creative Minds was formed, its history and its future. And the issues that learning disabled members of the Creative Minds hubs feel are important. We will also talk about a Swedish project influenced by Creative Minds.

Karen Flood is a consultant who has advised the UK government on learning disability issues including the arts, health and supported living. Creative Minds is the network for the learning disability arts sector in the UK.

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**Pavel Konecny, CZ**

**Art collector**

**PRIVATE PARADISE OF EMIL MILAN GRGURIC**

For over thirty years, outsider artist Emil Milan Grguric (1919 – 1997) worked on a sculpture garden that he called the Garden of Eden, surrounding his villa Katarina, located in the fishing village Kukljica on the shores of the Croatian island of Ugljan. Within the garden, which measures around 1500 square

meters, some 35 concrete statues, mostly life-size or larger, flank the grounds and pathway toward the central villa. They include a self-portrait of the artist as well as several composite works with intricate narratives; many are identified with carved names or comments. The villa itself has the footprint of a four-leaf clover; designed and built by Grguric himself, it can also be understood as a work of sculptural architecture. The façade culminates in a high gable topped with a portrait bust of Grguric's mother, Katarina, for whom the home was named.

The interiors are as interesting and impressive as the exterior of the building; about 20 large and complex concrete reliefs, each with numerous figures and other elements, are set off by deep colored walls. The themes generally depict motifs from the Bible as well as those drawn from Croatia's stormy history.

All of Grguric's works are thoughtfully conceptualized as well as very well constructed; set within the carefully maintained Mediterranean garden full of mature trees and shrubs, the work provides a compelling visit for the viewer.

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## **Minna Haveri and Päivi Lilja, FI**

### **Kettuki**

#### **Good questions – Ethical thinking in art activity in supported studios**

Being motivated to think about and question the reasons of our actions can be considered to be the cornerstone of ethical art activity in supported studios. Bringing up grievances and uncertainties is key to the development of the field. Different professions have ethical guidelines which tell about the kind of attitude and responsibility that the work requires. Readiness to ethically reflect and evaluate one's own approaches is considered to be an emblem of advanced professionalism. Ethical guidelines are also a tool for making the practices known. They improve the self-esteem of the operators and help to gain appreciation in the eyes of others.

In the presentation Dr. of Arts Minna Haveri and Kettuki's executive director Päivi Lilja, BA social services will talk about ethical matters from practice-oriented issues of art activity to the general reflection of values of culture. The presentation follows the topics which are elaborated in the Good questions - the guide of ethical art activity in supported studios (Kettuki 2016). The guide was produced in the Kettuki network, in cooperation with artists with disabilities, mentors in supported studios and with the help of a group of experts including a lawyer, professionals of the social services and with specialists of the art field.

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## **Becca Hoffman, USA**

### **Outsider Art Fair Paris and New York**

#### **Art Fairs : What goes into creating cultural events with a global reach**

This talk will look at the position of the Outsider Art Fair in the context of the field — from the growth and expansion of the New York Fair since Wide Open Arts' purchased it in 2012; to the development and creation of an art fair marketplace in the context of the French art scene; the future of the fair.

These are questions we ask ourselves going into each edition of the Fair: What dealers can we include? What artists can we include? What collectors do we want to invite? What museums and cultural institutions do we want to make sure are aware of OAF? What other events may be relevant for us to reference or partner with?

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**Iris de Maaker och Hetty Schaart, NL**

**Atelier de Kaai**

**Presenting the artists Marianne Schipaanboord and Karhang Mui**

We give an explanation about the way we have supported these two artists through the years. Protected them for and also released them carefully in the art world.

Questions are: In whose interest is it that their work is seen?

About care and responsibility, representing the interests of the artist.

How important is it that people know that a work of art is made by an outsider artist?

Marianne Schipaanboord, (54 years old) got international recognition as an outsider artist. She is deaf, can't speak and is spastic. Drawing is the way she communicates her thoughts and feelings.

And Karhang Mui (29 years old) is recognized as a special talented artist. He builds complicated colourful landscapes on paper, full of little details. He loves to work in isolation, far away from voices and other noise.

Galerie Atelier De Kaai is a small studio in Goes in the south of Holland, for disabled artists. Talented people are supported in their artistic development. They can draw, paint and use graphic techniques. Special attention is given to writing poetry and prose.

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**Nina Roskamp and Bertold Schmidt-Thomé, DE**

**Geys020**

**Characteristics and legal dimensions of the art of Geys020**

In summer 2017, the "Foundation Collection Geys020" started its work:

"The artists must know that their works are also independent of the Lebenshilfe Braunschweig, the 'mother organization' of Geys020. The Lebenshilfe Braunschweig wants to secure the works of the artists permanently."

Completing and explaining this aim will be the content of the presentation of Nina Roskamp and Bertold Schmidt-Thomé.

In the studio "GEYSO20" disabled people get the freedom and the space to work creatively and to cultivate their own individual expression of pictures and forms.

The gallery displays both the artists of the studio Geys020 as well as guest artists. In exhibitions and art talks, the studio draws attention to the special cultural contribution of outsider art, emphasizing its importance to a multi-faceted engagement with art.

The collection Geys020 documents the history of the studio since 1992, builds up a representative collection of outsider art, contributes to the publication of the work and supports research on outsider art.

In the case of both the works of the artists of the studio Geys020 as well as its guest artists numerous legal questions had to be clarified before becoming part of one of Europe's first representative foundation's collections of an Outsider Art Studio.

Who owns the works of art? Who has the rights of use to the works of art created to date? To name only a few indispensable questions that had to be examined under German law before the Stiftung Sammlung Geys020 (Foundation Collection Geys020) could have been set up.

In the collaboration of the head of the Studio and an art lawyer, their solution was not only an exciting but also socially more than enriching task.

Let us introduce you to the characteristics and the legal dimensions of the art of Geys020!