

19. January 2022

Dear members and friends of the EOA!

Although the beginning of 2022 seems all in all not much different from the beginning of 2021 regarding the COVID pandemic, there are indications for a justified hope that we are at the beginning of a shift to an endemic form of the illness. Let us look with optimism to the next months which should bring us back together in physical meetings, and the opportunity to meet at hybrid events, which will stay as one of the lasting achievements of the last years.

The New York Outsider Art Fair 2021 (January 29 to February 7) learned from the 2020 edition of the Paris fair and combined a show in five physical venues with the presentation of 45 exhibitors in online viewing rooms on its website. Unfortunately, this did not work for the Paris Outsider Art Fair this year which did not take place.

The most important event for Art brut/Outsider Art in Europe in 2021 was a very generous donation of the famous abcd collection (owned by Bruno Decharme and his wife Barbara Safarova) to the Centre George Pompidou in Paris, the largest museum for modern art in Europe. The gift consisted of 921 works by 242 old and new classic art brut artists, like Barbus Müller, Aloïse Corbaz, Henry Darger, Katsuhiko Terao, Dan Miller, Ramón Moya Hernández, Miloslava Ratzingerova, Achilles G. Rizzoli, André Robillard, Josef Karl Rädler, and Lonel Talpazan. A selection of these works will permanently be on display in a special room of the museum.

Also significant was the show of the 8th edition of the Euward, the European Award for painting and graphic art works by people with cognitive impairment, at the Haus der Kunst in Munich (April 30 to August 15). The prize awarded every two to four years is financed by the Augustinum Foundation in Schleißheim. The exhibition featured numerous examples of the art of the three winners, the Swiss Felix Brenner, the German Andreas Maus, and the Dutch Kar Hang Mui, and also works by thirteen other selected artists from all over Europe and beyond.

For me, a highly thought provoking exhibition regarding Outsider Art and its position in the general art world was „Crip Time“ at the Museum of Modern Art in Frankfurt/Main (September 18, 2021, to January 30, 2022). To my knowledge, it was the first major show which takes the approach of disability studies as a starting point for an art exhibition. The curator Susanne Pfeffer selected 41 artists who use their disabilities as the central theme of their art works, including e.g. Dietrich Ort and Adelhyd van Bender.

As you know we failed to host a physical EOA conference in 2021 although negotiations with the organisers of the Art Brut Biennial in Hengeloo (at the end of September) seemed to be promising for a while. Then this was also cancelled due to travel restrictions, like so much this year, and we decided for an online version of the conference (on the topic „Presenting Outsider Art“) and the general assembly on August 31. This event was well attended but it lacked the main advantage of these meetings: to have ample opportunity to meet and talk with all participants which is an important means for exchange and networking.

After several virtual EOA Board meetings over the course of the year we finally met in person again at the Amsterdam Hermitage Museum on October 29, partly being the guests of Hans Looijen of the Outsider Art Museum positioned there. One of the outcomes was the decision to use some of the money EOA is generating by its higher membership fees for updating the internet presence of our organisation.

The discussion about the idea of a joint touring exhibition of some European Outsider Art Museums was continued at a webinar on „Lifestories“ organised by the Association for Rural Culture and Education, Kondas Centre of Naïve Art and GAIA Museum on November 11. We are grateful that our Scandinavian friends keep up the exchange of EOA members by this series of virtual events.

Another cancelled event was the international conference which the Trebnje Gallery of Naive Artists, the central museum of naive and self-taught art in Slovenia (and new member of EOA), planned for its 50th anniversary on January 28, 2022. .

We are now all looking forward to the 2022 edition of the EOA conference which will take place at the Culture and Congress Center Verkatehdas in Hämeenlinna/Finland on the topic „Lifestories“ on June 10. The whole meeting (June 9 to 12) will include a program of visiting studios and other Outsider Art venues in and around Helsinki and Hämeenlinna and of course the general assembly on June 12, from 10 to 12 a.m. The conference will be a mixture of presentations, lectures, workshops, and films for which the open call of last year generated more than 30 suggestions from 10 countries. In 2023 then, we will finally – after two forced postponements – be guests in St. Gallen and its Museum im Lagerhaus for a conference on the topic „Outsider Art and Tradition“ (May 11 to 14).

It would be great to see many of you at Hämeenlinna this year and please spread the word so that EOA will continue to grow and welcome new members!

Sincerely,

Thomas Röske
President of EOA

EUROPEAN **OUTSIDER ART** ASSOCIATION