

30. January 2024

Dear members and friends of the EOA

Wishing you all a Happy and creative New Year!

Recently, I was amazed by realising how many supported studios there must be in Europe. Not that I know the exact number. But as part of the project “Interconnecting of Supported Studios in Baden-Württemberg”, which is financed by the respective provincial government, I set out with two friends and a student assistant to look for supported studios in this German county. The results of the research will lead to a website, launched next April, the centerpiece of which is a map of Baden-Württemberg, where all studios for people with cognitive impairments and/or mental health issues are marked. With a click of the cursor you will be able to access basic information about the studios – which will hopefully lead to communication and exchange between them and with other interested parties. Our research showed that there are at least 65 studios of this kind in Baden-Württemberg – an astonishingly high number. If you consider that there are sixteen federal counties in Germany and that Germany is only one European country, you get a notion of the enormous number of such studios in Europe. There exists a great creative potential alongside the established art scene, which is still hardly known. Up to now, many of these studios are not publically known and are not networking with others.

Especially in view of the new interest in collective forms of art production, since the last Kassel Documenta in 2022, this insight into the number of supported studios provides food for thought. It seems important to help more supported studios and their artists to gain visibility to empower this alternative art world and ways of supporting creativity. I feel we should strive to make this unexplored arts infrastructure visible for curators and other mediating figures in the art world so that they take into account these artists and their art when developing new ideas for art exhibitions and presentations – and buy examples for their collections.

It seems that people working at museums for modern and contemporary art are still not familiar enough with Outsider Art. They need to be confronted more frequently and thoroughly with good examples of contemporary practice, and I feel they also need to be better informed about it. The curriculum of art history departments pays too little attention to this kind of art and its history. We experts should offer our help and try to catch those curators by their curiosity for the uncommon.

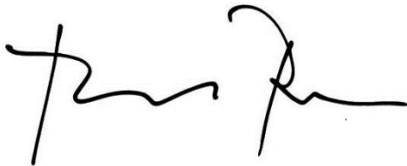
I want to encourage you to engage with art museums in your neighbourhood and to introduce them to your studios so as to enlighten and inform them and bring your important work into focus. Experiencing the special atmosphere of the collective of artists working together will help inspire change. Be bold and embolden others! There is no need for anybody to be afraid of Outsider Art!

There were also relevant and important discussions on how best to support artists and change the art world at Outside In's *Humanising the Arts* symposium this month in Brighton.

Several supported studios from across the UK spoke in the morning about the importance of respecting and supporting the individual to find their own ways of working and how the art world needs to change to enable them to participate. In the afternoon representatives from art galleries and museums, including the V&A and Museum van de Geest, spoke about how their organisations are working to include wider body of artists and develop their engagement.

I am looking forward to discussing this and other topics at EOAs international conference 2024 which this year will take place at Musée Dr. Guislain in Gent/Belgium from 23. -26. May on the topic “**OUTSIDER ART, ARTIST COLLECTIVES AND ACTIVISM**”. The annual general assembly is on Sunday 26. May. Hope to see you there.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Thomas Röske', with a stylized, cursive script.

Thomas Röske

President of EOA

EUROPEAN **OUTSIDER ART** ASSOCIATION