

## Biographies

**Nielsen Maria Bach** studied Art History and Media Science at Aarhus University. After a year in Australia, where she was an arts worker at MSSA Care Personnel, Melbourne, she became project manager and exhibition curator at GAIA Museum Outsider Art, Randers in Denmark in 2008. Since 2009 she has managed the Secretariat of the European Outsider Art Association.

**Christian Berst** is a publisher, gallerist, art collector, exhibition curator and author. Having developed his passion for Art Brut as a collector from the mid-1990s, he founded the Christian Berst Gallery, the only specialist gallery of its kind in Paris. Berst is renowned for his significant discovery work for contemporary Art Brut, which takes him around the entire world. As a curator, exhibition commissioner and lender to museum exhibitions he regularly publishes text contributions and catalogues.

**Johann Feilacher** has been the director of the 'House of Artists', Gugging, since 1986. He has curated over 150 international exhibitions in museums and galleries and has written articles and books on Art Brut and 20<sup>th</sup> century artists. Since 2000, he has developed the Foundation of the Social Welfare Institution, the 'House of Artists in Gugging' as private institute; in 2003 he established the 'Privatstiftung-Künstler aus Gugging' as a permanent collection of art; in 2005 he founded the 'Art Brut Center Gugging'; in 2006, together with Nina Katschnig, the 'Museum Gugging'. In 2011, he was made an Honorary Professor for Art and Science. In parallel, he is a sculptor with works in sculpture parks and public venues in the USA and Europe.

**Elisabeth Gibson** graduated at Duncan of Jordanston College of Arts with a BA in fine art sculpture. In 1990, she started working with Project Ability following a period in local government. She was appointed Artistic Director in 1994 and Executive Director in 2007. Project Ability is the only specialist visual arts company in Scotland whose purpose is to support people with learning disabilities and people with mental health issues to develop skills in fine art, craft, film, and digital arts.

**Minna Haveri** completed her doctoral studies at the Department of Art in Aalto University in Helsinki, Finland, in 2010. Her dissertation, entitled *Contemporary Folk Art* (Nykykansantaide), investigated various phenomena in Finnish contemporary visual folk art and the meanings attached to them. After that, as an independent postdoctoral researcher she has been partly moving into new research areas of craft-based art expression and art of the disabled people, still keeping herself in touch with the role of art in identity formation, cultural inclusion and well-being. Over the past year she has been working in Aalto University as an Adjunct Instructor. She also acts as the project coordinator and workshop teacher in the ITE museum (contemporary folk art museum) project Special Art Studio for people with disabilities.

**Chris Kappeller**, born Christina Monika Kappeller, studied psychology at Gießen University from 1991 to 1998. Afterwards she did research in suggestion phenomena and worked as a relaxation and hypnosis therapist. After training as a PR adviser from 2000 to 2001, he worked in the field for several PR companies, and travelled a lot. Finally, in 2010, he suffered from burnout syndrome, saw this crisis as an opportunity, and started his life anew. As a client at a day clinic, he discovered his creativity. Since 2011 he has participated in the Wehrheim Open Studios.

**Katrin Luchsinger** is an art historian who teaches at Zurich Art Academy and the Institute for Art History at Zurich University. Her field of expertise is art and psychology around 1900. For some years now she has directed a research project for the Swiss National Fond at Zurich Art Academy: the Conservation of Special Cultural Assets, [www.kulturgueter.ch](http://www.kulturgueter.ch). Her dissertation ‚Die Vergessenskurve. Werke von Patientinnen und Patienten in psychiatrischen Anstalten um 1900. Eine kulturgeschichtliche Untersuchung‘ (‚The curve of forgetting: art works by patients in psychiatric asylums around 1900, a cultural historical analysis‘) will be published in 2014.

The art historian and diploma-winning designer **Viola Luz** studied in Mainz, Valencia and Marburg. Her thesis ‚Wenn Kunst behindert wird‘ (‚When art is handicapped‘) examines how works of art by creative people who are mentally handicapped are seen by the public. Her book, which was written at Marburg Philipps University, locates itself within Disability Studies and analyses the relevant discussions in society, the art world and art history from a critical normalist position.

**Henrik Pätzke** grew up in Sweden. His father was from Berlin, and he lived in two cultures. After school, he followed his wish to become an artist. He visited adult education programmes and art schools in Sweden. In 1997, he started to work at Ateljé Inuti in Stockholm. There he had the possibility of developing his life, and also to work in a co-operative. He wants to show his own character and life in his art.

From 1998 to 2004, **Frederik Poppe** studied art at Berlin UdK, and Special Needs Education at Berlin Humboldt University. From 2005 to 2011, he wrote a PhD at the Institute for Rehabilitation Sciences on ‚Interaktion zwischen bildenden Künstlern mit Assistenzbedarf und ihren Bezugspersonen‘ (‚The interaction between artists needing assistance and their carers‘). Since 2008, he has worked at the Institute for Aid Education at Leipzig University. He publishes, lectures and curates shows about Outsider Art.

**Thomas Röske** has been head of the Prinzhorn Collection of the Psychiatric University Clinic in Heidelberg since 2002. He studied history of art, musicology and psychology at Hamburg University and obtained his doctorate in 1991 with a book about Hans Prinzhorn. He was assistant professor at the Department of Art History of the University of Frankfurt from 1993 to 1999, from 1996 to 1999 the second speaker of the Graduate Programme "Psychic Energies of Visual Art" there. On the side he repeatedly worked as a freelance exhibition curator for different institutions. He now teaches at the Institute for European Art History of Heidelberg University. He has published mainly on German Modernism and Outsider Art.

**Eva di Stefano** studied philosophy and art history in Vienna and Palermo. She teaches the history and phenomenology of contemporary art at Palermo University. She is the author of numerous articles and books on 19<sup>th</sup> and 20th century European Art. At the moment, she is focussing her research on the connections between art and the psyche, in particular on the phenomenon of Outsider Art. After the publication of her book 'Art Brut and Outsider Art in Sicily' (2008), she founded and directs the 'Osservatorio Outsider Art' Research Centre at Palermo University and the on-line magazine of the same name, aiming to preserve and support the works of several outsider artists, for example Giovanni Bosco.

**Randy M. Vick, MS** is an Associate Professor in the Department of Art Therapy at the School of Art Institute of Chicago. He writes and presents on the relationship between art therapy and outsider art and serves on the board of *Art Therapy: Journal of the American Art Therapy Association*. With over thirty years of clinical experience in mental health and community contexts, he currently consults for *Project Onward*, a studio for artists with special needs.

# Essential Ethical Questions around Outsider Art

Outsider artists are by definition characterized by nonconformity. This is mostly not self-chosen but is the result of distinct differences from established ways of perceiving the world, thinking about and reacting to it, combined with a specific vulnerability. Our contemporary power-oriented society tends to enforce an imbalance between the outsider minority and the so-called normal majority. We, who share a specific sympathy for the art these 'minorities' produce, accordingly feel challenged to mediate between them and society. And our response to both sides seems to need as much care as encouragement. Problems can emerge – a result of our being either not considerate enough or too considerate – and therefore ultimately we all, albeit on different levels, participate in this imbalance in attitude, whether we like it or not.

Our main guidelines here should be the accepted levels of respect, the values and ethical considerations that we apply to everyone equally. Ideally, our identification with the person in front of us should tell us how to behave, how we should act, what we have to do to prevent any misunderstanding or conflict. This means that the first step towards an ethical/responsible way of working with these artists is not only to familiarize ourselves with them, but also to increase our knowledge of them and stay up-to-date with developments in the field they are part of.

There are four main areas of concern. I will approach them through the following questions:

## **1. How to facilitate the production of works of art?**

Today, in principle, artistic creation is a field where the power relations established elsewhere in society have no purchase. We should be open to every form of expression. Therefore, in this field only strengths should exist, and no shortcomings. The most sophisticated or idiosyncratic artistic message should be as open for appreciation as the most basic and fundamental.

Thus in facilitating the work of outsider artists, there can be no prescriptions. The only guideline in this area is to give the artist the utmost freedom to develop in an individual way. This does not only mean trusting the artist's talent and urge to express. Suggesting models or offering orientation need not be harmful in principle. The only exception might be the suggestion of artistic models that, perhaps unconsciously, mimic past academic practice. It would be repressive – and unrealistic – not to allow for any 'influences'. Creativity is usually fueled by richness of experience, and this can also include experience with new materials or new visual stimuli. And although a

restriction to traditional artistic media is sometimes inevitable, the possibility of working with every kind of contemporary medium is definitely a plus. Outsider art has for far too long been too closely connected to traditional drawing, painting and sculpting, often with waste materials.

The facilitating team should nevertheless be cautious when advising artists, and should only offer help with specific problems if explicitly asked. One of the defining differences between trained artists and outsider artists is that the latter are often less guided by what could be called 'avoidance strategies' in their work. Most trained artists have difficulty in forgetting their knowledge of other art and what is 'new' and 'contemporary'. Outsider artists should not be burdened with second-hand concerns of this kind.

The same is true regarding the potential audience for the work. Trained artists usually search for international recognition, or at least the presentation of their work in important galleries and/or museums. This can also be true for some outsider artists, but most are happy with a dialogue about their work on a much smaller scale, if at all. They may just want to experience people's interest in their work and occasionally to have the opportunity to talk to them. Therefore it is important that art facilitators should sideline their own ambitions and prioritize what is really in the artist's interests.

The contemporary art world is highly charged ideologically, and large sections of it are mainly oriented towards capital. Thus it isn't always the best context for all kinds of creativity. It is not surprising that more and more art students are becoming interested in the open studio model, so markedly different from the often competitive atmosphere in the art academy. It would be fatal if open studios, in their desire to 'professionalise', should all too quickly and unthinkingly imitate the contemporary art academy and marketplace.

## **2. To whom do the works belong? What is their value?**

A work of art always belongs to the one who created it, regardless of who provided the material and work conditions necessary for its creation. This is surely also true for works created in therapeutic sessions or open studios, not least if they are to be valued like any other artworks. Exceptions to this rule require a contract that specifies the agreed terms, signed by the artist or their representative. Gifts from the artist to the studio should be documented as such. It is not acceptable to simply keep works; a respective payment should be made to the artist or their representative. If the artist is already dead, the works should be purchased from their estate. The price should be agreed by all parties or recommended by an independent arbiter if agreement is impossible. The respective contracts and agreements should also include a clause which specifies whether works can later be sold to third parties.

Art facilitators can have significant power over artists in an open studio. Many works in this context are made for them or with them in mind. Therefore they should avoid trying to get 'special prices' for art works, since they can easily pressurize the artists. As a rule, facilitators should never accept artworks as personal gifts.

Outsider art environments and installations pose special problems. They are often very large in size, forming a permanent part of wider landscapes. They are unique artifacts by self-taught creators, but at same time, they belong to the surrounding community and communicate with it. The response from these communities can vary: they are loved by visitors and cared for by supporters but also they can be threatened by authorities and destroyed by vandals. Often ethical questions arise after the artist's death. Their value as creative works is often confronted by other stakeholder interests in the spaces they occupy. Attempts to retain outsider art installations in the face of conflicting interests may require complex assessments of value. Conservation of these works may require special knowledge and responsibility. The main task for us lovers of outsider art should be to further the awareness and knowledge of these unique art works in society overall.

### **3. How to present the works to a public? How to price them?**

Many outsider artists do not consider the presentation of their work in any detail, partly due to lack of experience, and partly because they do not identify their work with museum display or the established art world. Whatever the case, a curator presenting the work of an outsider artist should consult them closely and at the very least, explain why they have decided on a specific presentation. This might also be useful in a critical analysis of curatorial practice, which often automatically follows current fashions or established traditions: here too, outsider art can be inspirational, in finding new ways for audiences to engage with art works in general. Art facilitators have the task of mediating these ideas to professional exhibition curators, who are often not cognizant with the specific characteristics of outsider art. Thoughtless curating can very easily not only exploit and damage the content of the work, but also the artist behind it.

With these special considerations in mind, we should open the doors of established art venues to outsider artists. We live in a time when the established art world is more than ever beginning to be aware of the potential of outsider art, without sensationalism or pity. Nevertheless, outsider artists need not exclusively use established professional exhibition spaces. Semi-professional spaces, like civic, educational or community buildings, even hospitals, can offer the advantage that expectations are not predominantly guided by traditional or contemporary thinking about art. This may ease an exchange between artists and audience, which – as mentioned before – often is what outsider artists are looking for.

If works by outsider artists are to be sold to third parties in behalf of the artist in an exhibition or another context, the price should be the artist's decision. Of course it should be possible to advise the artist on the hypothetical market position of the works. But the artist cannot be left out of a decision about the price. In every case, exploitation should be prevented.

At the same time, the percentage of the purchase price paid to the artist and the exhibition venue should be agreed before the exhibition. Furthermore the exhibition venue should establish beforehand how much the exhibiting artist is entitled to earn. Often this cannot be more than a specific monthly sum, so that either the money generated from a sale should be divided over a longer period, or another solution must be found, such as the creation of a (charitable) foundation processing the sales of one or several artists.

#### **4. How to mediate between artists and the art world?**

It is essential to treat outsider artists professionally, also in negotiating with third parties. Sometimes those who mediate between outsider artists and an audience maintain established patterns by treating them as patients or clients of an institution. Here professional texts about contemporary art should be the model. Artists should only be given their full or their family name unless they have specifically chosen otherwise. Their specific experiences, be they psychiatric experience or a disability, should only be written about or discussed from a neutral standpoint which avoids diagnostic or medical clichés. Psychiatric illness and disability should only be mentioned, if at all, as special conditions and experiences connected to the artist's way of working and outcomes. Difference still attracts attention. Sensationalism should be avoided at all costs. Every text should be proofread and approved by the artists or their representatives.

And again, also here, the dissemination of knowledge is crucial. Those interested in outsider art works and their position, both in the art world and society in general, should broadcast and publish their ideas. Without knowledge of the specific characteristics of this special art, nobody can consciously engage with it.

# The Current Exhibition: OVARTACI

## Transformation and Role Play

### Works of Overtaci and Other Queer Art

The Danish painter and decorator Louis Marcussen (1894–1985) spent 56 years of his life in a mental institution. He called himself Overtaci, meaning Overtossi – Chief Idiot – in the Jutland dialect. He chose the role of the fool as an alter ego and invented for himself a changeable self which not only gave him personal space in dealing with the chief psychiatrist, but also enabled him to meet the doctor eye-to-eye, as the head of the lunatics.

For the first time in Germany, our exhibition presents Overtaci's work, which also found its way into Jean Dubuffet's Collection de l'Art brut via Asger Jorn. It shows a selection of important loans from the Overtaci Museum in Risskov, part of the psychiatric hospital at Aarhus, which was Overtaci's home for a long time. This was the source of many pictures, sculptures and machines which, above all, reflect his visions and imaginings of life cycles and transformations.

The exhibition focuses on the transformation from man to woman that preoccupied Overtaci throughout his life. The artist was fascinated by the female. He perceived women as pure, divine beings, as an ideal worth striving for. He rejected his own masculinity. When his wish for a conversion became more and more pressing, Overtaci was able to persuade the doctors that a castration would calm his inner restlessness and aggressiveness. Nevertheless, he was discontented with the result of the intervention. He only felt 'relieved' after he had emasculated himself completely with a chisel and afterwards enforced a surgical sex change.

In the centre of the gallery is a symbolic reconstruction of Overtaci's room in the psychiatric hospital: he decorated it with many drawings and pictures which articulate his visions and experiences. He decorated his/her bed with ornaments and absurd figures. Full-size paper cut-outs of female shapes, painted on two sides, hung on the walls. Female dolls and combined animal-human beings made of *papier-maché* extended his (inner-soul) relationship. Thus Overtaci during his long-term hospitalisation created his own individual living environment.

The room space is surrounded by other transformations which played a role for Overtaci: animal-human metamorphoses, soul and face 'landscapes', textual figures and musical instrument bodies. Overtaci constantly surprises with ever new forms of multiple change that point beyond the purely physical, and include different levels of language (especially Chinese as a sort of global

language), written messages, musical compositions and theatrical stagings. These different forms and levels of being enabled him to outgrow his own inherited limitations into an enlarged consciousness.

In visions of former lives, Overtaci saw himself predominantly as a female being. As such he meant to have lived in old China, in India, Egypt and on the moon. He was reborn as a female animal, as a butterfly, bird of paradise, tiger or puma. Often he experienced a violent death and was reborn in another form. Overtaci's use of poetry, eastern mysteries, yogis and esotericism reaches back to his childhood.

Insecurity about one's gender can also arise with other people who have special psychic experiences. However, in view of earlier positions in the sexual sciences which virtually go back to Magnus Hirschfeld's 'intermediate stage theory' and accept infinite variations in the combination of gender and sexuality, Overtaci's art project seems almost visionary. His imagination around his metamorphoses works like a wonderful metaphor for one's search for oneself and one's potentials.

Alongside Overtaci's life work we have installed works by other people with psychiatric experience, in which motifs of sexual role transformation and double gender also appear. We present drawings and pictures from the Prinzhorn Collection by Alois Dallmayr, Meta Anderes, Helen Prager, Stephanie Richards, Cora Spassvogel and others, as well as works by László Istók and H. Sz. from the Reuter collection in Pécs. The contemporary Berlin photographer Ono Ludwig represents the present time with three self-portraits.

Thus the exhibition confronts the viewer with unexpectedly varied 'queer' self-images and imagination. Through an exhibition of works by psychiatrically experienced people, the question is put in a provocatively new way: why is this topic still largely excluded from our consciousness?

## Two early Drawings by Adolf Wölfli for the Prinzhorn Collection

At the beginning of the year two large drawings by the Swiss artist Adolf Wölfli (1865-1930), on sale since 2009, were safeguarded for the Prinzhorn Collection. They have been part of the Collection since 2004, on permanent loan from the Fraenger Institute in Potsdam, and have been frequently shown in exhibitions in Heidelberg and elsewhere, last in the 'Time Objects' exhibition dedicated to Wolfgang Rihm at the Karlsruhe City Gallery in 2012.

After much endeavor, the substantial purchase price was met with the help of the Ernst von Siemens Art Foundation, die Kultur-stiftung der Länder, Dr. Manfred Fuchs and the City of Heidelberg as well as the Manfred Lautenschläger Foundation. We are extremely grateful for their contributions and also would like to thank the helpful circle of Friends of the Prinzhorn Collection.

Adolf Wölfli, a mental patient who lived from 1896 until his death in the Waldau Psychiatric Asylum near Bern, Switzerland, was a patient of Walter Morgenthaler and became well known through a study by the psychiatrist which appeared in 1921, a year before Hans Prinzhorn's book 'Artistry of the Mentally Ill'. It was the first monograph about a 'lunatic' and his art, which actually labeled him as an 'artist'. Since the 1960s, Wölfli's works have been exhibited more and more frequently, most notably at Harald Szeemann's documenta 5 in 1972.

Today, Wölfli is Europe's most famous asylum artist, a 'classic' of art brut or outsider art. His most important works comprise several self-made and extensive books, containing hundreds of illustrations, nearly all in the possession of the Adolf Wölfli Foundation at the Art Museum in Bern. Beside these, there are many coloured pencil drawings, mostly in a smaller format, which Wölfli himself called 'bread art' and exchanged for painting materials or chewing tobacco. Usually only these drawings appear on the art market. The Prinzhorn Collection also owns five 'bread art' pieces, since Prinzhorn's time. The doctor dedicated a colour plate in his book to one of them.

The two newly acquired drawings date from 1904 and 1905, and belong to Wölfli's earliest preserved series of works. The Wölfli Foundation in Bern owns 49 of the 53 known pieces. Each drawing is done in pencil on wastepaper in one format, and shows almost the entire visual vocabulary typical of the artist: figurative elements, ornaments, writing and scores (albeit with six lines) – only the notation is still missing.

For the Prinzhorn Collection, these two drawings are a paradigmatic addition, particularly as they were once Prinzhorn's 'private property', as has been noted on the back of one of the original frames. Morgenthaler had obviously given them to the Heidelberg doctor personally – and had overlooked the fact that the 'Bridal Ring' (1905) belongs to a series of four pieces, the remaining three of which are still in Bern (cf. the exhibition catalogue in the glass case below). Later, Prinzhorn apparently gave the works to his friend the art historian and folk art specialist Wilhelm Fraenger (1890-1964), who had them hanging in his study all his life.