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THE MUSEUM OF EVERYTHING

Tonight an exhibition of outsider art invites you to step inside a strange bestiary of the troubled creative mind

Text by John-Paul Pryor | Published 14 October 2009



Henry Darger, Untitled (National Flag of Angelina), 1940s-1960s

*"The words of the prophets are written on the subway walls..."
The Sound Of Silence, Simon & Garfunkel*

It's impossible to pinpoint what it is about outsider art that is so fascinating. Perhaps it's the artists' shared monomaniacal devotion to a particular theme or aesthetic form, perhaps it's the inherent lack of self-consciousness common to the work (often being the product of the psychologically frail), or perhaps it's more simply that these artists evoke a powerful sense of the folkloric outlaw – we can't help but think of them as mysterious visionaries living on the outskirts of sanity, writing strange letters from the edge. Now, for the first time many of those visual letters have been gathered together in one permanent exhibition, [The Museum Of Everything](#), which officially opens its doors tonight.

This incredible art museum, which has taken over a disused recording space in Primrose Hill, boasts a dizzying array of beautiful and disturbing artworks hand-picked by some of our most illustrious cultural provocateurs (Nick Cave, Jarvis Cocker, Tal R, Annette Messager...), and there is no exhibition on earth where you will find a stranger bestiary of the troubled creative mind. Upon entering you are greeted by Indian road worker Nek Chand's haunting life-size sculptures, which act as a gateway to myriad works of skewed genius – cue the unsettling panoramas of Henry Darger's now legendary Vivian Girls paintings, populated by horned angels and pre-pubescent hermaphrodites; untreated schizophrenic Edmund Monsiel's tiny, and terrifyingly intricate pencil drawings; the Old Testament thunder of missionary Sister Gertrude Morgan's dark religious scenes; soldier Carlo Zinelli's cracked mystical musings on life, death and scary monsters; psychiatric patient Aloise Corbaz's bizarre and often violent erotica; mute social outcast Alexandre Lobanov's disturbing photographs of himself posing with various guns; and Willem Van Genk's paranoid, pseudo-political collages. "For these artists there are no studios, no press junkets, no art fairs, no magazine spreads," says curator James Brett. "Instead there are treasure troves of untrained work, discovered under rocks, in basements and attics, its creators often unaware that their art would ever see the light of day. The UK has never had a permanent home for artwork created outside mainstream art circles. Call it Art Brut, self-taught, what you will... the words rarely do justice to the range of beautiful, delicate and democratic imagery – often made in the most difficult of circumstances."

Image Gallery



There will be events, talks and late night openings throughout Frieze Week October 15 – 18