

**The Museum of
Everything**
Pinacoteca Giovanni e
Marcella Agnelli, Turin
Until 31 August
Reviewed by
RICHARD BUCHT

The Museum of Everything had this to say about the artists featured in its peripatetic exhibition: "For these artists there are no studios, no press junkets, no art fairs, no magazine spreads. Instead there are treasure troves of untrained work, discovered under rocks, in basements and attics, its creators often unaware their art world would ever see the light of day."

Untitled (Atlas Building),
by William Hawkins

www.pinacoteca-agnelli.it

The Museum of Everything – I have never seen anything quite like it. Having opened first in a building in North London during the Frieze Art Fair last year, and now on show at Turin, it has been wildly popular, and with good reason. Whatever you call this vast collection – people's art, street art, folk art, outsider art, naïve art, art brut... you'll be blown away by the inventive and uniquely masterful handling of materials within it, and touched by the intentions of its artists, all creating work within a very sincere context – ordinary folks trying to say something with their art. What they are trying to express may have been some internal or personal joy, pain, bewilderment, commemoration or indignation, but they all do it with a clarity of purpose that comes from the clearest of creative well-springs (so rare). Possibly none of them has ever had the intention of becoming a famous artist. But after seeing this show, you'll understand that 'outsider art' is 'insider art', and you'll never see the world around you in the same way again. The show is unmissable.

Certainly for our interests as graphic souls it's a doubly important show. The handling of layout, colour, line and proportion all take place within a context of work practice that generally has 'free-form' construction but produces a very clear visual impact. Most of the work is excellent in a stand-alone way, but it is that clear creative well-spring from which these people work that is of special interest to us – just to say something and not be afraid. There is no brief, career or fame in sight. These people make work because they need to say something. It has been said in the modern era that 'everyone is an artist'... this show is proof of the truth of that.

The works have a familiar feel – we've all seen thousands of pieces of this type of art here and there in our lives. It's when it's assembled en masse that the penny drops and you see the brilliance of the 'School of Everyday People'. The curator/collector James Brett did not discover this school. It's always been there. But he did bring a vast collection of it together, allowing us to see something we've always known in individual works but now understand more completely as a 'movement'. A movement of everybody. That's the deep human joy in this show. It's life-affirming for everybody.

Wearing your heart on your sleeve is an often beautiful, if often difficult, way to go through life and the world. Wearing your art on your sleeve as well, I would like to think, would make carrying it all a little easier. For the artists in this show, I hope it did. I say that because many of the people whose work is in this show have had a very long road in life. Their lives and journeys were not all hard, although many appear to have been very hard. They produced some wonderful, beautiful work, with all the raw emotions of their lives and beliefs right there on their sleeves for us to see. As with all artists and their lives, we hope that their work had some redemptive quality for them and made their road a little easier. In many of these cases we'll never really know. But given what they have offered as their work, ours is to humbly give thanks and hope their art world made the rest of their world a little easier. We get the benefits of their work but not the costs they often bore in their lives. The journey we'll make to Turin is a bargain price to pay for what they have offered us. This show felt 'once in a lifetime' for me for so many reasons, most of them personal. If you see one art show this year, see this one. You can always go see 'art' - the establishment will see to that. 'Art' is a dish served up with the rest of our breads and circuses. But if you care a little, like these people cared a lot, then have a look at the lives of the people on the outside so you can understand your inside with a bit more clarity of purpose. You'll know what I mean when you get there.

