

WILL HEINRICH | CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK

Not an Insider? All the Better.

The Outsider Art Fair can sometimes feel like a rock 'n' roll junk shop, full of chaos and noise. But this year's edition, at the Metropolitan Pavilion in Manhattan, is more like an uptown antique store — stocked with treasures but a bit staid. Still, it remains a comparative bargain at only \$35 for entry, and its 66 exhibitors range from one end of this increasingly diffuse genre to the other.

At Creativity Explored (C3) in San Francisco, more than a hundred developmentally disabled adults spend 40 hours a week

making art like Antonio Benjamin's cheeky nudes. The Chelsea gallery BravinLee Programs (D21), here for the first time, has brought artists chosen for their outsider-like aesthetic — what the gallerist John Lee calls Outsiderism. As usual, there's also a booth of donated works being sold to benefit God's Love We Deliver (B4), and if you can't make it in person, you can catch at least some of the action in an online viewing room. Consider this list of notable works a starting point.



"Untitled (Figures With Blue Eyes)" (circa 1950s), a pencil drawing by Aloïse Corbaz at Ricco/Maresca.



A crayon and pencil drawing by Martín Ramírez, "Untitled (Feathered Train)" (circa 1953), at Fleisher/Ollman's booth.

Drawings by Aloïse Corbaz and Martín Ramírez

Fleisher/Ollman, A3/Ricco/Maresca, B9

Two of the most prominent galleries showing outsider art have come this year with selections from two of the genre's most prominent collections. Fleisher/Ollman's booth, hosting a small fraction of the art that Audrey Heckler left behind when she died last year, includes a spectacular, unusually vibrant drawing by the maestro of obsessive train tunnels, Martín Ramírez (1895-1963). Among the rarities from the prolific collector Robert Greenberg at Ricco/Maresca is a colored pencil drawing of a group of women by Aloïse Corbaz (1886-1964), who worked for Kaiser Wilhelm II's chaplain before being hospitalized for schizophrenia. With their giant pursed lips and solid blue eyes, surrounded by color, her fairylike fashionable women are faintly alien but intensely alluring.



A hand-carved slate drawing by William Kent, "Leave the Moon Alone" (1964), at Margaret Bodell/Revival Arts.

'Leave the Moon Alone!'

Margaret Bodell/Revival Arts, A2

After the closure of his New York gallery, Castellane, in 1966, the self-taught wood sculptor and printmaker William Kent (1919-2012) retreated to a dairy barn in Durham, Conn., and got a day job at a paper box factory. But he kept carving zippy, eccentric pop imagery into slabs of slate to make prints on paper and fabric. "Leave the Moon Alone!" (1964), which features buxom Greek gods, phallic rockets and a speckled green orb, in this case on a brown paisley background, expresses Kent's environmentalist objections to the space program in a way that's completely straightforward but irresistibly idiosyncratic.

Outsider Art Fair

Through Sunday at the Metropolitan Pavilion, 125 West 18th Street, Manhattan; 212-337-3338. outsiderartfair.com.

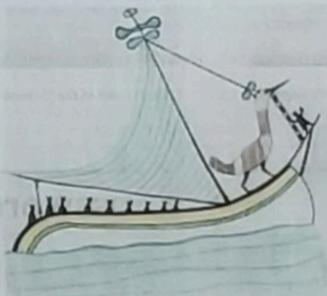


A flag quilt, "Remember Sisters, We Sisters Are Married to Truth and Freedom, Not Married to Fear and Lies."

'Remember Sisters, We Sisters Are Married to Truth and Freedom, Not Married to Fear and Lies'

Portrait Society Gallery of Contemporary Art, B11

The Milwaukee collagist Della Wells worked with Anne Marie Grgich, an artist, and Sandy Jo Combes, a seamstress, to make this nearly 10-foot-tall American flag quilt, on which a watchful young woman and a debonair, man-sized rooster, both surrounded by portraits of Black women activists, stand at the altar. The piece features golden medallions, a large silver insect, tiny beads, a spray of yellow flowers, and both a real suit, courtesy of Grgich's husband, and a real wedding dress, from her mother, but I wouldn't quite call it exuberant. It is, but it's also defiant, as if to say, "We're not going anywhere."



Pudlo Pudlat's untitled colored-pencil drawing of a bird at the helm of a sailboat at the Andrew Edlin Gallery booth.

Untitled Drawing by Pudlo Pudlat

Andrew Edlin Gallery, D14

In this undated colored pencil drawing by the Inuit sculptor and painter Pudlo Pudlat (1916-1992), a sinuous ship decorated with a broad yellow stripe rides on the crest of a green wave, helmed by what looks like a gray and brown bird with a taciturn black beak. It's an extraordinary composition: The wave bulges under the prow, as if they're crossing the page together, while the avian captain looks toward the empty upper corner, serenely confident that his company of elegant pencil lines can fill any amount of unmarked space.



Morton Bartlett's photograph "Girl With Dog" (1950), at Marion Harris.

Untitled Photographs by Morton Bartlett

Marion Harris, D3

Morton Bartlett (1909-1992) spent his life in Boston sculpting anatomically correct boys and girls in plaster, at close to life-size, in order to dress them up, pose them and immortalize them in black-and-white photos. The photos here are posthumous prints, which may be less exciting than originals — but the images themselves remain spectacular. When the warmth and precision of Bartlett's sculpture meets the dry whimsy of his camera, the results are as subtle and expressive as any art I know. Forced to choose one, from among all the melancholy debutantes and ballerinas, I'd recommend the dismayed young woman with flowers in her hair, strong cheekbones and a string bow tie.



A painting on canvas in the Batuan style by I Made Griyawan, "The Many Colors of Your Balloon and My Balloon" (2008), at Diamond.

'The Many Colors of Your Balloon and My Balloon'

Diamond, D10

The Batuan style of painting dates to the 1930s, when artists in this Balinese village began rendering traditional motifs with Western materials. The contemporary painter I Made Griyawan has gone one step further, integrating aspects of Western art like a distinct horizon line — or, in his delightful acrylic painting, "The Many Colors of Your Balloon and My Balloon" (2008), the bald, primary yellows and greens of four dozen or so latex balloons floating merrily above cavorting children. But don't worry — the repetitive, textile-like pattern of gray-blue waves and exaggerated clusters of palm leaves and red flowers will transport you to Bali all the same.



The artist known as Zimar uses this mask in musical performances. It is among the Brazilian works curated for the fair by Mateus Nunes.

Untitled Mask by Zimar

OAF Curated Space: Follow My Moves, A12

In a strong presentation of Brazilian works from 1950 to the present, curated for the fair by Mateus Nunes, the piece that really caught my eye was this speckled, bumpy, reddish mask. A lizardlike, bicycle-seat-shaped face consisting of crushed plastic helmets and stone with huge jagged white teeth, which an artist known by the mononym Zimar uses in musical performances, the piece has an understated but surprisingly substantial presence. It feels almost as if it were discovered rather than made.



"Le Roi," a small clay figure from 2025, at Galerie Pol Lemétais, was created by Gérard Cambon, a retired office worker.

'Le Roi'

Galerie Pol Lemétais, D9

One beautiful thing about a small clay figure like this bust of a king by Gérard Cambon, a retired office worker in southern France, is the way finger marks effortlessly translate into larger bodily gestures. The kink in His Majesty's nose is exactly the size and shape of a pressed-in thumb — but also exactly the curve a nose might take on after being broken. Combine this with the sooty glaze of bits of metallic garbage — like the bottle caps printed with faces in another piece nearby — and what you get is a charming cast of players ready for the next great Claymation epic.