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Outsider Art Museum displays revolution in art

The Outsider Art Museum presents 'Art Brut | Jean Dubuffet's revolution in art'. In 1949 artist and collector Jean Dubuffet shocked the Paris cultural establishment. Seventy years later, this pioneering exhibition that showed over 150 works are coming to the Netherlands for the first time.

Immediately after the Second World War the artist and collector Jean Dubuffet embarked on his search for new, pure and spontaneous works of art, remote from the established order. On his journey he visited psychiatric institutions and prisons, created a networks of intellectuals, poets, painters and collectors. During his various encounters he collected works which in his opinion were the proof that this art form, the one produced by people with no specific education to art, deserved a place in the art world. Established assumptions, academic views and standards must be cast aside in favour of a new, pure and spontaneous art.

In 1949 his friend René Drouin's prestigious gallery offered him a stage. He displayed a selection of over 150 works from his Compagnie de l'Art Brut collection. This was the first time that Art Brut (since expanded to 'Outsider Art') had been shown to the general public. The response to this new art form was mixed. Art Brut was associated with lack of artistic quality – an idea fiercely disputed by Dubuffet, who wanted his exhibition to show exactly the opposite.



Works by Aloïse Corbaz, Gaston Duf and Adolf Wölfli*

The idea that Art Brut is preferable to cultural art, as Dubuffet put it, implied in the opinion of the cultural establishment the inconceivable total destruction of art history. Outsider Art has since been granted the stage it deserves. With the advent of the Outsider Art Museum and many other international initiatives, Jean Dubuffet's mission is still valid.

The exhibition included works by such great figures as Aloïse Corbaz, Fleury-Joseph Crépin, Gaston Duf. and Auguste Forestier, and Adolf Wölfli. The work of Adolf Wölfli (1864-1930) was, and is, admired by artists, collectors and museum for its innovative style. After several court convictions, the 21-year-old Wölfli was committed to a mental asylum, where he produced an extensive body of work that read like a diary. He created an epic tale in which he himself played the leading role as the young knight or emperor Adolf. His work was a colourful assemblage of human and animal figures, kaleidoscopic forms, sheet music and scraps of text: the perfect illustration of Dubuffet's Art Brut, made without any artistic training and outside the realm of official art.

Aloïse Corbaz (1886-1964) worked as a governess at the court of Kaiser Wilhelm II, where she fell head over heels in love with the emperor and imagined she was having an affair with him. When she was

committed to an institution, she secretly began to produce art. Her work was dominated by the image of a pair of lovers, often with the Kaiser and the court as the subject.

Gaston Duf. (1920-1966) made weird pencil drawings full of mythological and monstrous 'voodoo creatures'. When he was admitted to hospital because of his precarious health, the attending physician discovered that his pockets were stuffed full of drawings. After a medical colleague with an eye for art provided Duf. with better drawing materials, his output further increased.

The Art Brut | Jean Dubuffet's revolution in art exhibition provided a reconstruction of the basic ideas of Art Brut, with reference to the works assembled by Dubuffet. Why did he purchase some works but not others? Which criteria did he use when collection work, and what information did he collect? And what became of the artists whose work he collected for his Compagnie de l'Art Brut?

OUTSIDER ART MUSEUM

The Outsider Art Museum (OAM) is the only museum in the Netherlands with Dutch and international Outsider Art. Opened by Queen Máxima in March 2016, it is the result of an unusual partnership between the health-care organisation Cordaan, Hermitage Amsterdam and Dolhuys I museum of the mind in Haarlem. It is designed and furnished by Benthem Crouwel Architects, with graphic design by Kees Peerdeman. The exhibition originates from de Collection de l'Art Brut in Lausanne and was produced for their 2016 exhibition 'Jean Dubuffet's Art Brut' (<https://www.artbrut.ch/>).

On Wednesday 30 January 2019 the Outsider Art Museum is holding a symposium to mark the opening of the exhibition (to register, go to info@outsiderartmuseum.nl). The director of the Collection de l'Art Brut in Lausanne, Sarah Lombardi, and the senior curator of the Cobra Museum of Modern Art, Hilde de Bruijn, will give a lecture on the history of Art Brut and the impact of the exhibition. The Art Brut | Jean Dubuffet's revolution in art exhibition can be seen at the Outsider Art Museum from Thursday 31 January to Sunday 25 August 2019. The Outsider Art Museum is located at Hermitage Amsterdam.

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* Aloïse Corbaz, Scene with a Flowered Kiss in Gouache, 1947, Collection de l'Art Brut | Gaston Dufour, Rinâûçêr'-hôte, approx. 1948, Collection de l'Art Brut | Adolf Wölfli, Saint Adolf bitten in the leg by snake, 1921, Collection de l'Art Brut