

RAWVISION



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EXHIBITIONS

RAWREVIEWS

Else Balnkenhorn



DUBUFFET'S LIST

Museum im Lagerhaus
St. Gallen, Switzerland
December 6, 2016 – March 12, 2017

This exhibition illuminated a little-known aspect of Jean Dubuffet's early research in the art brut field. In 1950, five years after coining the term *art brut* (raw art) to describe the creations of self-taught art-makers who found themselves situated either by the force of circumstances or by choice on the margins of mainstream society and culture, Dubuffet visited the Prinzhorn Collection at the psychiatric hospital of the University of Heidelberg in Germany. There, between 1919 and 1921, the art historian and doctor Hans Prinzhorn (1886-1933) had expanded an existing, psychiatric-research collection of artworks made by mentally ill patients to include more than 5000 items. In 1922, he published his *Bildnerei der Geisteskranken* (Artistry of the Mentally Ill), a book that caught the attention of such modern artists as Dubuffet, Paul Klee and Max Ernst.

Dubuffet always expressed himself with clarity and precision; he also attentively assessed and classified whatever interested him. As this exhibition showed, the critically thinking artist, remembering what he had seen in Heidelberg and examining Prinzhorn's book, made a point of evaluating numerous works in the Prinzhorn Collection. This exhibition highlighted the comments Dubuffet had written down as he ranked those objects.

They ranged from "the hare; no big thing" in response to August Natterer's *World Axis with Hare* (II) (pencil and watercolour on watercolour cardboard, mounted on

Johann Knopf



pasteboard, circa 1911-1917), one of the best-known works in the Prinzhorn Collection, to "mediocre" to describe an untitled picture of a green-faced, mythological creature by Franz Karl Bühler (grease crayon and chalk on paper, circa 1909-1916). By contrast, a delightful, undated, coloured-inks-on-paper drawing of angels by Else Blankenhorn earned Dubuffet's high praise and the label "very beautiful". In the rankings of *Dubuffet's List* lie the seeds of a bigger, broader discussion of the relative merits of *art brut* and outsider works that has yet to gain momentum. Such a discussion would place more emphasis on certain formal, technical and thematic aspects of such art than it would on the biographies of its self-taught makers (a topic that has been the traditional focus to date of studies in these related fields).

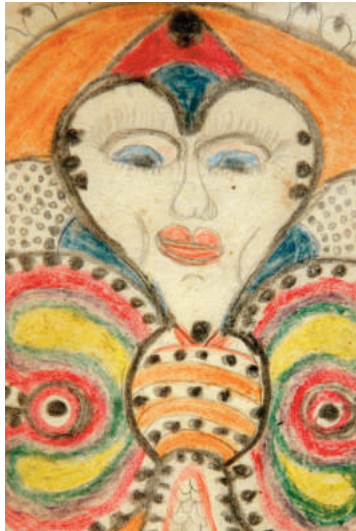
Edward M. Gómez

MINNIE EVANS: VISIONARY

Luise Ross Gallery, New York City
January 10 – February 25, 2017

Minnie Evans (1882-1987) claimed that, when she was 43 years old, a voice told her to "draw or die." Heeding its call, this self-taught artist, who lived in coastal Wilmington, North Carolina, became highly productive from the early 1940s until the time of her death. A devout Christian, Evans believed she enjoyed direct communion with God. Angels, mythological creatures, flowers and faces appeared in her hallucinations and became common motifs for her.

Evans' works, which she made using regular pencils, coloured pencils, crayons and inks on paper, were "automatic" drawings (as the



Minnie Evans

Surrealists would have described them) that represented the liminal space between her own visionary world and the actual, physical world around her. Evans, who served as the gatekeeper of Airlie Gardens in Wilmington from 1949 through 1974, seemed to have been inspired by that verdant natural setting; in many of her drawings, such as *My Beautiful Face #1* (1962) and *Untitled* (1960), dense, interlocking passages of flowers and foliage form masks or faces, or create decorative borders.

To date, Luise Ross Gallery, which has represented Evans' estate since 1989, has mounted five exhibitions of the artist's work. This latest, comprehensive survey of her art was its largest presentation yet. Among the forty-two works on display were three early drawings from the mid-1940s rendered on the back sides of United States Coast Guard stationery sheets.

Also on view were three larger paintings from a private collection, including *Greenfield Lake* (1959), a rare oil-on-board landscape, and *Crucifixion* (oil on canvas, 1950), which depicts Jesus Christ on the cross. *Untitled* (Chinese Figure, oil on paper, circa 1944), appeared on the exhibition's promotional material and was included in a small group of Evans' works the gallery showed at its booth at the 2017 Outsider Art Fair in New York in January. This image features the figure of the fictional, villainous character Fu Manchu, whom Evans had seen in a movie. In her picture, he appears surrounded by exotic fans, large jars and plants. Behind him, the sea shimmers under cottony clouds, and an orange sun — one of Evans' favourite motifs — rises in the sky.

Sarah Fensom