

## **Outsider Art**

“Outsider art” is most often described as the art of the insane or the untrained. The name did not actually come into use until the 1970s, though the term was originally coined by Jean Dubuffet in 1945. He called it Art Brut, or raw art. It has always existed outside the constraints of Art History.

The art historian Michel Thevoz observed that, “with Art Brut, it seems we have to deal with something very archaic, that maybe should be compared to medieval creations where the idea was not at all to instill a feeling of beauty, but of devotion, an adherence to myths, to beliefs.”

How different from the traditional artist is the Shaman in the prehistoric caves painting images while in a trance, or Hildegard Von Bingen, whose visions were expressed as song or drawings in the 1100s? Shaker Hannah Cahoon (1782-1864) recorded a divine vision of “Gift Drawing: The Tree of Light or Blazing Tree.” Images are received as prophetic visions. Many of the artists are telling the story of their life as they see it.

Outsider art is created in the trenches of life and not in the halls of the academy. The self-taught artist is able to reach into his subconscious and through his images enables us to make contact with an invisible world of a different reality. He seeks the bidding of an inner necessity to create. There is no unifying style or historical movement. Most of the artists are not even aware of the others.

This is art that has grown out of the shadows yet has always been around, however hidden. Join us in this class to explore its origins and try to answer some of the major questions the course provokes: Can the art of the mentally disabled be considered Fine Art? Can Fine Art come from untrained individuals who could be considered “natural geniuses?” What is genius? What is art?

**LEADER:** Wendy Worth is an art historian and has an MA in conservation biology.

**MONDAYS:** 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., 6 weeks: March 2 through April 6

**LOCATION:** PSRC, Maximum 20 seats