

Forbes

Finding Art Outside The Mainstream In New York



Harold Granucci, Nine Planets with Sun, 48x40. © OLIVER CORREA 2021

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I cover the intersection of art and travel.

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The 31st annual **Outsider Art Fair**—the only fair championing self-taught artists from around the world—takes place March 2 through 5, 2023, at the Metropolitan Pavilion in Manhattan. Outsider artists are united through their being uninfluenced by "the conventions of classical or fashionable art," as stated by artist Jean Dubuffet who helped define the genre, **then called Art Brut**, in the late 1940s.

Featuring over 64 exhibitors from 28 cities in eight countries, the fair continues embracing the inclusive, nonconforming, and "renegade" spirit of its practitioners, also variously referred to as folk or visionary artists.

Highlights from this year's edition include a presentation of *The Life and Death of Elvis Presley: A Suite*, a series of eight complex paintings by American artist and architect Paul Laffoley (1935-2015) representing the artist's interpretation of the distinct phases in the life of Elvis Presley. Donald Ellis Gallery offers an early group of graphite and colored pencil drawings by Inuit artist Parr (1893-1969), celebrated today for his unadulterated depictions of the hunt, animals and the human figure. SHRINE gallery showcases the work of Mary T. Smith (1904-1995) and David Butler (1898-1997), two figures in the Southern tradition of "yard shows," where Black artists decorated their properties to convey messages that could not be openly voiced. Kishka Gallery & Library has drawings by Denver Ferguson (b. 1985), a climate refugee who began creating artworks on scrap paper while working as a cashier at a gas station in Connecticut following his departure from the US Virgin Islands post Hurricane Irma.

Within Outsider art, it is quickly realized that the remarkable and unusual creations result from remarkable and unusual lives. Take Harold Granucci, a recently discovered, self-taught artist who viewed the world in grids and sequences. Born in Connecticut in 1916, at age 65, he began drawing in solitude eight hours a day creating geometrically based artworks that gave visible form to calculations found in nature, ranging from the storms to the solar system and sunflower crowns. He passed away at 90 leaving behind a prolific and relatively unseen body of work, a selection of which is on display at the fair thanks to Art Sales & Research gallery.

For this year's [OAF Curated Space](#), the fair has joined forces with Grammy Award-winning music producer, Randall Poster, co-founder of [the Birdsong Project](#), a collaboration with some of the world's most respected musicians, artists, poets, and actors, supporting bird conservation. Poster and fair owner Andrew Edlin, who have been friends since childhood, will co-curate an exhibition, "We Are Birds," featuring dozens of works inspired by birdlife made by self-taught and contemporary artists.

Appropriate considering how [a Eurasian owl escaped from the Central Park Zoo](#) has become a prominent figure in the city this winter.