

OUTSIDE OF EVERYTHING

New exhibition at the Museum of Everything looks at 'outsider art'

BY HAZELANN WILLIAMS

HAVE you ever wondered what outsider art is? Or wanted to know who defines a piece of art as being 'outside the norm'? The very term - outsider conjures images of unwanted and somehow less valuable work, which is usually how many people view the art form.

But the Museum of Everything, the world's only wandering space for the undiscovered and untrained artists hopes to change that. Touring Europe and displaying the works of artists such as Sister Gertrude Morgan and Sam Doyle, the curator of the exhibit James Brett refuses to use the term, instead he prefers the term unintentional art.

"I don't talk about outsiders, I take a political stand against it because who is defining the inside?" questioned the founder of the Museum of Everything.

"It used to seem cool to me



JAMES BRETT: Founder of the Museum of Everything

as a teenager. But I gradually realised that what it was saying was something political and complicated. When you are getting to things like disability and race it is wrong to call it outsider because you are reinforcing a sort of segregation. I radicalised on a personal level after that and made sure that my exhibits include what is known as 'black outsider art'."

It would come as no surprise



I WAS A BAD BOY: An intimate painting by Sam Doyle

to many who read this article, to know that black artists have often been excluded from many institutions, be it the academies, museums or the higher echelons of art history. Although in recent years there has been progress for black artists, such as Frank Bowling's inclusion to the Royal Academy of Arts - the first black artist to be elected a Royal Academician at the institution. Still according to Brett,

there is a tendency by the major art houses to dispossess vast amounts of the world's population because they do not fit in their ideals of what it means to be a worthy artist.

"My first encounter with 'outsider art' was in the southern states of America where 50 per cent of the artists are African American. Their work was mainly labelled folk, they weren't being celebrated and



OH HAPPY DAY: A painting by Sister Gertrude Morgan

their work was being ripped off by many artists in the mainstream," explained the curator.

"You can see some sort of visual continuity in the art from black artists, that fail to be embraced in the mainstream culture, and that is probably because of the money that is involved in art and because these artists in the exhibit make art because they feel that they have to not because they want it to get into a gallery. And

that is what interests me most, the idea that anyone can call themselves an artist is quite a democratic notion."

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