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# From Obscurity to the Center of the City of Light

The Museum of Everything, a traveling exhibition of outsider visual works, has arrived in Paris—what might be considered the quintessential city of insider art.

Within a mile of classic institutions such as the Louvre and the Musée d'Orsay, the exhibition is featuring hand-painted signs exhorting damnation, hundreds of blotted-ink and scribbly pencil drawings, collages as thick as Dagwood sandwiches and many more objects fashioned out of rusted bottle caps, frizzy wool leftovers, beat-up guitars and weathered castoffs.



The Museum of Everything

An untitled work by folk artist Justin McCarthy shows Ice Capades comic Hans Leiter, who sometimes wore a tutu.

The [museum](#) bills itself as championing "undiscovered, unintentional and untrained artists." The stars of this collection include Henry Darger, whose life work is "The Story of the Vivian Girls..." It's a 15,145-page manuscript, with hundreds of drawings and watercolors, that was only discovered by Darger's landlord after the artist died in 1973 at age 81.

Former slave and self-taught Alabama artist Bill Traylor (1854-1949), represented by a half-dozen cardboard ink drawings, sold his work for pennies. Hawkins Bolden (1914-2005), a blind and epileptic sculptor from Memphis, Tenn., fabricated hundreds of "scarecrows" from found metal cans and pots, puncturing them to create "eye holes."

Another artist on view is Judith Scott (1943-2005), who despite being deaf, mute and suffering from Down syndrome created hundreds of mysterious cocoon-like sculptures swaddled in yarn, into which she secreted thousands of objects.

James Brett, a British filmmaker and the founder of the museum, says it's his mission to "bring this phenomenal work to the public." The artists, he notes, "rarely if ever spoke about their work." The Museum of Everything premiered in London in 2009 in

connection with the Frieze Art Fair and drew 35,000 people. Exhibitions followed in Italy in 2010 and Russia early this year. The museum's next destination hasn't yet been set.

While Mr. Brett has pulled together some 7,000 pieces, only a little more than 600 works are on view in Paris. The location, the elegantly decaying corridors and classrooms of an abandoned Catholic primary school in the St. Germain neighborhood, is a new art space called The Chalet Society, founded by a well-known French champion of contemporary art, Marc-Olivier Wahler.

The exhibition runs through Dec. 16.

—Matthew Rose

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