

## The Museum of Everything

This event has now finished. Until Feb 14 2010



Time Out says

By Helen Sumpter Posted: Fri Oct 16 2009

The Museum of Everything is a new art venue in Primrose Hill dedicated to the creativity of obsessive, marginalised individuals. Helen Sumpter goes inside.

Hermit, hobo, medium, savant, autistic schizophrenic- just some of the descriptions applied to the creators of the 200 extraordinary works on show in a new art venture called The Museum of Everything. The artists represented here are all outsiders; untrained individuals, often socially marginalised and psychologically fragile, whose drive to create powerful, fantastical drawings, paintings, objects and texts using whatever materials are at hand, comes purely from an obsessive need to manifest their often troubled inner feelings and experiences.

Installed in the rooms of a rambling and atmospheric former dairy near Primrose Hill (more recently used as recording studios) this inaugural exhibition includes considerable collections of some of the best known outsider discoveries. Two installations show some of the 2,000 figures, initially made in secret since 1958 from cement and found materials, by Indian roads inspector Nek Chand. Another highlight is a room dedicated to reclusive Chicago janitor Henry Darger. Having largely retreated from social contact outside of work, Darger spent his time creating hundreds of narrative paintings, including huge panoramic collages, to illustrate his 15-volume epic written fantasy about seven childhood sisters called the Vivian Girls. Darger is now one of the most highly prized outsiders but his work was only discovered, piled high in his rented room, after his death in 1973.

Outsider art, which can encompass visionary art, naive art, primitive art and folk art (defi-

nitions are debatable but the term broadly applies to art produced outside of the influence of mainstream culture and art institutions) has been acknowledged and widely exhibited by the art world since Jean Dubuffet first coined the term 'art brut' (raw art) in the mid-1940s. More recently, in 2006, the Whitechapel Gallery's exhibition 'Inner Worlds Outside' showed work by outsiders along with famous 'insider' artists who have adopted a naive style, such as Paul Klee, Wassily Kandinsky and Joan Miró. The continuing influence of the 'outsiders' on the 'insiders' is evidenced by the accompanying text panels about each of the artists in this exhibition, written by a host of luminaries and admirers who have selected the artists for display, among them Peter Blake, Tal R, Annette Messager, Carsten Höller, Eva Rothschild, Norman Rosenthal and Ed Ruscha. LA-based Ruscha had even taken time out before the opening of his current Hayward Gallery retrospective to be shown round the exhibition while I was making my visit.

Given that most outsider art was never intended for any form of public viewing or display - collector and museum Founder James Brett accurately describes the venue as a 'public museum showing extraordinary works of privacy' - it can suffer from being seen in the too-pristine surrounds of a white cube gallery. But this unrefurbished space (holes in walls and remnants of decor remain from the dismantling of its previous incarnations) provides a sympathetic environment for work that may be lovingly crafted but is itself often made from rough and random materials.

Outsider art can also be sidelined as quirky craft but Brett and the team of curators involved in this enterprise have found the right tone with the branding and marketing of the space; respectful of the power and sensitivity of the work but without the overburdening gravitas that sometimes accompanies breathy accounts of the outsider art world.

After last week's showy commercial fest built around Frieze Art Fair, a visit to this exhibition is a welcome reminder that at its base, the desire to create satisfies a basic human rather than financial need. Don't wait too long though, the exhibition is initially scheduled to remain open only until Christmas (the building as well as the works in it are on loan from their private owners). Popular public demand may keep it open longer but either way, it's one not to miss.

The Museum of Everything details

Address

The Museum of Everything

Corner of Regents Park Rd and Sharples Hall St, (currently closed), NW1 8YL

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<http://www.musevery.com>

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