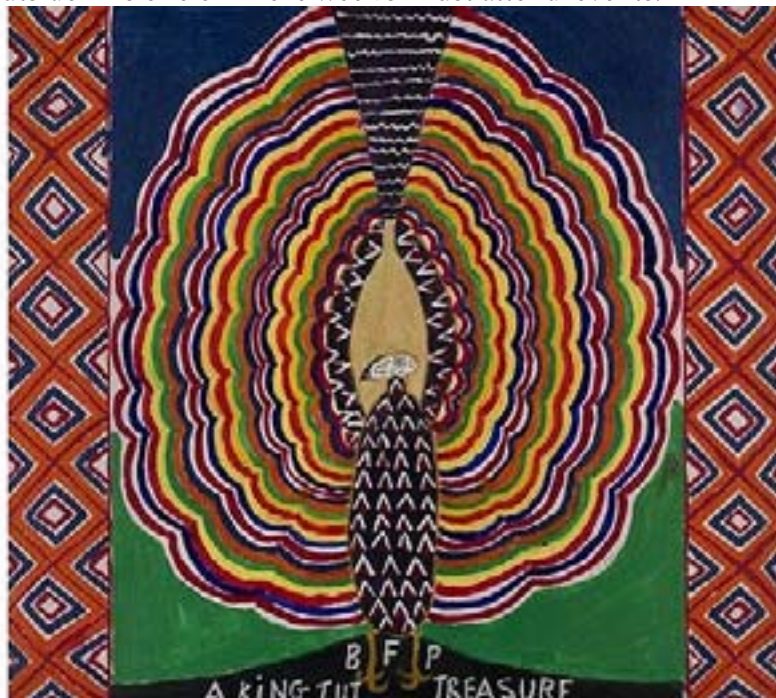


The Telegraph

Museum of Everything: Frieze brings the outside in

A new museum that represents one of the least travelled areas of art collecting - the world of the insane and the outsider - is one of Frieze week's 'must attend' events.



King Tut Treasure by Rev BF Perkins

Sharpleshall Street is a tiny road in north London that is barely visible on the map. Its name plates are either painted over or obscured by trees, and spotting number 11a is difficult because it is hidden down a small alley. But in the evening, at least, the entrance to the 10,000 sq ft former dairy and recording studio is illuminated with fairy lights. Above the door is a sign made with crazy lettering, reminiscent of the word sculptures of the American artist, Jack Pierson, which reads "Museum of Everything".

The Museum of Everything is the latest addition to the London art scene and, just as its location is obscure, it represents one of the least travelled areas of art collecting – the world of the insane, the obsessive and the disabled; the world of the outsider and the self-taught artist to whom many pay homage, but few the price.

See a slideshow of works in the Museum of Everything

It is the brainchild of James Brett, a film-maker and maverick collector who displays a healthy scepticism of the workings of the contemporary art market, but is embraced by it nonetheless. Tonight, VIP guests of the Frieze Art Fair have been invited to a party to celebrate the opening of the museum as one of the events – alongside receptions at Tate Modern and the Hayward Gallery – that make Frieze week a "must attend" event.

Paying homage by writing texts on the exhibited artists are such luminaries as the curators Norman Rosenthal, Hans Ulrich Obrist, and Ralph Rugoff, the artists Carsten Höller, Peter Blake, and Ed Ruscha, and pop stars Jarvis Cocker and Pete Dinklage.

Entering the new museum (its name was inspired by someone who created a Museum of Everything on the Isle of Wight to house the ephemera of their life) you are confronted with a late 19th-century mechanical shooting gallery that was once an attraction in Coney Island's amusement park. It now makes a light-hearted opening to a tour through a labyrinth of viewing rooms.

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Some of the artists' names might ring a few bells. There are two installations, for instance, of figures by Nek Chand, the road worker who built a sculpture garden out of recycled materials in Chandigarh, India. Then there is a room with works by Austrian artists who were treated at the Maria Gugging Psychiatric Clinic near Vienna. In the 1970s, the clinic exhibited their work and began selling it. Johann Hauser's powerful drawings can now fetch up to 40,000 euros.

The American, Henry Darger, who made panoramic fairytale illustrations based on his disturbed childhood, is perhaps the most famous; his works have sold at auction for as much as \$90,00. The museum has one room consisting of 10 panels, perhaps 20 metres long, of drawings by Darger, which form a



Friday Disasters by George Widener (b. 1962) was a Southern artist with exceptional memory, whose inner world is revealed in diagrams on discarded paper napkins. Photo: MUSEUM OF EVERYTHING

continuous storyline.

But the majority of artists are still eminently affordable. Sam Doyle's primitive figures, which were an influence on the graffiti artist Jean Michel Basquiat, can still be bought for less than £10,000. Paintings by the Rev BF Perkins, who is represented with a dazzling painting of peacock feathers (pictured above) can still be bought for a few hundred pounds because he was so prolific, says Brett.

Brett began collecting 10 years ago while travelling in the US, and found things he liked for under £20. He bought things from junk shops or direct from the artists. As he began to familiarise himself with the market, he realised the best works could be quite expensive. But by then he had been sucked in. "My compulsive nature took over," he says.

While he appreciates the interest of mainstream dealers and collectors, he is wary of the effect this can have on prices. "The contemporary market is all about what other people think. It all boils down to money," he says.

Although there are some parallels with the collection of "outsider art", on loan to the Irish Museum of Modern Art in Dublin, the Museum of Everything claims to be the only museum or gallery devoted to this genre. As such, this makes the journey of discovery to Sharpleshall Street all the more worthwhile.



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