

NAÏVE

Of art, a painting, etc.: produced in a bold, straightforward style that avoids sophisticated techniques. Also: produced by a person without formal training.

German art collector Wilhelm Udhe is credited with mounting the first exhibition of what he dubbed Naïve Art in 1928, when he displayed together works by French painters Henri Rousseau (1844 – 1910), Louis Vivin (1861 – 1936), André Bauchant (1873 – 1958), Camille Bombois (1883 – 1970) and Séraphine (1864 – 1942).

INTUITIVE

Of any faculty or gift: not acquired by learning; innate.

In 1991, Intuit, the Center for Intuitive and Outsider Art, is founded in Chicago. Today, its mission statement describes it as “a premier museum of outsider and self-taught art, defined as work created by artists who faced marginalization, overcame personal odds to make their artwork, or who did not, or sometimes could not, follow a traditional path of art making, often using materials at hand to realize their artistic vision.”

ART BRUT

Art that is created in an untaught or unsophisticated style, frequently by children or the mentally ill.

French term with an approximate translation to “raw art” or “rough art” as coined by artist Jean Dubuffet in the 1940s. He began a collection of what he considered to be such art in 1945 that now numbers 70,000 works in Lausanne, Switzerland.

IMAGE CREDIT

Ronald Lockett, American, 1965–1998, *Remembering Sarah Lockett*, c. 1997, metal, wire, wood, and paint, approx.: 48 x 48 x 2 in. (121.9 x 121.9 x 5.1 cm) frame: 48 x 48 in. (121.9 x 121.9 cm). Gift of the Arnett Collection and Ackland Fund, 2010.52.5. © 2022 Estate of Ronald Lockett / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

ACKLAND

WHAT IS UNSETTLING ABOUT CATEGORIES?



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Unsettled Things includes art by an array of artists who, for decades, have often been categorized in art historical scholarship as being in a separate category other than simply American-based makers of art. Under increased scrutiny, the categories that have been applied to their efforts can, whether inadvertently or intentionally, work to diminish their efforts and marginalize the creators. As curator Bernard L. Herman remarks, "When we apply a label — for example, *folk* or *outsider* — to any aspect of expressive culture, we position it as something other than ourselves."

The following terms are among those that the art world has applied in the past in reference to the creative efforts of the artists in *Unsettled Things*. The list begins with terms that have been used more broadly and ends with ones that have narrower applications. Defining these categories can be difficult, especially as language and its connotations evolve through time. Definitions for the terms below come from relevant passages in the Oxford English Dictionary as accessed online through the UNC-Chapel Hill libraries. Examples of the uses of these terms within fine art communities throughout the last century are also included.

FOLK

Art pertaining to, current or existing among, the people; traditional, of the common (local) people, esp. opposed to sophisticated, cosmopolitan.

In 1961, the American Folk Art Museum was established in New York City; its current mission is to showcase "the creativity of individuals whose singular talents have been refined through personal experience rather than formal artistic training."

Auction house Christie's first offered American Folk Art through its sales of Americana in 1979.

SELF-TAUGHT

Of knowledge, skill, experience, etc.: acquired or attained by one's own unaided efforts.

In 1994, the High Museum of Art in Atlanta, Georgia, was the first general interest museum to establish a dedicated department to works by self-taught artists. On its collection website, their curator writes, "Not all great artists attended art schools. The artists featured in the High Museum's folk and self-taught art collection instead were shaped primarily by lessons learned from family, community, work, and spiritual experiences."

OUTSIDER

Art produced by untrained artists (esp. social misfits) who are not part of the mainstream tradition.

Art historian Roger Cardinal introduced the term in his 1972 book *Outsider Art*.

In 1993, the biannual Outsider Art Fair is established and continues to this day.

VERNACULAR

Of arts, or features of these: native or peculiar to a particular country or locality. *spec.* in vernacular architecture, architecture concerned with ordinary domestic and functional buildings rather than the essentially monumental.

In 1996, the Michael C. Carlos Museum at City Hall East opened the major exhibition *Souls Grown Deep: African-American Vernacular Art of the South* in conjunction with the Atlanta Olympic Games.

VISIONARY

Able or accustomed to see visions; capable of receiving impressions, or obtaining knowledge, by means of visions.

In 1989, the American Visionary Art Museum was incorporated as a 501 (c) 3 non-profit in Baltimore, Maryland. Its current mission statement refers to "art produced by self-taught individuals, usually without formal training, whose works arise from an innate personal vision that revels foremost in the creative act itself."