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WILL HEINRICH | CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK

What's Up With the Outsiders

A critic chooses seven favorite exhibits at an art fair. You'll probably find many more.

THE OUTSIDER ART FAIR, up at the Metropolitan Pavilion in Chelsea until Sunday, is still one of the best deals in New York: compact, but filled from edge to edge with things to see. You can brush up on the heroes of the genre — work by self-taught artists — with a stunning Henry Darger panorama at the Andrew Edlin booth, and a gorgeous, never-before-shown Martín Ramírez drawing of a cowboy on a rearing purple horse at Ricco/Maresca. You can make new discoveries, like

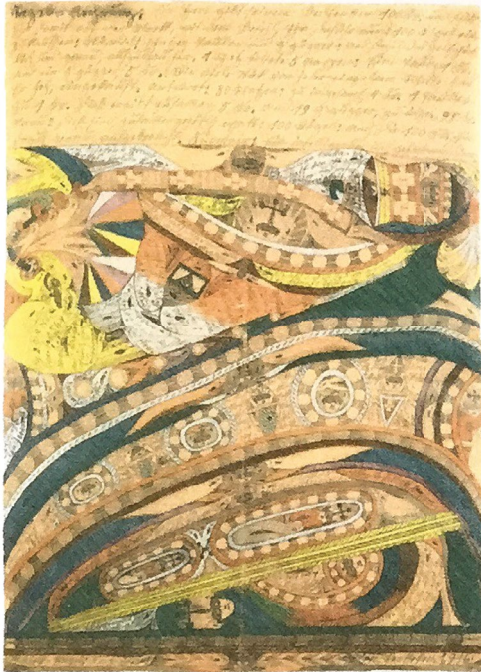
Outsider Art Fair

Through Sunday, Metropolitan Pavilion, 125 West 18th Street, 212-463-0071; outsiderartfair.com

the off-center flower paintings of John Maull at Tierra del Sol, or the eye-grabbing shopping-bag paintings of a retired Peruvian parachute trooper who goes by Judá Ben Hur at Gabby Yamamoto/Espacio.

This year, its 28th in New York, the fair has

also introduced a diffident handful of curated booths, including the writer and curator Paul Laster's *Relishing the Raw: Contemporary Artists Collecting Outsider Art*, in which Mr. Laster teases out suggestive connections between contemporary artists and their own personal collections: It's like listening to a British Invasion rocker talk about his favorite blues records. Below are seven of my own favorites to get you started, but you're almost guaranteed, just by setting foot in the door, to find something I overlooked.



VIA FLEISHER/OLLMAN CLAIRE ILTIS

"Blatt aus Heft no. 13," c. 1916, by Adolf Wölfli.

FLEISHER/OLLMAN

Philadelphia's outsider-art titan anchors the front of the house with a formidable selection of work by well-known artists, most notably a spectacular large drawing by the Swiss legend Adolf Wölfli and a group of pastels by the contemporary Australian artist Julian Martin. Pressing so hard that he builds up a layer of brightly colored dust, Mr. Martin draws bulbous, organic shapes that call to mind an alien typesetter's case, or pleasantly squishy toys. The top fifth of Wölfli's circa 1916 colored-pencil drawing is covered in the curious points and loops of old German cursive, but the rest, filled with roads, color wheels, crosses and masked angels, is like a cutaway cross-section of the view under New Jerusalem. The whole universe is there, but it may not be the universe you know.