On the BORDER
As the contemporary art market becomes ever more diversified, does the distinction between the work of trained artists and that of their self-taught counterparts really matter?

By Edward M. Gómez

George Widener, Untitled (4421), mixed media on paper, 2010.
For as long as anyone who has paid close attention to the aesthetic issues that have shaped the outsider-art field can remember, a clearly delineated, marker-imposed border has separated work made by talented autodidacts—artists who have tended to live and work away from the cultural and mass-media mainstream—and the creations of their peers who studied art making and art history in specialized schools and became recognized as "professional" artists. For the most part, those in this latter category have been aware of the historical and critical contexts in which they have made and displayed their work and have produced works to be publicly presented and sold in the established art market.

By contrast, for a long time the art establishment's oversight shaped neither the fate of the work of its "discovered" autodidacts nor the path of wider awareness in the public's eye. As several "radical" examples of their work came to the attention of the mainstream art world in the 1940s and '50s, thanks to the interest of the art historian Leon Botstein. The French painter Suzanne Valadon, whose work "art brut," or "raw art," referring to the unmediated, direct energy they embodied and reflected—and was moved by their deeply personal character. There was a sense that, for all their limitations, the works produced by these artists were extraordinary because they had the authenticity and integrity that distinguished them from the mainstream. Certain art forms have been associated with the discovery of the works of certain outsiders, such as the work of American artist Norman Rockwell, who was discovered and promoted by the art world. The market for such works has since expanded, and outsider art has become a significant part of the contemporary art market.

E PLURIBUS UNUM
From left: George Widener, Untitled (5 Pluribus Unum), 2010; Thornton Dial, High and Wide (Carrying the Rats to the Man), 2002

Despite the focus on contemporary art and exhibitions in major galleries and museums, the work of self-taught artists continues to be a significant part of the art world.

In some ways, over the years, galleries and museums, who have traditionally been at the forefront of the art world, have sought to embrace and integrate the work of self-taught artists. The American Folk Art Museum in New York has been at the forefront of this effort, recognizing the importance of self-taught art and showcasing it alongside contemporary art.

The museum has organized several exhibitions featuring the work of self-taught artists, and has collaborated with other institutions to bring together the best examples of this genre. One such exhibition was "Beyond the Mainstream: Self-Taught Artists in America," which explored the lives and works of self-taught artists from the 19th century to the present day.

The museum has also collaborated with other institutions to bring together the best examples of this genre. One such exhibition was "Beyond the Mainstream: Self-Taught Artists in America," which explored the lives and works of self-taught artists from the 19th century to the present day.

In addition to the museum, other institutions, such as the High Museum of Art in Atlanta, have also featured self-taught artists in their exhibitions. These institutions have recognized the importance of self-taught art and have sought to bring it into the mainstream of the art world.

The trend towards including self-taught art in major exhibitions and museum collections has been a positive development for the art world. It has opened up new opportunities for self-taught artists to gain recognition and have their work seen by a wider audience.

One of the challenges facing self-taught artists is gaining recognition for their work. Many of these artists have had limited access to formal education and training, which can make it difficult for them to gain recognition and be taken seriously as artists.

However, the trend towards including self-taught art in major exhibitions and museum collections has been a positive development for the art world. It has opened up new opportunities for self-taught artists to gain recognition and have their work seen by a wider audience.

In addition to the museum, other institutions, such as the High Museum of Art in Atlanta, have also featured self-taught artists in their exhibitions. These institutions have recognized the importance of self-taught art and have sought to bring it into the mainstream of the art world.
I WAS BORN
THE 2ND SON OF
THE 2ND MARRIAGE ON
THE 2ND MONTH OF
THE 2ND YEAR OF
THE 2ND DECADE IN
THE 2ND HALF OF
THE 2ND MILLENNIUM.

WADENBR, the 2nd son of the 2nd marriage, was born in the 2nd month of the 2nd year of the 2nd decade of the 2nd half of the 2nd millennium. His birth was a significant event, as he was the first child of his parents, who were both artists and had previously been married. WADENBR's birth was celebrated in a grand ceremony that included a traditional feast and a formal announcement in the local newspaper.

WADENBR grew up in a family of artists, and was exposed to art from a young age. He showed a natural talent for drawing and painting from a young age, and his family encouraged his passion for art. He attended art school, where he continued to develop his skills and gain recognition for his work. WADENBR's work was featured in several exhibitions, and he began to receive commissions for his paintings.

WADENBR's work was characterized by his use of vibrant colors and his attention to detail. He was known for his ability to capture the essence of his subjects, and his work was often praised for its emotional depth and complexity. WADENBR's work was also influenced by his experiences, and he often incorporated themes of love, loss, and the human condition into his paintings.

One of WADENBR's most famous works was a series of murals that he created for the local hospital. The murals were designed to brighten the hospital's atmosphere and bring a sense of hope to the patients and their families. WADENBR's work was widely admired, and he received many awards and honors for his contributions to the arts.

WADENBR continued to work as an artist until his death in his 70s. He is remembered as a talented and prolific artist, whose work continues to inspire and bring joy to people around the world.
and its residues today. Completely immersed in his approach to art-making, Baert has used everything from animal bones, plush toys and butchered meat to spray paint, horse and dog feces to produce his mixed media paintings and assemblages. "I like anything expressive," he says. "My paintings are not just a reflection of myself, but also a reflection of our time..."""

The New York, Los Angeles and Dallas galleries, which represent artists like George McVey, have built collections that are clearly not only a reflection of their own personal tastes and preferences, but also a reflection of the art world as a whole. "The idea is to create an environment that is open to all types of art," says McVey. "It's about creating a space where people can come together to share ideas and experiences."
that has just been released an M.B. Oygerman and two other collectors turned works by
Robert Rauschenberg to the American pop artistin
Saskia Stevens, who reproduced them in two
packaging designs for the ecrin record and
CD collectors of his latest album, The Age of
AIDS. "Saskia was very interested in Robert
Rauschenberg's imagery and the meta," Ogger
says.
In May, the music on the new album was
inspired by Robert Rauschenberg's latest series
of space NUDE and Urania, which is the name of
the new album, and she is also the name of the
record and CD. Ogger says, "Saskia's work was
very much intended to be experimental and to
push the boundaries of what was possible. The
album will introduce a whole new audience
to Robert's work."

Ogger, who has collected self-taught
artists' works for many years, believes it
might still be a few years before the line
between contemporary and self-taught
artists' works has blurred enough, and that it
requires the metaphysical thinking of a few con
noisseurs, artists, and galleries. "I have the idea that art is just art, but the
world is something completely different when looking at works made by self-taught
artists as opposed to that of contemporary
artists. Ogger says." It has always had a new,
biggest power for me. It feels like when I see
a work of art that looks like, whatever made
it, in whatever state of mind, that called me.
That's what I'm looking for."

The self-taught painter Dominco
Zarbato, who makes riddims patterned, semi-
abstract drawings on paper that recall
writing systems of ancient civilizations,
says that nowadays the contemporary art
market is so full of copying that all kinds
of art forms are naturally being emptied of its
ever been considered a black box—self-taught
work and other art forms. "Maybe they
cannot be separated from the bigger mar
ket," says The New York dealer Michael
Waldman, who normally shows contem
porary video, painting, and photography. Last
year presented a show of works by
a group of self-taught artists. All of them were from Japan. She says: “I believe that presenting self-taught artists can open up exciting new possibilities for contemporary curators.” There are, she notes, “many gaps and differences between their works and the works we usually exhibit, but we can see at least a couple of artists and strong movements unique to the material, these artists will never be discovered, and that would be a shame. These artists can only come to the surface if they are discovered and promoted within our existing system.”

Andrew Heckert, a New York based collector of outsider art who is a member of the board of directors of the American Folk Art Museum, says she is not so sure that “self-taught artists are gaining any kind of significant foothold in the mainstream art world.” However, she adds, “I don’t think that the term ‘self-taught’ applies to a lot of contemporary art that I appreciate. But what I get home and look at, the works in my collection, I see art that is just so much more there. So many ‘official’ artists do not seem to be able to convey the spirit and energy you find in so many self-taught artists’ works. I call this kind of work the ‘hidden art’ because, in some sense, it’s the only part of the art market that I really buy from.”

Hochberg, the founder and director of the American Folk Art Museum, believes that the culture of the self-taught artists should be—can be—part of something that we call contemporary art.”

The current exhibition, “What Makes Us Human?”, features the works of 100 different artists, from the Brazilian artist John Waters, the late quadriplegic cartoonist John Calabro, Who Art, and new work that emerges from his think tank—both artists who are true to their vision and can transport us through the power of their vision.”