



## Collection de l'Art Brut

### Art in Obscurity

26 January – 28 April 2019  
Aargauer Kunsthaus, Aarau

"Art Brut" is receiving more attention internationally now than ever before. An exhibition at the Aargauer Kunsthaus is taking a look at this art, described by painter and collector Jean Dubuffet as "raw diamonds", and its close connection to Switzerland. The exhibition is produced by the Collection de l'Art Brut and realised in cooperation with the Aargauer Kunsthaus. It assembles roughly 200 paintings, drawings and assemblages by twenty-two Swiss artists from the Collection de l'Art Brut, complemented by works from the Aargauer Kunsthaus. Sometimes wildly and freely gestural, sometimes meticulous and detailed, the works focus on man, nature, architecture and emblematic imagery.

Art Brut has long taken on intercontinental scope: Nowadays, there is a global search for new discoveries in the field, and form and terminology in the realm of Art Brut are the subject of recurrent and controversial debates. One origin of this interest lies in turn-of-the-century Europe: Social and political upheavals in the first decades of the twentieth century made artists (whether Dadaists, Surrealists or Expressionists) and intellectuals reject traditional academic guidelines in favour of an anti-classical aesthetic. The unconventional artistic expression of inner images, fantasies and feelings became a catalyst of modernism. Many avant-gardists found a source of inspiration in the art of other cultures as well as in the "Artistry of the Mentally Ill".

In 1945, the French painter and collector Jean Dubuffet travelled various language regions of Switzerland, always on the lookout for forms of artistic expression being pursued independently from the official art market and established trends. In museums and particularly in obscurity—in hospitals,

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prisons and psychiatric clinics-he encountered individuals who were developing their very own creations insulated from academic models and stereotypes. He used the term *art brut* (French for "raw" or "rough art") to describe these intuitively and autodidactically evolved art forms. In 1971, he donated a large part of his collection to the City of Lausanne, which, in 1976, gave rise to what is now the internationally renowned *Collection de l'Art Brut*.

Following its first presentation at the Museo di Ascona (under the title *Art Brut-Swiss Made*, 4.7.-21.10.2018), the Aargauer Kunsthaus is showing an adapted version of the exhibition supplemented by works from the museum's own collection (Walter Arnold Steffen, Alois Wey and Adolf Wölfli, among others) under the title *Collection de l'Art Brut. Art in Obscurity*. This joint project with the Collection de l'Art Brut reflects the longstanding concern of the Aargauer Kunsthaus to look not just at established Swiss art but also at artistic production on the margins (consider, for instance, the two *Outside* exhibitions in the 1980s under then director Heiny Widmer, or the 2015 show *Auf der Grenze* curated by Thomas Schmutz). The exhibition features works from the canon of Dubuffet's collection, including by Julie Bar. and Berthe Urasco; art by patients of the Cery Bel-Air asylum that was donated to Dubuffet by its former director, the physician Charles Ladame; works by Adolf Wölfli and Heinrich Anton Müller to which Dubuffet was introduced at the Waldau psychiatric clinic in Bern by Walter Morgenthaler, a doctor there. Other artists such as Benjamin Bonjour, Hans Krüsi, Martial Richoz, Armand Schulthess, Gaston Teuscher, Gaspard Corpataux, Justine Python and Anne-Lise Jeanneret became part of the Lausanne collection from 1976 on thanks to the collecting efforts of curators Michel Thévoz and Lucienne Peiry. Sarah Lombardi, since 2012 director of the Collection de l'Art Brut, has continued the collecting activities to this day and included contemporary artists such as the Lausanne-based Diego into the collection as well as the exhibition.

In addition to aiming to show the wide variety of individual styles of the Art Brut artists, the artist also draws attention to recurring groups of themes. Accordingly, the exhibition is organised thematically, starting with the emblematic figures of Aloïse Corbaz. Inspired by fairy tales and operas as well as by her work as a nanny and seamstress at the imperial court of Wilhelm II, Corbaz has princes, heroes and fairy-tale figures dance across thin sheets of packing paper. Dense ornamentation evoking heraldic imagery and Bern folk art characterises the work of Adolf Wölfli. Julie Bar. and Jules Doudin draw humorous picture stories of animals, humans and mythical creatures on notebook paper and small slips. An encyclopaedic or conceptual proclivity for a meticulous or graphic use of line and surface is apparent

in the works of Martial Richoz and Diego. Those of Aloïs Wey and Benjamin Bonjour confront us with collaged and painted imaginary palace architectures. This colourful world continues in the vegetal and animal landscapes of Samuel Failloubaz and eventually leads to the *images du pays* of Hans Krüsi who at times used uncommon materials such as milk cartons as painting grounds. The show concludes with raw gestures as well as writings relating to the artists' own selves, as reflected in the handwritten protests of Justine Python, the convoluted figures of Gaston Teuscher or the mask-like assemblages of Angelo Meani.

Embedded in the midst of the exhibition is a kind of "satellite space" featuring large-scale, crystalline drawings on graph paper. They are the work of Emma Kunz. This Aargau artist should not be seen as an Art Brut artist. Rather, the aim is to create a quiet space of refuge and encounter to reflect on art, its classification in categories and canonisation. What distinguishes established modernist art from Art Brut? The work of Emma Kunz has arrived in academic and museum circles, even though to the artist herself viewed her drawings more as a research tool and resource for her work as a healer. A pendulum guided her in her intuitive creative process. The drawings are said to have helped her render invisible energies and larger connections intelligible. In purely formal terms, there are apparent parallels to the systematic pictorial geometries of a Diego, the distinction, however, lies in the biographical and intentional categorisation of the artworks and their creators. In this context, Emma Kunz may serve as an inspiration to question the demarcations between genres.

The meeting of the Aargauer Kunsthaus and the Collection de l'Art Brut thus holds great potential: two historically grown collections enter into a dialogue and allow us to reflect, in an institutional framework, candidly and critically, with a view to the past and the future, on Swiss art and its supposedly linear and clear categorisations.

**Works from the Collection de l'Art Brut in Lausanne on Display Are by:**

Julie Bar. (1868-1930, Geneva/Geneva), Benjamin Bonjour (1917-2000, Bex/Vaud), Aloïse Corbaz (1886-1964, Lausanne/Vaud), Gaspard Corpataux (1838-1917, Freiburg/Fribourg), Diego (b. 1963, Lausanne/Vaud), Jules Doudin (1884-1946, Payerne/Vaud), Samuel Failloubaz (1903-1975, Vevey/Vaud), Anne-Lise Jeanneret (1950-2017, La Sagne/Neuchâtel), Pierre Kocher (1923-2005, Lausanne/Vaud), Hans Krüsi (1920-1995, Appenzell(Appenzell)), Angelo Meani (1906-1977, Milan, Italy), Heinrich Anton Müller (1865-1930, Versailles, France), Justine Python (1879-?, Villariaz/Fribourg), Jean Radović (1913-1991, Gajtan, Serbia), Martial Richoz (b. 1963, Lausanne/Vaud), Armand Schulthess (1901-1972, Neuenburg/Neuchâtel), Gaston Teuscher (1903-1986, Montherod/Vaud), Johann Trösch (1924-1984, Zürich/Zürich)), Berthe Urasco

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\*Aargauer Kunsthaus

(1898-?, Geneva/Geneva), Alois Wey (1894-1985, Murg/Sankt Gallen) and Adolf Wölfli (1864-1930, Bern/Bern).

**Works from the Collection of the Aargauer Kunsthhaus in Aarau Are by:**

Walter Arnold Steffen (1924-1982, Saanen, Belgium), Alois Wey (1894-1985, Murg/Sankt Gallen) and Adolf Wölfli (1864-1930, Bern/Bern).

**An additional discourse window (or "satellite space")** features works by the artist and healer Emma Kunz from the collection of the Aargauer Kunsthhaus.

**Publication**

In conjunction with the exhibition *L'Art Brut-Swiss Made*, the Collection de l'Art Brut in Lausanne prepared a publication in cooperation with the Aargauer Kunsthhaus in Aarau and the Museo Comunale d'Arte Moderna di Ascona. Published in German, Italian and French, the volume includes selected reproductions, a foreword by the directors, Sarah Lombardi, Mara Folini and Madeleine Schuppli, an introductory text by Sarah Lombardi and short biographies of all artists from the Collection de l'Art Brut included in the exhibition. Publication date: June 2018. Price: CHF 25.-

**Curator at the Aargauer Kunsthhaus**

Julia Schallberger, Curator Aargauer Kunsthhaus, Aarau

**Concept for and Overall Curator of the Travelling Exhibition**

Sarah Lombardi, Director Collection de l'Art Brut, Lausanne

**Preview for the Media**

**Thursday, 24 January 2019, 10.30 am**

Introduction by Madeleine Schuppli, Director; tour of the exhibition with Julia Schallberger, Curator of the exhibition at the Aargauer Kunsthhaus. Sarah Lombardi, Director and Curator of the Collection de l'Art Brut, will also be present. Followed by a reception

**Opening**

**Friday, 25 January 2019, 6 pm**

**6.15 pm Speakers:** Madeleine Schuppli, Director Aargauer Kunsthhaus, and Julia Schallberger, curator. Followed by a reception

**5 - 6 pm Preview** for members of the Aargau Art Association

**6 - 8 pm Children's Opening.** Meet at the studio downstairs at 6 pm

**Talks and Film Screening**

**Art Brut?**

**Sunday, 28. February, 7 pm**

Roman Buxbaum, Helen Hirsch, Markus Landert and Katrin Luchsinger discuss the term "Art Brut". Moderated by Julia Schallberger, curator  
Followed by a reception. Admission + CHF 15.-

**La Collection de l'Art Brut and the Universe of Armand Schulthess**  
**Thursday, 21 March, 6.30 pm**

Sarah Lombardi, Director Collection de l'Art Brut, Lausanne speaks about the collection (in French)

Followed by a screening of the film *J'ai le téléphone* (1974) with an introduction by the filmmaker, Hans-Ulrich Schlumpf (in German)

Followed by a reception. Admission + CHF 15.-

**Adult Education Class**

**Wölfli, Kunz and Krüsi: Art in Obscurity**

**Lecture: Monday 1.4. 7.30 pm Guided tour: Thursday 4.4. 5 pm**

With Julia Schallberger, curator of the exhibition at the Aargauer Kunsthaus. Please register at [www.vhszh.ch](http://www.vhszh.ch)

**Guided Tours**

**Sunday 11 am**

24.2. with Brigitte Haas, 31.3. with Silja Burch

**Sunday 1 pm**

27.1. with Astrid Näff, 3.3. with Brigitte Haas, 28.4. with Astrid Näff

**Thursday 6.30 pm**

7.2. guided tour with the curator, Julia Schallberger, 14.2. with Brigitte Haas, 14.3. with Astrid Näff, 18.4. with Astrid Näff

**Easter Monday, 1 pm**

22.4. with Astrid Näff

**Children and Families**

**Art Hunt**

**Saturday 16.2. / 23.2. / 2.3. / 16.3. / 23.3.**

**10 am - 12.30 pm** (ages 9-13), **1.30 - 3.30 pm** (ages 5-8)

Children are introduced to art

**Family Sunday**

**Sunday 10.2. / 10.3. / 14.4. 2 - 4 pm**

Interactive guided tour and workshop for families with children

**Open Studio**

**Sunday 27.1. / 24.2. / 31.3. / 28.4. / 26.11. 11 am - 4 pm**

The studio is open for young and old creative minds.

For additional events for schools, families and children as well as barrier-free events please refer to the separate flyer.

**Images for the Media**

Images are available for downloading on our website  
www.aargauerkunsthhaus.ch> Media. Please consider the copyright.

**Opening Hours**

Tue - Sun: 10 am - 5 pm; Thu: 10 am - 8 pm

**Holiday Opening Hours**

**Open from 10 am to 5 pm:** Maundy Thursday 18.4., Good Friday, 19.4., Easter  
21.4. and Easter Monday 22.4.2019

**For additional information please contact:**

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