



### **Arnulf Rainer and his collection of art brut**

curator : Franz-W. Kaiser

**Arnulf Rainer** (born 1929 in Baden, near Vienna) became known as from the 1950s as a champion of Austrian avant-garde art. Himself a prolific artist, he is also a collector of works by autodidacts, outsiders, prisoners, the mentally ill, mediums and the naïve. These are the creations which, after the Second World War, Jean Dubuffet termed art brut and which in 1972 Roger Cardinal referred to as outsider art.

Arnulf Rainer began his collection in 1963. In 1969 he showed it at the Nächst Saint Stefan gallery in Vienna with which he was then affiliated. While la maison rouge is therefore not the first institution to present his collection, this time it shows it in relation to Rainer's own works.

#### **In response to surrealism**

Arnulf Rainer was 19 when he discovered surrealism and the prominence it afforded to the subconscious in the creative process. His art at that time depicted a fantasy universe inhabited by strange and gradually dissolving creatures (*Schweber und Steher* – "Soaring and Standing", 1948).

The "Microstructures" series further explored this disintegration, with inside and outside merging into a tight-knit structure.

In 1951 Arnulf Rainer travelled to Paris. Disappointed by the direction surrealism was taking, he distanced himself from the movement and turned towards greater informality. While in Paris he saw *Véhémences Confrontées*, an exhibition staged by Michel Tapié at the Nina Dausset gallery of works by Capogrossi, De Kooning, Hartung, Matthieu, Pollock, Riopelle, Wols and Russel. Almost certainly this helped shape his "Centralisations" series (*Zentralisation IX/4, TRRR 51, 1951*).

#### **Appropriating expressions of madness**

In the 1960s, Arnulf Rainer began his collection of art brut, focusing primarily on works by institutionalised persons. He compiled drawings, paintings, and more widely documents (reference books and photographs) related to creations by the mentally ill. "The encounter with this

material went beyond the activity of an ordinary art collector. For me, this was a spiritual and mental, rather than artistic, confrontation. What I collected provided study material." (Arnulf Rainer, *Art Brut Himmagen*, 1991). These elements were central to Arnulf Rainer's quest to penetrate and assimilate the state of madness.

He experimented with different techniques to physically experience certain forms of insanity.

So as to escape the controlling influence of rationality on the creative process and allow uninhibited expression, he drew after consuming alcohol (*Profil unter Ouzo* – "Profile under Ouzo", 1961) and drugs (*Skizze unter LSD* – "Sketch under LSD", circa 1966), in particular as part of studies conducted by doctors at Lausanne university clinic and at the Max-Planck-Institut in Munich. By numbering the pages of his sketchbook he was later able to retrace the process (works under the influence of mescaline, 1966).

In his 1967 text *Schön und Wahn* ("Beauty and Delusion") he defends "the expressive value of schizophrenic gesturing, such as pulling faces." The following year he attempted to recreate these expressions by photographing himself at night in a photo booth in Vienna station. "This required a certain agitation as well as heightened expressiveness of the facial muscles and nerves, for which I had spent the day in preparation." "Facial tension and the effort of physiognomic expression condition not only a formal change in personality [...] but also the full deployment of subterranean forces, the ones we term psychopathic." (Arnulf Rainer, "Face Farces", 1971).

Arnulf Rainer continued his research with *Faces Farces* (1969-1973), this time working with a photographer who would take a picture as soon as Rainer rang a bell, capturing the highest degree of expressive tension.

Documentary photos of psychotics' body language gave rise to further series, including *Profiles* (1961-1970) and *Selbst-Daneben* (1974).

In the *Fingermalereien* ("Fingerpaintings") series, it is the pictorial process itself which engages him.

By applying paint directly with his hands, Arnulf Rainer reproduces and assimilates the technique used by Louis Soutter, whom he discovered at the Fine Arts museum in Lausanne, in 1961. "[For Louis Soutter] finger-painting is a means of painting with the skin, without a brush or any specific tool. In my view, it corresponds to a conceptual attitude towards corporal art and the gesture. It cannot be said that I paint with the fingers, rather with the entire hand." ("Friedhelm Mennekes and Arnulf Rainer discuss Louis Soutter", *Die Finger malen*, 1986).

#### **Overpaintings**

Such appropriation can be traced back to Arnulf Rainer's *Übermalungen* ("Overpaintings"), a recurrent theme in his work for more than fifty years.

Very early on, even before his interest in expressions of madness, Arnulf Rainer appropriated other artists' work

by painting or drawing directly over it. These can be works given to him by other painters and collectors (canvases by Sam Francis, engravings by Goya) or works which he has bought himself (Portfolio by Michaux).

Mostly though, his subjects are his own works, whether originals, reproductions (*Selbstübermalungen*) or multiples (overdrawing on a lithography of *Hämm und Gloff*), sometimes going as far as to completely obscure the surface beneath (the *Reste* series).

Certain overpaintings are directly relevant to Arnulf Rainer's interest in the facial expressions of the mentally ill, beginning with those relating to the study of manifestations of powerful emotions.

In particular, he has worked on original pieces from his collection by Charles Le Brun (1619-1690), Francesco de Ficoroni (1664-1747), Tim Bobbin (1708-1786), Johann Caspar Lavater (1741-1801) and even the renowned *Recueil de têtes de caractère et de charges, dessinées par Léonard de Vinci* ("Album of character heads and caricatures drawn by Leonardo da Vinci") compiled by Pierre-Jean Mariette in 1730.

In the mid-1970s he drew over photographs of sixty-nine "character heads" sculpted by Franz Xaver Messerschmidt circa 1770. "[They] sprang from the need for dialogue. I'd had enough of just covering myself. While searching for a grandiose expression, I ran into this Baroque Austrian's character heads." (Arnulf Rainer, "On the *overdrawings* of F. X. Messerschmidt", 1977).

In a logical continuation, Arnulf Rainer began painting and drawing over art brut.

His relationship with works by the mentally ill reached a turning-point in the mid-1990s. No longer content to paint or draw over their work (*Überzeichnung Louis Soutter*, 1975), he invited these creators, notably Johann Fischer, Franz Kernbeis and Johann Hauser (all patients at Klosterneuburg Hospital) to paint over his own works (originals and reproductions), thereby bringing full circle the appropriation process he had begun forty years ago.

### **The Arnulf Rainer collection**

The Rainer collection, which now extends to more than two thousand pieces, sourced the majority of its early works in the very places they were produced - psychiatric hospitals - and later, to a lesser extent, at auction rooms and specialised galleries.

Through the intermediary of his first wife, and through research by Dr Jacab (who in 1956 published *Drawings and paintings of the mentally ill*), Arnulf Rainer rapidly forged links with East European institutions, thanks to which he began his collection (L. Domenico, L. L., J. Radovic, Nikifor, S. Sekulic).

Already though, patients in psychiatric care were creating less and less. Progress in treatments to alleviate their suffering, made possible by the development of chemotherapy, also diminished their creative capacities. Meanwhile, institutions were encouraging therapeutic art sessions during which participants' artistic activities were supervised and channelled according to doctors' therapeutic intentions. This subverted the "defiant spirit

that is the necessary component of artistic invention." (M. Thévoz, *Requiem for madness*).

Arnulf Rainer turned naturally towards Klosterneuburg Hospital in Gugging, near Vienna, where Dr Navratil was seeking to give his patients the means and independence to create. In the 1980s the doctor opened the "Artists' House" for patients. This was "not a therapeutic setting in the strictest sense but rather somewhere liberating and sufficiently independent of the hospital for creative individualities to develop." (M. Thévoz, "La Tinaia", *L'Art Brut*, issue 17). Like La Tinaia, a facility in Italy which functions along similar lines, Gugging sets out to integrate its patients-creators by requesting their admission to art institutions. This acceptance, which goes hand-in-hand with the introduction of their work onto the art market, aims for social integration with an underlying therapeutic goal.

Arnulf Rainer has not limited his collection to works by the mentally ill. He recognises similar qualities in the work of the naïve, outsiders and the self-taught (P. Ghizzardi, M. Raffler, A. Wallis, T. Gordon) and also mediums (M. Gill, G. Hozatko-Mediz, A. Zemánková). Nor is he interested only in the most prominent among them; his collection includes drawings by Aloïse, A. Wolfli, L. Soutter and F. Schroder-Sonnerstein alongside the work of unknown artists such as J. Jantos, I. F. S. Maly, Goldberg, and Herbert.

Constantly on the lookout for new works, Arnulf Rainer is also a member of the jury for EUWARD, the European Award for Painting and Graphic Art by Artists with Mental Disability. Certain of these artists now feature in the Rainer collection (C. Dobringer, M. Enver, W. Mösenbacher, E. Staudinger, H. Schmidt).

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### **a travelling exhibition**

This exhibition, initiated by la maison rouge, will travel to the Gemeente Museum in The Hague (Netherlands) in winter 2005-2006, then in spring 2006 to the Dhondt Daenens Museum in Deurle (Belgium) and to the Dr Guislain Museum in Ghent (Belgium).

### **catalogue**

Arnulf Rainer and his collection of art brut  
Co-published by la maison rouge and Fage Editions, n°3 in the *privées* series. 272 illustrated pages in French and English with texts by Roger Cardinal, Franz Kaiser and Bernard Vouilloux, and an interview with Arnulf Rainer. €30.

### **related events**

Thursday September 15th, 2005 at 7pm: Bruno Decharme, filmmaker, prominent collector of art brut, and founder of abcd la galerie, will talk about his collection, the market and its evolution.

Thursday September 29th, 2005 at 7pm: la maison rouge welcomes Joelle Pijaudier, director of the Musée d'Art Moderne in Villeneuve d'Ascq which conserves the L'Aracine collection of art brut.



## Één

### Berlinde de Bruyckere

**Berlinde de Bruyckere** was born in 1964 in Ghent (Belgium) where she lives and works.

A strict religious upbringing and time spent early on in the family butcher's shop no doubt helped shape the emergence of an oeuvre in which the body is seen as the point where suffering and desire meet.

For her exhibition at la maison rouge, she has chosen to show sculptures from 1999 to 2004 which she groups under the title *Eén* ("One"). This "one" refers back to a mythical origin shared by all these works, "a cosmic universe in which man and beast were not yet separated... In which the sexes were not yet divided, where pedestals did not exist and things were spread or suspended somewhere..." (Barbara Baert, exhibition catalogue, published by Gli Ori, 2004).

For each of the works in *Aanéén* ("Together"), the artist has assembled two bodies, such as these two horses.

Berlinde de Bruyckere first used the theme of the horse in 2000 when Ieper Museum (Belgium) commissioned her for a piece about war.

The museum's archives turned up photographs of horses killed in the First World War, their corpses left lying in the streets of a devastated town. From these images she produced a first installation of five horses set on trestles.

In spite of its weight, *Aanéén* (2003/2004, di Gropello collection) seems to rise up while the horses' heavy manes hang down in an atmosphere of gentle melancholy. The hides are stitched together with no visible gaps, transforming these vast bodies into giant stuffed toys one longs to caress.

The sculptures and drawings of *Aanéén-genaaid* ("Sewn Together") comprise hybrid figures which the artist has created by assembling diverse elements.

In the drawings, horizontal pencil strokes are sketched in where two parts touch. In the sculptures, the colour and veins of the wax distinguish the assembled elements (*Aanéén-genaaid*, 2003/2004, La Gaia collection, Busca).

*Aanéén-genaaid* (2003/2004, Antoine de Galbert collection) clearly evokes the creation of Eve from Adam's rib. Set on a table, these two fused bodies together confront death.

The series of *Dekenvrouw* ("Blanket-women") are older works in which women's bodies huddle beneath blankets. Each one is named after its model, such as *V. Eeman*, 1999 (Mark Deweer collection, Otegem).

Threadbare blankets, steeped in history, memories and smells, are a recurrent material since 1994. Folded, laid across metal structures or in trees, they are a reference to the original home. Blankets are one of the first things given to refugees and the injured. They give shelter but can also suffocate; they provide warmth but can cut a person off from noise and others (*Wezen*, 2003, private collection, London).

Such duality is integral to each of Berlinde de Bruyckere's works.

In a single piece she succeeds in combining a perfect and classic portrayal of reality with modern deconstruction and the use of heterogeneous materials.

Over recent years, Berlinde de Bruyckere has looked to bring a masculine element to her chosen themes, such as the oneness or merging of two beings. The conjunction of a medieval crucifixion scene by the Master of Gūdböhm (1360) depicting the contorted figure of a robber on the cross, and present-day images showing the mutilated corpses of soldiers hanging under a bridge in Iraq led her to produce a series of sculptures and drawings. She called these *Jelle Luipaard* (2004/2005) after the model.

The violence conveyed in these two sculptures is attenuated by the choice of material - wax - and by the figures' frail and slender legs.

Berlinde de Bruyckere sculpts wax, stretches and deforms bodies, fuses them. She is interested only in bodies and the energy that emanates from them. This is why she has chosen to hide faces under blankets or a trailing mane, or to produce headless figures.

Pencil drawings and watercolours usually precede the sculptures. They are done on scrap paper, pages torn from old books. They have their own history (histories), exist independently and function as studies in series that complete the vision of the three-dimensional work.

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#### recent exhibition

Berlinde de Bruyckere's recent exhibitions at the MuHKA in Antwerp in 2001, the Venice Biennial in 2003, and at the Saatchi Gallery in London where she has her own room, have secured her international acclaim. She is now an important figure on the Flemish art scene, chosen by Harald Szeemann to take part in his exhibition "Visionary Belgium" which ran until May 2005 at the Centre for Fine Arts in Brussels.

She is represented by Continua (San Gimignano), Hauser & Wirth (Zurich and London) and Yvon Lambert (Paris).

#### Catalogue

To coincide with *Eén* at the De Pont Museum of Contemporary Art in Tilburg (Netherlands) and at la maison rouge, an illustrated catalogue is published by Gli Ori in Prato (Italy) with texts by Barbara Baert and Harald Szeemann.

French, 138 pages, €50.



## le méta jardin

Gerda Steiner and Jörg Lenzlinger

Swiss artists **Gerda Steiner** and **Jörg Lenzlinger** are behind the first in a series of installations, each one purpose-made for the patio at la maison rouge.

*Le méta jardin*, truly a work in progress, is made from natural and artificial plants, crystals, and miscellaneous objects gleaned by the artists on their numerous world travels, or specially sourced in Paris.

Visitors are invited to stroll around this recreated biodiversity which, over the duration of the exhibition, will slowly take over the patio.

Sensitive to modern-day environmental issues, like sorcerer's apprentices these artist-gardeners propose a futuristic and hybrid landscape. Theirs is a poetic vision, tinged with cynicism and a large dose of humour.

For la maison rouge, Gerda Steiner and Jörg Lenzlinger have designed a garden around the gravel and sand already in place. With its glass walls, the patio becomes a vivarium for the foundation's visitors.

meta garden has all the features of a traditional garden - grotto, fountain, pond, wooden bench – interpreted very much in the artists' own way. There are plenty of Swiss surprises lurking in this jardin à la française which visitors should take time to unearth.

### a short biography

Born in 1967 in Esttswil and in 1964 in Uster respectively, Gerda Steiner and Jörg Lenzlinger both live and work in Uster (Switzerland). They are represented by Nicola Fornello in Prato and Turin, and by Stampa in Basel. They have worked together since 1997.

**2003** *¿Como llego la morsa a Madrid?*, La Casa Encendida, Madrid

*Giardino calante*, Chiesa San Stae, Venice Biennial

*Wucher*, Kunsthaus Aaran

*Schönheitsfehler + Goldgruben*, St Gall

**2004** *Whale Balance*, Watari-um, Tokyo

*Les Envahisseurs*, conservatory and botanical gardens of the Science History Museum, Geneva

*Wurzelbehandlung*, Tel Aviv Museum of Art

*Brainforest*, 21st Century Museum, Kanazawa

*La Fuente de la Juventud*, La Cartuja, Seville Biennial

## practical informations



### getting there

**metro stations:** Quai de la Rapée (line 5) or Bastille (lines 1, 5 or 8)

**RER station:** Gare de Lyon

**bus n° 20, 29 or 91**

### accessibility

the exhibition areas are accessible to disabled visitors and people with restricted mobility.

### opening days and times

Wednesday to Sunday 11am to 7pm

late-night Thursday until 9pm

closed December 25th, January 1st and May 1<sup>st</sup>

### admission

**full price:** €6.50

**concessions:** €4.50 (13-18 years, students, full-time artists, and over-60s).

**free:** under-13s, the unemployed, companions of disabled visitors, members of ICOM and *les Amis de la maison rouge*.

### annual pass

**full price:** €22

**concessions:** €14

free and unlimited admission to the exhibitions.

free or reduced rate admission to related events.