

BIOGRAPHIES
ENGLISH

ART BRUT IN SWITZERLAND
FROM THE ORIGINS OF THE
COLLECTION TO THE PRESENT

COLLECTION
DE L'ART BRUT
LAUSANNE



ANS
YEARS

ART BRUT IN SWITZERLAND FROM THE ORIGINS OF THE COLLECTION TO THE PRESENT

The Collection de l'Art Brut marks its 50th anniversary in February 2026. But the concept of Art Brut dates back to the mid-20th century, when Jean Dubuffet (1901–1985), a successful artist in his own right, developed an avid interest in works produced outside the confines of conventional art circles.

Dubuffet – the first true theorist of Art Brut – coined the term in the summer of 1945, when he visited psychiatric hospitals, prisons and collections of ethnographic and other art in Switzerland in search of works of interest. The doctors, artists and museum directors he met during this trip would be instrumental in helping Dubuffet build his then-nascent collection and develop the concept and its core principles, which he refined through his subsequent reflections and discoveries – first in Switzerland, and later in France and elsewhere.

Switzerland thus played a key role in the emergence of a new genre that challenged prevailing categories and definitions and helped draw attention to the work of self-taught outsider artists.

The 50th anniversary exhibition *Art Brut in Switzerland: From the Origins of the Collection to the Present* and the accompanying publication bring together contributions from numerous artists and authors to explore Dubuffet's close and enduring ties with Switzerland – a relationship that led him to donate his collection to the City of Lausanne in 1971 for long-term preservation and public display.

The show features a selection of drawings, paintings, sculptures, embroideries, writings and assemblages from the Collection de l'Art Brut's holdings. Some of these more than 300 pieces come from Dubuffet's original collection, which he began building up in 1945, while others are more recent acquisitions added in the half-century since the museum opened in 1976.

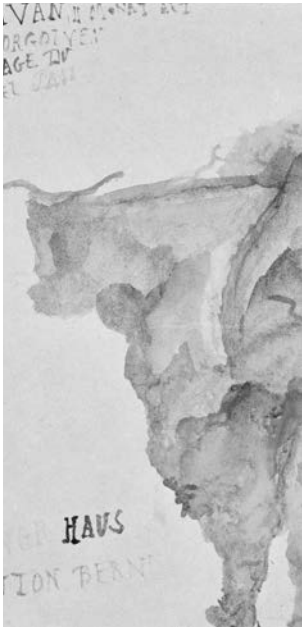
While the works on display reflect the distinctive forms of expression adopted by these self-taught creators – none of whom were destined to become artists – the landscapes and buildings they depict are unmistakably Swiss. Other clues as to the nationality of the artists behind these pieces include mountains, trains and cows – animals that Dubuffet himself portrayed, and indeed glorified, in his early paintings. In this sense, the selected exhibits are the very embodiment of Art Brut: a norm-subverting form of creative freedom championed by Dubuffet as a counterpoint to established art.

Curated by Sarah Lombardi, director of the Collection de l'Art Brut

ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER



Information concerning **GOTTFRIED AESCHLIMANN** (1858-1930) is scarce. A factory worker and husband, he was committed to Waldau psychiatric asylum* in 1908, where he remained until his death in 1930. The two drawings attributed to him are executed in graphite. They depict scenes from everyday life, whether rural – two shepherds with their goats, a flower in their mouths – or bourgeois – figures in formal dress, with pocket watches and hats. Jean Dubuffet discovered the drawings during his visit to Waldau cantonal asylum* in 1945.



ANONYMOUS (early 20th century). We have almost no information about this artist. The work attributed to him or her was created at Waldau psychiatric asylum*, visited by Jean Dubuffet with Jean Paulhan in July 1945. He returned from this visit with several other creations which remain unattributed to this day.

The drawing attributed to Alfred Mäder shows a powerful ox that stands out on the paper due to a series of brown ink blotches. The inscriptions – ‘Haus Kanton Bern’ and ‘juillet 1921’ – offer clues to the catalyst of the drawing’s execution, which may have been linked to a memory.

The asterisk refers to an index of hospitals and asylums listed at the end of this booklet.*



Born in Vevey (Switzerland), **ALEXANDRE BACHELARD** (1888-1951) was brought up in Geneva. His mother owned a biscuit factory and taught him the trade of confectioner and biscuit maker. He then improved his skills in internships in Switzerland and France. He married in 1911 and the couple had a son. He was called up during World War I and got divorced on his return. During the 1920s, he set up a new biscuit business with his brother but, following a dispute, they were compelled to sell it. Bachelard then lived in great poverty before being admitted to Cery psychiatric asylum* near Lausanne in 1931. He had several short stays there, but was able to resume his work as a biscuit maker with his brother, and never stopped inventing new recipes.

Executed using graphite, coloured pencil, or oil on paper, Bachelard's compositions were based on postcards and newspaper images, which he enlarged using a stencil system. His subjects – in particular, celebrity portraits, castles, and aeronautical events – offer a reflection of the news and popular culture of the 1930s and 1940s. Bachelard gave his drawings to the doctors and patients in the asylum in exchange for packets of cigarettes.

Collection Neuve Invention



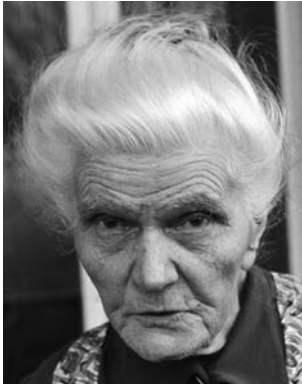
JULIE BAR. (1868-1930) was born in Geneva (Switzerland). Suffering from epileptic fits and a mental disability, she was unable to attend school and was placed in a specialised institution when still very young. In 1916, aged forty-eight, she was committed to Bel-Air asylum*, where she spent the rest of her life. She never worked and her only known activity was drawing, to which she dedicated herself assiduously. She took great pride in her creations and enjoyed receiving compliments, happily showing her drawings to the medical staff.

Bar. drew with confidence using a graphite pencil that she sometimes enhanced with coloured pencils. Her works often include floral elements, animals, and figures in everyday scenes. She also depicted vehicles and houses devoid of their interior, showing only their outlines. She drew compulsively, filling entire notebooks and even decorating their covers.



BENJAMIN BONJOUR (1917-2000) was born in the municipality of Bex (Switzerland). One of five siblings, his father worked for farming families and later in the Bex salt mines. In 1925, at the age of eight, he suffered several bouts of high fever, probably caused by untreated meningitis, which left him with left him with lasting effects on his mental state. Unable to live independently, his elder brother took him into his care but he was killed shortly afterwards in a road accident. From that time on, Bonjour shared a flat with his two younger sisters. Later on, he became a pedlar, visiting neighbouring villages to sell everyday items to the countrywomen. When he was about sixty, Bonjour ceased his peddling and then spent all his time walking, singing, and drawing.

His graphic output was prolific. His preferred subjects were trees, mountains, and flowers, and his compositions were always very dense and colourful. Other elements were animals, churches, and houses that he observed during his walks. Turning away from naturalistic representation, he would repeat certain motifs in bright colours, often arranged in closely set lines.



ALOÏSE CORBAZ (1886-1964), called Aloïse, was born in Lausanne (Switzerland). Though she dreamed of becoming an opera singer, after completing her secondary education the young woman worked as a dressmaker. Following a romantic disappointment, she was sent abroad and held several positions as a governess in Prussia, notably in Potsdam at the court of Wilhelm II. While there, she developed an intense attachment to the emperor and lived out an imaginary romantic passion, but the outbreak of World War I obliged her to leave the country. On her return to Switzerland, Aloïse expressed religious, pacifist, and humanitarian attitudes with such zeal that her family had her committed to Cery psychiatric asylum* in 1918.

Aloïse began to write and draw in secret shortly after entering the hospital. She drew on envelopes, pieces of cardboard, or sheets of wrapping paper that she collected and stitched together with thread to create large formats. Her materials included graphite pencil, coloured pencils, and gouache, and sometimes even the juice of flower petals, crushed leaves, and toothpaste. Aloïse created a personal cosmogony populated by historical princely figures and mythical heroines with blue, pupil-less eyes.

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GASPARD CORPATAUX (1838-1917) was born in Fribourg (Switzerland). A lawyer by profession, at the age of forty-four he was committed to Marsens hospice (which later was transformed into Marsens cantonal psychiatric hospital as a result of 'indecent assaults').

Between 1903 and 1916, he wrote numerous letters to the hospice's medical director, members of the Fribourg Council of State, and federal councillors. Composed during the last period of his life, they repeatedly pleaded for his release from the hospital, but his requests were never met with success. Rarely making use of capital letters, his letters are distinguished by the pliancy of their structure; they were composed with a pen and India ink on paper from school exercise books or squared administrative paper, sometimes red or green. Occasionally written on both the front and back of the sheet, his letters are written in meticulous handwriting, similar to calligraphy. He drew attention to words he considered important by underlining them either once or twice. Unable to regain his freedom, Corpataux liberated his voice from confinement through his inventive presentation of language.



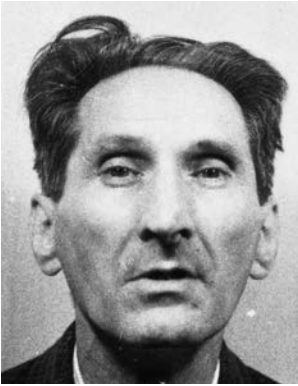
DIEGO DE MAURI (1963) was born in Lausanne (Switzerland). When just a few days old, he suffered a cardiac arrest, which had lasting consequences. He went to nursery school, after which his parents chose to have him educated in a specialised institution. At the age of eighteen, he joined a vocational integration programme in plasterwork for which he left the family home and moved to the canton of Valais for the three years of training. In the evenings, he would draw as a means to escape what he found a difficult environment. He only told his parents about this painful period on his return home. He then asked them to provide him with pens and paper. After a stay in the mountains, he developed a passion for chalets, which became his favourite subject.

De Mauri creates his works following a two-stage procedure: using a ruler, he meticulously traces out a preparatory sketch that he then goes over with a black felt pen. He then fills in the white spaces with coloured felt pens. Each drawing is unique but is inspired by previous drawings of which he makes multiple variations. They feature different themes – swimming pools, construction sites, shops – but they are systematically accompanied by a central motif representing a building in the form of a chalet or tower.



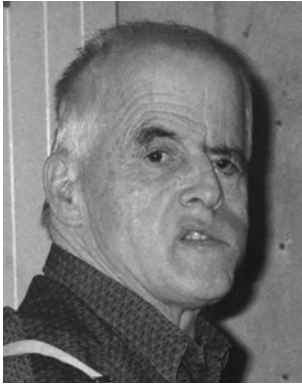
Born in Payerne (Switzerland), **JULES DOUDIN** (1884-1946) was one of ten children. His life was marked by the death of his father, a shoemaker, when he was eleven years old. The young boy left school early to support himself and was successively employed as a farmhand, a labourer, and a railway worker. He began to drink heavily following a romantic disappointment when he was twenty-three. He was subsequently committed to Cery psychiatric asylum* near Lausanne. He ran away after just a few days but was re-admitted a year later. In 1927, having been hospitalised for over twenty years, he started to make drawings, which he continued over a period of several months with great dedication before stopping entirely, then resuming intermittently over the course of ten years.

Doudin sometimes stitched his drawings together with thread, creating improvised booklets with irregular pages. Executed in graphite pencil on light brown wrapping paper originally intended for making paper bags, his works were inspired by everyday scenes of country life (animals, self-portraits), Swiss legends (for example, William Tell and his son), or fantastical bestiaries.



SAMUEL FAILLOUBAZ (1903-1975) was born into a working-class family in Vevey (Switzerland). After receiving a basic education, the young man worked as a labourer and later as a pedlar. In 1934, he was hospitalised for the first of several times in a psychiatric institution. In 1966, he was placed in a care home for the elderly in Glion, in the canton of Vaud. Throughout these years, he continued to produce artworks, which he sold door-to-door in his local neighbourhood, together with other articles, such as postcards, toothpaste, and caramel sweets. Each week, he also sent envelopes containing several of his works to friends and acquaintances. In this way, between 1968 and 1975, he distributed more than thirteen thousand drawings.

Samuel Failloubaz began drawing around 1940, initially on scraps of paper or cardboard he recuperated, then on handkerchiefs, pillowcases, and pieces of fabric cut from clothing. Using graphite and coloured pencils, ballpoint pens, and felt-tip pens, he created a wide range of motifs, such as houses, boats, animals, and flowers. His compositions systematically feature a frame and subtle, colourful variations on recurring themes.



Originally from Ticino, **PIERRE GARBANI** (1926-2001), called 'Pierrot', was born in Fribourg (Switzerland). Deaf and mute, he learned to read and write at a specialised institute in Fribourg. Affected by a mild learning disability, he was unable to live independently, thus, in 1946 at the age of twenty, he was admitted to the Maison Saint-Joseph in Châtel-Saint-Denis, a hospice founded by nuns in the nineteenth century, where elderly people and children lived together. From a young age, he was fascinated by the lives of saints and dreamed of being buried directly in the earth upon his death, like a Cistercian.

It was only in 1990 that Garbani began to paint with conviction, and in all made some two hundred paintings in gouache and watercolour. He worked in the workshop attached to the Maison Saint-Joseph, that had been built in 1986. Some of his compositions he painted outdoors, facing the mouth of the Rhone. He painted instinctually, making the colours resonate with the help of a brush, and focused on movement in his paintings of abstract nature.



FRANCESCA GHION (1959) was born in Venice (Italy). In 1962, aged three, she was placed in the Association St-Christophe (today called La Branche), an institution in the canton of Vaud dedicated to accommodating children with developmental disorders, where she still lives. Impish by nature, she enjoyed working with others on daily tasks, which she carried out with great care. Concerned with her appearance, she chose her clothes with care, resulting in a personal elegance. She also showed an early interest in drawing, as well as being fond of music and traditional dances, which have become part of her daily life and bring her real happiness.

For Ghion, drawing offers a way to express her inner self. Colourful and bursting with energy, her works are created using oil pastels. They depict variations on the same themes, mainly landscapes featuring rows of houses, trees, or flowers, in juxtaposing colours of matching tones. A violet, black, or red sun is seen in every composition, like a treble clef on a musical score.



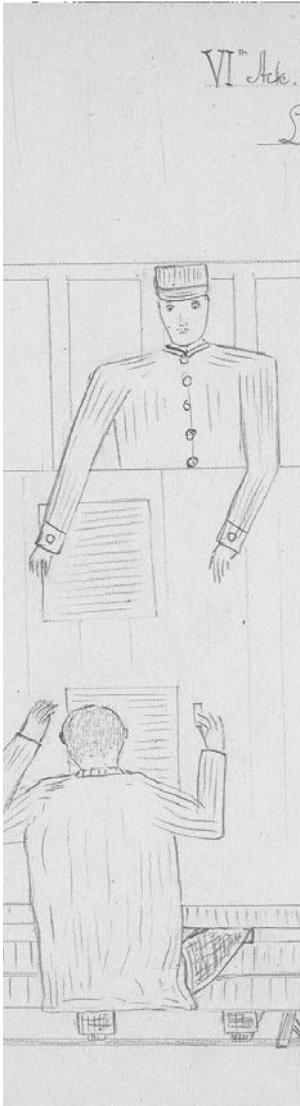
JOSEPH GIAVARINI (1877-1934), nicknamed the Prisoner of Basel, was born near Parma (Italy). As a child he lived with his widowed mother, who worked in a spinning mill. Since he received no schooling, he did not learn to read or write. As a teenager, he went to France and then Germany, where he trained to work as a builder and then as a foreman. In 1907, married with eight children, he settled in Basel (Switzerland) with his family. In association with his sons, Giavarini soon built up a prosperous construction company, but his life was turned upside-down in 1927 when he murdered his mistress. He was sentenced to six years in prison following a short stay in a psychiatric hospital.

Seized by remorse, during his hospitalisation he created two miniature coffins, one of which contained a sculpture of his dead mistress. While in prison – in both his cell and the carpentry workshop – he sculpted figures using breadcrumbs, clay, or plaster, which he painted and varnished with hard glue. His family, who visited him regularly, supplied him with the necessary materials. He ceased talking about the meaning of his works and kept the identity of other figurines he made, using the same technique, a secret.



ROBERT GIE. (1869-?) was born in Messen in the canton of Solothurn (Switzerland). He was married but probably had no children. Working as a carpenter, he alternated periods of work with drifting, during which he took to drink. In 1908, when he was living in Bern, he was found in a disturbing state. He was committed to Rosegg psychiatric asylum in the canton of Solothurn when he was thirty-nine years old. He suffered from ideas of persecution and physical hallucinations in which he felt currents passing through him and then emanating from his body. After fourteen years at Rosegg his condition improved; in 1922 he left at the age of fifty-three.

In 1916, Gie. began to draw on scraps of paper and on walls. He used graphite pencil that he sometimes touched up with colour. He hid his drawings during visits from the medical staff. He drew silhouettes of men, often nude. Oscillating and undulating lines, resembling fluids or electrical currents, run through the limbs of the figures, connecting them to one another; these were probably associated with the physical hallucinations he suffered.



To this day, we have very little information about **LOUIS HENRI GROGNUZ** (1875-1952).

Treated at Cery psychiatric asylum* near Lausanne from 1913 onwards, he only left the institution when he was transferred to La Rosière asylum in Gimel-sur-Morges, which cared for chronic patients, one year before his death.

Grognuz wrote texts and letters in ink, which he addressed to Swiss political organisations, the Swiss Federal Assembly, and various historical figures, such as 'Princess Mary of Lancaster', an English baroness from the fourteenth century. He also wrote invitations to the canton of Vaud's Grand Council, in which he invited deputies to attend lectures on various subjects that he proposed to give. A notebook reveals another facet of his work: Grognuz also made meticulously executed drawings in graphite pencil, depicting landscapes, cadastral maps, military charts supplemented by combat vehicles, and scenes of collective life involving soldiers. His compositions are often accompanied by descriptive texts, sometimes resembling scripts for war films.



JOSEPH HEUER (1827-1914) was born in Geneva (Switzerland) to a German immigrant and a Swiss mother. Trained as a cabinetmaker, he also worked as a bookbinder, a machine regulator, and a clerk, and enjoyed walking through fields and forests. He joined the Swiss army in 1848 and was promoted to sergeant two years later. When aged thirty-four, he was committed to Vernets asylum* in the canton of Geneva. While living there, he considered himself the owner of the place and lived in solitude in a barn containing a rudimentary carpentry workshop, which he shared with animals. In 1900, he was transferred to Bel-Air asylum*, a move he continually contested while also demanding his release.

Although mention was first made of his artistic compositions in 1897, it was only following his transfer to Bel-Air that his works really attracted notice. Heuer wrote and drew with either a pen or graphite or coloured pencil. His fine, precise handwriting features dates and his words are punctuated by the letter 'H' at regular intervals. He also made drawings of ordinary life on themes featuring soldiers, history, or politics, and also created maps and plans.



The only information we have on the life of **ALFRED JACCARD** (19th-20th century) is that he had trained as an engraver and became a patient at Cery psychiatric asylum*, where the director – Professor Hans Steck – took an interest in his works.

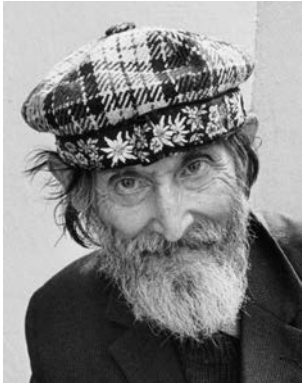
Jaccard made his drawings in graphite pencil on sheets of used paper and in notebooks. His production reveals a certain technical ability, particularly in his use of perspective and grey shading achieved through hatching, as well as in certain somewhat conventional compositions. His subjects included popular themes such as portraits and hat designs, and naturalistic ones like flowers, animals, and mountain landscapes. Some include elements of social and political critique.

Collection Neuve Invention



ANNE-LISE JEANNERET (1950-2017) was born into a rural family in La Sagne (Switzerland), in the canton of Neuchâtel. Suffering from trisomy, she was raised in her place of birth and very early on devoted herself to creative activities, which she continued until 2015. In 2001, following the death of her mother, she was taken in by the Fondation Les Perce-Neige, a centre near Neuchâtel, where she had been a visitor since 1968.

Jeanneret's compositions are distinguished by exuberant colour and great intensity. They all have a similar structure, being based on sketches – filled with writings – that border on abstraction and explode with a combination of powerful colour variations and the energy of her physical involvement. She worked in successive layers: she would sometimes draw figures, animals, houses, or boats – as a form of tribute to Lake Neuchâtel, to which she was very attached – and then cover them with a multitude of lines. Her materials were oil pastels and coloured pencils on paper, which she placed on an easel. In this way, she addressed her support not simply as a sheet of paper, but as a canvas onto which she could project her world, though with a tendency towards abstraction.



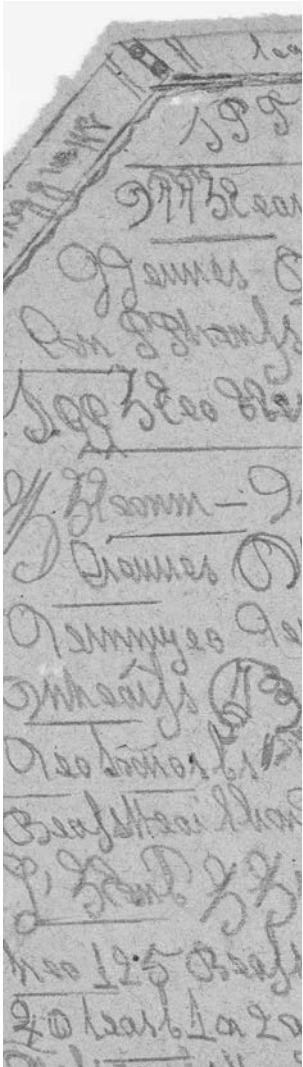
HANS KRÜSI (1920-1995) was born in the canton of Appenzell (Switzerland). When he was two, his mother had him adopted by a farmer and his wife. Eight years later, he was abandoned again and placed in an orphanage. He later worked as a farm labourer and then a forestry worker, though his wish was to become a gardener. He moved from one precarious job to another until, having never found a permanent post, he became self-employed and sold flowers in different Swiss cities. In 1947, he settled in St. Gallen. Each day, he went to Zurich to sell bouquets on the grand Bahnhofstrasse. Around the age of fifty-five, he began selling small paintings he made on pieces of paper or cardboard.

Krüsi drew on his childhood memories to create the rural motifs that are characteristic of his entire output: pastoral landscapes, shepherds, farm animals, and mountain pastures. He often divided his compositions into squares like a chessboard. Given his limited means, he made use of all sorts of improvised materials, such as paper napkins, cardboard, wooden panels, and milk cartons.



MADELEINE LANZ (1936-2014) – baptised Magdalena – was born in Geneva (Switzerland). For this psychically fragile child, school years were difficult; frequently punished, she struggled to blossom and found solace in drawing. She devoted several hours a day to it, both at school and at home. As a young adult, after recently completing training to become a seamstress, she was deeply distressed by the death of her brother, which was followed shortly afterwards by a disappointment in love. Hospitalised for depression, she was diagnosed with schizophrenia and obliged to give up work. In 2003, she transferred to a care home for the elderly, where the workshops available allowed her to take up drawing once again.

Completely self-taught, Lanz drew with spontaneity and enthusiasm. Following a period she spent in hospital in 2008, she made a series of works that reveal her exuberance at her newfound freedom. She drew on paper provided by her sister or the institution. Her colourful and original floral and geometric compositions were created using coloured pencils, oil pastels, graphite pencil, and gouache.



JEAN MARCHAND (1840-1911) was born in Carouge, in the canton of Geneva (Switzerland). The youngest son in his family, he worked as a spring maker and a cooper. At the age of twenty-three, he married and became a father, but a year later was imprisoned for 'scandal'. On his release in 1868, he was transferred to the Vernets asylum*. From this time on, he withdrew into himself, living disconnected from those around him and the world, concerned only with his creations.

His production consists mainly of contrived but indecipherable writings in graphite pencil, into which he inserted superfluous letters in decorative script. His texts are often written on tiny torn scraps of paper, which he stored together in envelopes he made himself. He also drew figures, houses, faces in profile, and elements resembling insignia. In addition, Marchand made small objects from folded paper, leaves, or bits of cotton that he sewed or stitched with thread, in which he hid chewed breadcrumbs. Mention was first made of his bound works in 1905.



ANGELO MEANI (1906-1977)) was born in Milan (Italy) into a family of eight children. His parents owned a small marble workshop and practised sculpture. As a young man, Meani entered into the family trade and began to sculpt marble. Later, he took up an apprenticeship to become a chiseller in a foundry, then studied to become a sculptor at the Accademia di Brera in Milan. Feeling rather cramped by this academic and serious working environment, he started collecting broken pieces of crockery and all kinds of everyday objects that he assembled to make comical masks. In 1943, he left the family business and fled to Switzerland to avoid being called up for Italy's armed forces in World War II. There he was employed for a while as a labourer and gardener, before starting to live on the fringe of society in the vicinity of Lausanne.

From this moment, Meani dedicated his time exclusively to being creative. He collected batches of broken crockery that the large stores offered him to make colourful masks. Chamber pots looking like hats, brush bristles to make a moustache, glass marbles for eyes, Meani repurposed objects to fit into his marvellously inventive and personal world.



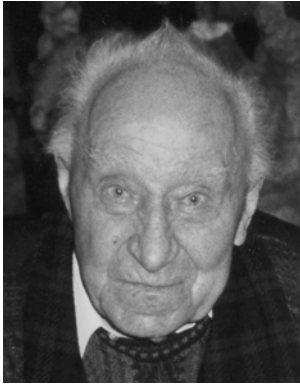
Born near Rolle, in the canton of Vaud (Switzerland), **BERTHA ÉLISA MOREL** (1891-1968) was the youngest daughter in a family of nine children, two of whom died in infancy. After attending primary school in Geneva, she worked in an office as a bookkeeper. She left this job to become an actress, then moved abroad and lived in Alexandria (Egypt) from 1916 to 1922. Ill, she was repatriated in 1922 and admitted that same year to Cery psychiatric asylum*.

From then on, she busied herself with a prolific creative activity: she wrote, drew, and embroidered on a wide range of materials, such as food wrappers and fabric offcuts which she recycled. In both her drawings and her embroideries, Morel created delicate geometric and abstract patterns which she paired with female portraits seen frontally and in profile. She also used graphite pencil to sketch her motifs directly onto fabric she was preparing to embroider. She used red and white sewing thread, often on small, irregularly shaped pieces of cloth. She also wrote plays and poetry.



MARC MORET (1943-2021) was born on a farm in Vuadens, in the canton of Fribourg (Switzerland). A farmer like his parents and grandparents, he never left the family property. A vegetarian who refused to kill animals, he looked after his heifers with great care and lived surrounded by his many cats.

After a period devoted to writing, he began to paint works with brightly coloured abstract patterns and distorted faces and bodies. He later devoted himself primarily to creating 3D collages made using bones, human hair that he obtained from the village hairdresser, and objects that had belonged to members of his family, such as pieces of fabric and buttons from his late mother, and parts of his grandfather's bed. Moret only used items that had already served a purpose, that corresponded – for him – to an emotion or moment, and which he looked on as being in some way commemorative. Unconcerned by the notion of beauty, he assembled these different elements on wooden supports using glue he made himself. These towering constructions are stored in a room on the first floor of the farmhouse, where he lived alone following the deaths of his loved ones.



JAKOB MORF (1922-2002) was born in Nürensdorf, in the canton of Zurich (Switzerland). He probably never knew his parents, as his mother died shortly after he was born and his father was unable to care for him. The child was placed with relatives and received only limited schooling. When he was sixteen, he was sent to work as a farm labourer for different farmers. Following an accident at work in 1980, he was taken into a care home for the elderly in the canton of Zurich, where he began to create spontaneous, self-taught art. During the day, he helped with various tasks on the farm attached to the institution, then, in the evenings, he devoted his time to making his drawings, sometimes working on them late into the night.

For thirteen years, Morf created a vast number of compositions on pads of lined or squared paper, using every sheet. Employing a symmetrical construction, he used coloured pencils to draw different motifs that he arranged side by side in organised rows. These included flowers, vegetables, suns, musical instruments, games of dice, clocks and watches that show the time he got up in the morning.



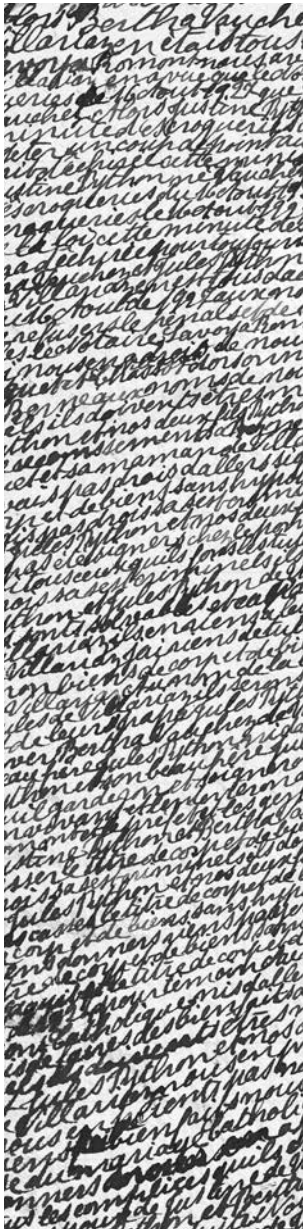
The son of a Swiss-born single mother, Henri Antoine Müller (1869-1930), known as **HEINRICH ANTON MÜLLER**, was born in Versailles (France). He married in 1894, and the couple soon had the first of their six children. Shortly before 1900, the family settled in Corsier-sur-Vevey, in the canton of Vaud (Switzerland). Müller worked in the vineyards and proved to be an ingenious handyman: he designed a 'machine for pruning vine plants for grafting', for which he was granted a patent by the Federal Office of Intellectual Property in 1903. Two years later, he failed to pay the annual renewal fee. As others began to exploit his invention, he fell into a state of deep despair. In 1906, he was admitted to the psychiatric asylum in Münsingen*, in German-speaking Switzerland, where he remained until his death.

In 1914, Müller started to build machines from branches, rags, and wire. To construct his animated sculptures, of which none survives today, he assembled wheels that engaged with one another in mobile frames of varying size. He also drew pictures of an imaginary bestiary and strange figures, primarily using graphite pencil and white chalk on recycled paper or cardboard.



VICTOR POCHON (1890-after 1956) was born in Moudon, in the canton of Vaud (Switzerland). An illegitimate child, he was the youngest of a family of six. A good pupil at school, he worked in a bookshop before beginning an apprenticeship as a baker. However, he did not complete it, having left for France at the age of eighteen with a friend, where he remained for four years. On his return to Switzerland in 1912, he completed his military service and was later mobilised during World War I, before being discharged on grounds of ill-health. He was subsequently employed on a number of farms as either a servant or a labourer. Admitted to Cery psychiatric asylum* at an unknown date, Pochon wrote long letters in careful handwriting, using graphite pencil on used paper.

Addressed to his doctors, state councillors, the French Consul, and the head of the Department of Justice, his prolific correspondence consists of requests to be transferred to France, his desire to learn a new trade, and an appeal to be tried for a crime he did not commit. He also made drawings of scenes featuring farm work and bust portraits framed by floral motifs, illustrating local tradesmen like 'the shopkeeper' or 'the newsagent'.



JUSTINE PYTHON (1879-?) was born in Villariaz in the canton of Fribourg (Switzerland), where she also lived with her husband, a farmer, their two children, and her sister. Feeling persecuted and surrounded by enemies, the family barricaded themselves in their home. Following accusations Justine Python and her sister made against various people and paranoid behaviour, they were placed under observation at the Marsens hospice (today Marsens cantonal psychiatric hospital) in 1932. Once in the institution, Justine Python switched from mutism to making constant complaints. After a stay of six months and improvement in her condition, she returned home.

During her internment, Justine Python wrote several letters, for the most part to the attorney general. These, and others she had already sent before her confinement, reveal the extent of her delusions of persecution and list the injustices of which she believed herself a victim. Her compact and graphically intense script covers both sides of the paper with such density that it is barely legible. The unbroken stream of words written with either pen or pencil is relieved by no paragraphs, leaves no empty space, and frequently joins words together, suggesting a flood of censure.



Jovan Radović, called **JEAN RADÓVIC** (1913-1991), was born in Gajtan, a small village in what was then the Kingdom of Serbia. Born into a family of nine children, he lost his father very early on when the latter died in a brawl between neighbours. Schooled between the ages of ten and fourteen, the young boy worked as a shepherd before joining the army at twenty-four. In 1941, during World War II, he was taken prisoner in Italy. After being held in various camps, he managed to escape and sought refuge in Switzerland in 1943. A year later, displaying aggressive behaviour and suffering from hallucinations, he was admitted to Cery psychiatric asylum* near Lausanne. He was repatriated to his country of origin – which had become part of Yugoslavia – in 1948.

Created between 1944 and 1947, Radović's drawings were made with graphite and coloured pencil on scraps of paper, which he sometimes cut into the shapes of the subject represented. These dynamic and colourful drawings feature such figures as men in uniform, women in festival costume, musicians, and scenes of daily life. He sometimes signed his drawings 'travail [work] Jean Radović' and added a few words on the theme.



MARTIAL RICHOSZ (1962-2024) was born in Lausanne (Switzerland), where he was raised by his grandmother. From an early age, he was fascinated by the trolleybuses that circulated throughout the city and liked to imitate them. As an adult, he was declared unfit to have a driving licence, and was thus denied his greatest wish: to become a trolleybus driver. Consequently, he invented his own bus company for which he performed all the roles himself: director, passenger, driver, etc. Every day, he walked through the streets of Lausanne wearing the local public transport uniform, at the wheel of carts he built to represent the trolleybuses. Following a route of his own invention, he made the sounds of the trolleybus and of the interactions with its passengers. He didn't work, instead organising his entire life around this obsession, the eccentricity of which he was fully aware.

Richoz made his trolleybuses from materials he salvaged, which he built around the frame of a hand trolley fitted with small wheels. To this he added rods to simulate the connectors to the overhead lines, plus mirrors and a protective screen, clearly demonstrating his concern for detail. He also drew the routes of his imaginary transport network in ballpoint and felt-tip pens on paper, creating a surprisingly complex and logical graphic work.



GASTON SAVOY (1923-2004) was originally from Attalens, in the canton of Fribourg (Switzerland). As a child, he received specialised education at an institution for the deaf and dumb in Fribourg, although he was only partially deaf and had a slight intellectual disability. He grew up on farms, sleeping alongside the animals in the stables. Gaston Savoy began to draw using felt-tip pens on pieces of wood or cardboard. Few of his early drawings have been preserved. In 1988, at the age of sixty-five, he was admitted to the Maison Saint-Joseph in Châtel-Saint-Denis, where he continued his creative work, of which he produced some two hundred examples.

For the most part, Gaston Savoy drew series of repeated animal motifs – such as cows and sheep – in which he recreated the theme of the poya, a traditional artistic genre from the canton of Fribourg that depicts the springtime journey of cows up to the alpine pastures. His compositions are marked by an obsessive succession of identical motifs in different forms that he drew on envelopes, pieces of cardboard, and sheets of paper.



LOUIS SOUTTER (1871-1942) was born in Morges, in the canton of Vaud (Switzerland). A brilliant student, the young man began to study to be an engineer but soon dreamed instead of becoming a painter or a musician. He started taking drawing and painting classes in several Parisian studios, then moved to Brussels. It was while he was there that he met his future wife, an American violinist. The couple moved to the United States in 1897. The following year, Soutter, who had become a painting teacher, was appointed head of the fine arts department at Colorado College, but, confronted by marital problems in 1903, he decided to give up life in the USA and returned to Switzerland. Suffering from physical and psychological problems, he lived an itinerant life, which led, in 1923, to his premature admittance to a home for the elderly in Ballaigues, in the Jura vaudois.

In order to escape the sadness of his environment, Soutter took refuge in music and drawing, and the social and psychological rupture with his past life found expression in his graphic output. In his painted work, he made a complete break with the academic language of his youth and, using whatever materials available to him, he developed a new, personal, and poignant body of work. He used his fingers to paint compositions in gouache and oils, or in Indian ink on paper or in school exercise books.

Collection Neuve Invention



GASTON TEUSCHER (1903-1986) was born in Montherod, near Aubonne (Switzerland). His mother, to whom he was very close, worked as a midwife, and his father was employed on farms. Gaston Teuscher was unruly and impulsive but was gifted with a certain facility for learning at school. After an initial job working in a glassworks, he assisted his father in cattle-breeding and then travelled to different European countries. On his return to Switzerland, he turned to teaching and graduated from a teacher-training course in 1925.

In 1974, aged seventy-one, Gaston Teuscher began to draw. Describing the activity as entirely impulsive, he produced small compositions of remarkable expression on silver or gold paper he retrieved from cigarette packets or restaurant tablecloths. He incorporated the stains and tears on these support materials, sketching faces and silhouettes in graphite pencil or ballpoint pen, which he highlighted using coffee grounds, tobacco juice, ash, or wine. Teuscher felt that what he was drawing already existed and that he was merely revealing it.



JOHANN TRÖSCH (1924-1984) was born in Zurich (Switzerland). From birth he suffered from a serious malformation of his spine that caused paralysis from his hips to his feet. The young boy never went to school and received no training, but he nevertheless learned to read and write. Apart from short outings in a wheelchair, he was confined to bed, where he spent his time writing and drawing on the pages of notebooks. A folding writing desk allowed him to work in bed. Using both sides of his sheets of paper, he expressed his daily life, thoughts, and all the knowledge he acquired from books of popularised information.

He used small sheets of squared paper and graphite pencil, which he highlighted with coloured pencils. Using fine and precise lines, he drew tiny details that can be identified by subtle formal metamorphoses: machine parts, vehicles, military equipment, boats and aeroplanes, plus pictograms, typographic characters, trees, flowers, and animals. Johann Trösch produced several thousand compositions, keeping them hidden during his lifetime, even from his family.



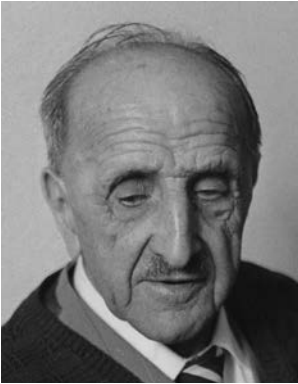
BERTHE URASCO (1898-1983) was born in Avully, in the canton of Geneva (Switzerland). She attended school until she was sixteen, then took piano and singing lessons, disciplines she enjoyed. At the age of thirty, she began to withdraw into herself and suffered from notions of persecution. These symptoms led to her being admitted to Bel-Air asylum* in the canton of Geneva in 1937, where she stayed for seven years. She was hospitalised there again for two months in 1961.

In 1939, she suddenly began to draw with passion, working hard throughout the day, using coloured pencils on used paper. She depicted different rural themes: landscapes with figures walking along roads, villages, and women wearing large hats. Curving forms drawn with thick black lines create a sense of movement. She drew with immediacy and confidence, without either preparing or revising her work. She regularly offered her creations to the medical staff, happily dedicating them on the back or trading them for drawing materials. However, she was unwilling to explain the meaning of her compositions.



PASCAL VONLANTHEN (1957) grew up surrounded by seven brothers and sisters on the family farm in a village in the canton of Fribourg (Switzerland). His life revolved around the breeding of animals and the passing of the seasons. Affected by Fragile X syndrome, his verbal expression remained very limited. As a child, he was unable to learn to read but, from the time he became an adolescent, he showed a pronounced fondness for writing. He filled entire exercise books with calligraphic signs, and kept these books with him at all times. Pascal Vonlanthen went on to work as a concierge's assistant in Fribourg, at the FARA, a foundation that finds jobs and shelter for handicapped individuals. For two days a week, he has visited the art workshop of the CREAM since its opening in 1998.

Initially, Pascal Vonlanthen produced drawings depicting a bestiary of farm animals and imaginary creatures. Gradually, he began to include lettering, his range of colours narrowed, and his work took on a more graphic quality. From 2014 on, he fully developed these new elements in the form of 'writings'. Textual simulacra, his signs are presented like variations of a letter rendered in increasingly abstract calligraphy.



ALOIS WEY (1894-1985) was born in Murg, in the canton of St. Gallen (Switzerland). The eldest of seven children, he was raised by his grandmother who ran a crockery shop. When he was fourteen, he left school to work as a roofer with his father, then in a factory. During the years of economic crisis in the 1930s, he worked at a variety of jobs. He retired from work when he was seventy-seven and settled into a retirement home. When he was eighty, he decided to change his home and moved into a new one near St. Gallen. It was there that he took up drawing again, something he had practised as a child. He drew and painted diligently, sometimes for as much as ten hours a day, thereby avoiding the inactivity he saw amongst the home's other residents.

Wey drew imaginary palaces and churches that soar frontally in the foreground of his compositions. Richly decorated with carriage entrances and geometric motifs, his buildings are brightly coloured, heightened with gold and silver details, and sometimes placed on top of one another. The extravagance of his architectural designs contrasts with the realism and simplicity of the mountainous landscapes and small buildings visible in the background that suggest farms or houses.



CLEMENS WILD (1964) was born into a family of booksellers living in the city of Bern (Switzerland). Physically, he suffered the consequences of a difficult birth, in particular impaired vision and a developmental disorder. From his childhood, Clemens Wild had a love of drawing and invented stories. His first works took inspiration from the female models and photo-novels published in the teen magazine *Bravo*. In 1982, when he was eighteen, he became both a resident and apprentice at Humanushaus, an anthroposophical social institution near Bern, where he still lives today. Beginning in 2012, he practised his creative work at the Rohling studio, a collective that brings together artists with and without intellectual disabilities.

Clemens Wild first won recognition for himself with a series of drawings of women responsible for cleaning and maintenance work. Beside their portraits, he wrote fictional stories based on their personal accounts, texts that reflect the women's life stories and hopes. All his works express a deep attachment to people who, though essential to the smooth running of society, rarely receive public attention. He works mainly with gouache, felt-tip pens and graphite pencils on Kraft paper or various recycled materials.



ADOLF WÖLFLI (1864-1930) was born in Bowil, in the canton of Bern (Switzerland). When he was seven, his father – an alcoholic stonecutter – walked out on the family, and his mother died two years later. Left an orphan, the young boy was placed in a series of farming families for whom he worked as a goatherd and farmhand. His youth was marked by a series of failures, including a disappointment in love that deeply upset him. Shortly afterwards, he was arrested and imprisoned for an attempted sexual assault on two young girls, but, following his release, he repeated the offence. Diagnosed with schizophrenia, in 1895 he was committed to Waldau psychiatric asylum*, where he remained until his death.

In 1899, he began to draw, write, and compose music, working from morning till night. Wölfli produced an enormous body of work, comprising twenty-five thousand pages of intricate graphic compositions, collages, musical scores featuring an unorthodox six-line staff, and literary texts that he wrote on the backs of his drawings. He also wrote an illustrated fictional biography, for which he composed music, called *The Legend of Saint Adolf*, which told the life story of his imaginary alter ego.

***INDEX OF THE HOSPITALS AND ASYLUMS MENTIONED**

Bel-Air asylum (today Belle-Idée psychiatric hospital) has been operative since 1900. It is located in Thônex in the canton of Geneva. The hospital was directed from 1925 to 1938 by Charles Ladame, who collected artistic works created by the patients from 1918 onwards and opened a small museum in the hospital in 1926. In 1948, he donated several works from his collection to Jean Dubuffet. Other works were ceded to the Collection de l'Art Brut from the museum and from Charles Ladame's archive in 1976 and 1988.

The asylum for the mentally ill in Cery (today Cery psychiatric hospital) was opened in 1873. Located in Prilly, near Lausanne in the canton of Vaud, it is a university psychiatric hospital. It was directed by the psychiatrist Hans Steck between 1936 and 1960.

The asylum for the mentally ill in Münsingen was founded in 1895 in the canton of Bern, close to the Waldau asylum. The psychiatrist Walter Morgenthaler briefly worked there before being appointed head doctor at Waldau.

Vernets asylum was the first of its kind to be built in Switzerland. Operative between 1838 and 1900, it was located in Geneva. When it closed, its patients were transferred to Bel-Air asylum.

Waldau cantonal asylum for the mentally ill (today Bern University psychiatric hospital) was Switzerland's first psychiatric hospital. It was opened in the Swiss capital in 1885. Psychiatrist Walter Morgenthaler first worked there as a doctor's assistant from 1908 to 1910, then at the Institut Friedmatt in Basel from 1910 to 1912. He was appointed head doctor at Waldau in 1913, where he remained in post until 1920.

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