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Re-envisioning Outsider Art: An Inquiry into Hans Prinzhorn's Pioneering Research

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Abstract: This article considers whether re-focusing on Hans Prinzhorn's text "Artistry of the Mentally Ill" (1922) could improve the inconsistencies within the Outsider Art genre. This article is a historical analysis of Prinzhorn's research and discusses five reoccurring categories that emerge during the production of pictorial configuration. This study has two aims: to consider the relevance of Prinzhorn's research in categorizing and understanding reoccurring themes and styles that emerge spontaneously during the production of pictorial configuration, and to establish whether mental illness or marginalization is necessary for the authentic style promoted by the Outsider Art genre. This historical analysis is considered alongside analytical psychology with fine art examples from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Keywords: Prinzhorn, Carl Jung, Outsider Art, Visionary Art, Analytical Psychology, Art of the Mentally Ill, Art Criticism

Introduction

Jean Dubuffet (1901–1985) conceptualized the l'Art Brut movement during the 1940s. According to him, l'Art Brut represented a "raw" and "uncooked" depiction of the creative process untouched by culture and formal artistic training. Dubuffet's writings were characteristically anti-bourgeois and encouraged audiences to turn away from art institutions. He wrote, "art made by professional specialists, I find it uninteresting." Instead, "it is the production of art emanating from persons foreign to the specialised circle and elaborated by those shielded from any influence, in a completely spontaneous and immediate way, that interests me" (Dubuffet [1951] 2004, 259).

In 1948 he published a notice inviting individuals to share their unique and inspiring imagery with the *Compagnie de l'Art Brut*; a non-commercial art association established in Paris. This notice requested art that drew "upon the basic human experience and most spontaneous personal invention." It described, "we seek works in which the faculties of invention and creation that we believe to exist in every human being (at least at times) are manifested in a very immediate manner without masks and without constraints" (Maizels 2002, 11). Following Dubuffet, the term "Outsider Art" was coined in 1972 by the art critic Roger Cardinal (1940–2019). He defined it as an internationally recognized category of self-taught art, "which rests on the notion that art-making is a widespread human activity reaching far beyond the world of public galleries, teaching institutions and culturally marked art production" (Cardinal 2009, 1459). He wrote, "it refers confidently to an actual fund of original work produced by untutored creators of talent whose expressions convey a strong sense of individuality" (2009, 1459). Cardinal declared that the term was intended to reflect l'Art Brut exclusively but has since "led a life of its own and has been abused and used in a variety of ways, which have often compromised its usefulness as a technical term" (2009, 1459).

The contemporary art historian, Colin Rhodes defines Outsider Art as a "rich and varied group of creators who do not fit into the official category of the professional artist" (Rhodes 2000, 7). He describes how since the 1980s the term has been transformed by art dealers and critics who now use it to reference any blend of art that exists beyond the borders of the mainstream art market. This interpretation could involve any work created by a varied

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demographic, such as untrained artists, naïve art, art from the third world and developing nations, folk art and even children's drawings; Rhodes states:

> In recent years, the term outsider art has begun to be used extensively to describe a bewildering range of artistic activity situated outside, or in opposition to, mainstream concerns. While it is surely desirable to maintain flexibility, there is a danger of the term becoming all-inclusive and therefore, meaningless. (2000, 14)

Likewise, the scholar of folklore studies, Daniel Wojcik, describes the genre as "'raw art' that is created spontaneously and for entirely personal reasons" (2016, 3). He explains how this category was historically associated with individuals who had no formal artistic training and who existed outside of the dominant art world. For example, "psychiatric patients, visionaries and trance mediums, self-taught individuals, recluses, folk eccentrics, social misfits, and assorted others who are isolated or outcast from normative society, by choice or by circumstance" (2016, 3). However, Wojcik states that the term is problematic, with many promoters and scholars acknowledging inconsistencies within the genre. He writes, "those who condemn the idea of the outsider art genre argue that the term is dehumanising, ultimately reinforcing notions of 'artist as other'—and marking individuals as pathological or primitive in relation to normal people and culture" (2016, 22). Wojcik strongly suggests that Outsider Art is a classification that has been defined and imposed upon individuals by collectors, art critics, and dealers. He insists that artists labelled as "outsider," usually have little interest in defining their work in such terms.

In response to these inconsistencies, Wojcik suggests that the folklorist Michael Owen Jones's behavioral approach could offer a new perspective on the dehumanizing portrayals of non-cultural art (2008). This approach involves studying the lives of eccentric and creative individuals to gain a deeper understanding of the universality of the creative impulse (Jones and Georges 1995; Jones 1997). However, this article suggests that it could also be beneficial—when discussing art criticism—to concentrate on the reoccurring themes and artistic styles that emerge during the creative process, a topic explored in depth in Prinzhorn's *Artistry of the Mentally Ill* ([1922] 2019).

Method and Considerations

This article considers whether re-focusing on Prinzhorn's text could improve the inconsistencies within the Outsider Art genre. This article is a historical analysis of Prinzhorn's research and discusses five reoccurring categories that emerge during the production of pictorial configuration. This study has two aims: to consider the relevance of Prinzhorn's research in categorizing and understanding reoccurring themes and styles that emerge spontaneously during the production of pictorial configuration; and to establish whether mental illness or marginalization is necessary for the authentic style promoted by the Outsider Art genre.

The historical analysis of Prinzhorn's text is considered alongside analytical psychology[2] with fine art examples from the twentieth and twenty-first century—specifically from Outsider Art, Abstract Expressionism, Surrealism, Cubism, and Spiritual Art. This comparison aims to establish similarities between the genres. This selection contains famous examples of artworks that exist as an artist's attempt to depict their inwardly directed psychic processes instead of objects and experiences from the external world. It would be simple to presume that the selection of artists in this article is an example of "cherry picking." However, it is crucial to

[2] Analytical psychology is a term coined by the Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung. It explores theories of human personality and thought, which takes into consideration the individual unconscious and its relationship to the collective unconscious (Jung 1959).

consider Prinzhorn's research aim, which was to produce a basic or introductory psychology relevant to all forms of human expression. Therefore, it should be irrelevant which items were chosen; the relevance lies in the configuration type's reoccurrence in a wide selection of pictorial creations.

This research is rooted in an ontological outlook of hermeneutic aesthetics—a collection of different interpretative perspectives that directs us toward new views of art that extends beyond the confines of art theory (Davey 2002). This approach does not concern itself with theorizing art as an expression of the zeitgeist or as a symptom of sociopolitical representations. Instead, it views art as a psychological manifestation of shared cognitive and expressive frameworks that have evolved through time. This study begins with the following hermeneutic considerations: art is a transformation of the real; the enigmatic quality of the artwork is what is of value about the art; and the understanding of the artwork reaches beyond the artist's expressed intentions.

Psychiatry and Art in the Early Twentieth Century

During the late nineteenth century, there was a preoccupation in psychiatry with categorizing and identifying mental disorders and diseases instead of developing cures and therapeutic techniques. However, this concern began to shift with three crucial figures: Paul Max Simon (1899–1961), Walter Morgenthaler (1882–1965), and Hans Prinzhorn (1886–1933). These psychiatrists paved the way for an artistic revolution that presented a different perspective on how creative products functioned within society. Images reflecting early primal drawings, naïve and folk painters, children's art, and art of the insane became valuable products, worthy of serious consideration.

This article focuses on the latter psychiatrist, Hans Prinzhorn, and his pioneering text *Artistry of the Mentally Ill*—a publication which has become a valuable contribution to both art criticism and psychiatry. On the first page of his book, Prinzhorn calls attention to how "most of the reports published to date about the works of the insane were intended for psychiatrists" ([1922] 2019, 1). Prinzhorn's research, however, was aimed at a far broader audience. He intended to create a foundation upon which to construct a general psychology of art relevant to all forms of human expression. He pursued a "basic, universal, human process behind the aesthetic and cultural surface of the configuration process" ([1922] 2019, xviii).

This book's appearance created great excitement amongst artistic circles. In art criticism it is common knowledge that Prinzhorn's publication influenced Jean Dubuffet and Max Ernst in their conceptualization of l'Art Brut and Surrealism (Conley 2006; Arnheim 1986; Rubin 1986). However, it was initially published in German meaning Ernst was the only Surrealist who was able to read the content and to understand its revolutionary significance, "not only for the psychiatric investigation of schizophrenic art but for the development of modern art and aesthetics" (MacGregor 1992, 279). Likewise, contemporary theorists of Outsider Art such as Rhodes and Wojcik have discussed the connection between Prinzhorn and Dubuffet. Wojcik merely states that Dubuffet was "influenced by Hans Prinzhorn's 1922 Artistry of the Mentally Ill" (Wojcik 2016, 38). Whereas, Rhodes informs us that Dubuffet could not read the German text, so his interest sprung solely from the rich illustrations (Rhodes 2000). The lack of consideration of Prinzhorn's psychology and textual research could potentially explain the problematic development of Outsider Art. It seems relevant to re-focus on Prinzhorn's research to bring some clarity to the topic.

Who was Hans Prinzhorn?

Before the age of twenty-five, Prinzhorn had distinguished himself in two areas of study. In Vienna, he studied philosophy and art history, which was followed by two years in London studying music and voice training. In his late twenties, Prinzhorn embarked on his medical

education which positioned him as an army surgeon during World War One. Psychiatrist James Foy suggests that "it is likely that his early interest in psychiatry took hold during his military service" (Foy 2019, x). In 1918 he obtained an assistant role in the Heidelberg psychiatric clinic in Germany. Here, Prinzhorn worked under the chief psychiatrist, Karl Wilmanns who had already begun collecting paintings and drawings by mentally ill patients. He persuaded Prinzhorn to enlarge the collection and to undertake a systematic research investigation.[3]

Prinzhorn's approach to the study of psychotic art was divided into two goals which are reflected in the subtitle of the book, "A Contribution to the Psychology and Psychopathology of Configuration." His method involved "a descriptive catalogue of pictures couched in the language of natural science and accompanied by a clinical and psychopathological description of the patients" ([1922] 2019, xvii). The art historian John MacGregor declares that "this approach was almost certainly dictated by Professor Wilmanns, whose original conception of the project was purely clinical" (1992, 196). However, Prinzhorn's other goal was to carry out "a completely metaphysically based investigation of the process of pictorial composition" ([1922] 2019, xvii). This intention was personal and most likely influenced by his art history and philosophical education.

Prinzhorn spent three years gathering over 5,000 pieces of artwork from institutions in Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Italy, and the Netherlands. He requested these works from hospitals with a letter, asking for "productions of pictorial art by mental patients, which are not simply copies of existing images or memories of their days of health but intended as an expression of their personal experience" (Rhodes 2000, 60). This request resulted in a collection of work from individuals who "worked autonomously, without being nourished by tradition or schooling" (Prinzhorn [1922] 2019, 269). It was from this archive that Prinzhorn constructed his research and developed his thesis. His thesis stated that "pictorial creative power is present in every creative person" and that we must view "tradition and training as external cultural embellishments of the primary configuration process" ([1922] 2019, 279). He believed that creative power could break forth in every individual under the right conditions. However, he understood that individuals in the confused states of schizophrenia provided rare access into the psyche as they were unaffected by the outside world. He described:

> The autistic, self-important schizophrenic of course creates for himself an entirely different, richer world out of the sense data of his environment…a world whose reality he does not establish for himself by logical conventions or reconciles with the impressions of others but which for him remains raw material for his inspirations, his arbitrariness, and his needs. ([1922] 2019, 39)

According to Prinzhorn, the schizophrenic experiences an "associative loosening," where external objects and experiences lose their importance. This "loosening" results in the patient experiencing the world more freely according to their inspirations or psychic complexes. Prinzhorn described how everyone experiences something similar in their dreams or can achieve it through practice. He wrote, "in any case, it is not difficult to achieve through practice a similar loosening of associations while awake, the free association of ideas which belongs to psychoanalysis leads in the same direction" ([1922] 2019, 39). However, he declared that these comparable cases are only temporary, whereas the schizophrenic's experience "occurs necessarily and is almost impervious to change, finally becoming a permanent condition" ([1922] 2019, 39). According to this reasoning, any creative individual can temporarily gain access into the deepest part of the psyche, which, in Prinzhorn's view, is the source of authentic art.

[3] The Prinzhorn's Collection Museum is located at the University of Heidelberg, Germany. The director Thomas Röske writes extensively on the artwork within the collection. However, these articles are predominantly in German.

This declaration matches theories within analytical psychology[4]—specifically Carl Jung's conceptualization of the visionary mode of creativity. According to Jung, the visionary mode produces imagery that reflects the archetypal contents of the unconscious, reminding us of our dreams and night-time fears instead of our experiences in everyday life. The Jungian analyst Craig Stephenson describes the visionary artist as an individual who is "aspired to transcend the limits of what was actual and artificial by descending into the sensual and sublime profundity of nature as well as intuitively going down, through reverie and dreams, into the ancient pagan depths of the mind" (Stephenson 2015, 14). In this view, it could be suggested that Prinzhorn's research is an attempt to understand the visionary mode of creativity. This suggestion is implied by the following statement:

> A purely psychiatric approach is insufficient; a psychoanalytical one is rewarding particularly in thorough interpretations of symbols, but only when the analyst has a great deal of knowledge and critical ability…attempts at interpretations which are insufficiently documented therefor only run the risk of causing confusion in other current research. We must therefore be temporarily satisfied with a survey which badly needs amplification by a more knowledgeable hand. (Prinzhorn [1922] 2019, 240)

Prinzhorn's Five Categories of Reoccurring Configuration Types

In the second chapter of his text, Prinzhorn identifies six interrelated tendencies or "impulses" which inspire an individual to create; he labelled these tendencies as the expressive urge, the urge to play, the ornamental urge, the ordering tendency, the tendency to imitate, and the need for symbols. Prinzhorn believed that these tendencies could help classify the large variety of visual expression typical in psychotic art more effectively than diagnostic categories. According to MacGregor, this approach effectively removed the art of the insane from the realm of psychiatry, as the six tendencies were in no sense pathological (1992).

In the third chapter of his book, titled *The Pictures*, Prinzhorn organized the vast collection of drawings into five categorical types: 1) unobjective and unordered scribbles, 2) playful drawings with a predominant ordering tendency, 3) playful drawings with a predominant copying tendency, 4) visual fantasies, and 5) increased symbolic significance. These categories develop according to the increased complexity of the configuration and the artist's ability to express a unique vision. Prinzhorn stated, "the more completely a picture's individual expressive content ripens into a more commonly understandable and communicative configuration (which it does independently of skill), the higher we will rank it as a creative achievement" (Prinzhorn [1922] 2019, 67).

Unobjective and Unordered Scribbles

"Unobjective and unordered scribbles" is a category that presents itself as random dramatic gestures that have no connection to anything real, formal, or symbolic. Prinzhorn described this configuration type as the predecessor of drawing, which exists "nearest to the zero-point on the scale of composition" ([1922] 2019, 41). In his view, when an individual engages with this practice, it is merely to satisfy the expressive urge—a "dark involuntary impulse" to create. Prinzhorn stated that the expressive urge is the primary motivation behind any image-making activity. He based this idea on Ludwig Klages' *Theory of Expression* (1921)—according to this

[4] Prinzhorn was not strongly associated with the psychoanalytic community. However, there is a record that Prinzhorn was familiar with Carl Jung, stemming from his student days in Vienna. There is also evidence that Prinzhorn spoke on the topic of the drawings of the mentally ill in 1922 at the famous Wednesday meetings of the Vienna Psychoanalytical Society; a meeting in which Jung was present. Jung even possessed a copy of Prinzhorn's text in his private library, suggesting that Jung and Prinzhorn may have directly or indirectly influenced one another.

theory, expressive gestures have the potential to enable the realisation of psychic factors. In response to this, Prinzhorn believed that voluntary and involuntary movements communicate individual psychological elements—"simply and directly, instead of by rational association" ([1922] 2019, 12).

Regarding pictorial composition, the expressive urge is linked with two other primary impulses: the playful urge and the decorative urge. However, these impulses present themselves as "unobjective and unordered scribbles" when there is no relation to formal tendencies—linear arrangement, regular pattern, symmetry, and proportion. Prinzhorn compares this style to a young child who scribbles, between the ages of two and four. He wrote, "to a child scribbling is a game of movement, and nothing could be further from his mind than the possibility that it could actually be made to represent something" ([1922] 2019, 271).

"Unordered and unobjective scribbles" is an informal configuration characteristic that can be seen abundantly in Abstract Expressionism, particularly in the practice of "action painting." This abstract style emphasized the physical act of painting and focused on a creative process that was instinctual and direct. The artists within this category produced imagery using a spontaneous application of dramatic, sweeping brushstrokes and the chance effects of dripping paint upon a canvas. These frantic and scattered brushstrokes can be seen in Michelle West's *Dancing Figure* (1962), Joan Mitchell's *Lady Bug* (1957), and Lee Krasner's *Icarus* (1964). Likewise, Jackson Pollock (1912–1956) is a well-known example of an artist who engaged with this configuration type. During his lifetime, Pollock described how "the source of my painting is the unconscious" (Pollock 1978, 214). It is also well-known that he engaged with Jungian psychotherapy to help him cope with alcoholism and depression. This "awareness" of the unconscious could imply a conscious intention to produce unconscious material, forcing an inquiry into the production's authenticity. However, both Jung and Prinzhorn ascertained that anyone could reduce critical thinking through practice and ultimately engage with the ambiguous portion of the psyche[5].

Likewise, Dan Miller (b.1961) creates expressive imagery reminiscent of Pollock's abstract paintings. However, Miller is classified as an outsider artist due to his low functioning autism diagnosis. Miller's drawings are made up of numbers and words written repeatedly so they appear as a work of abstraction. Nevertheless, he does not engage with this creative process to compose such imagery. Instead, it is an intensely expressive and linguistic exploration of his observations and experiences. Miller's creations are different from Pollock's because he is not intentionally engaging with unconscious imagery. Even though the creative process is different, the final artistic product shares strong similarities.

In his text, Prinzhorn acknowledged that his collection shared similarities with modern expressionist art. He believed that the person with schizophrenia had to adapt to the world's alienation forced upon him, whereas the modern artist deliberately turned away from his familiar reality. Prinzhorn's interest in schizophrenia can be branched out to other mental health or behavioral difficulties because his focus was on the individual who lacked critical thinking with difficulty adapting to society. He described:

> For the schizophrenic…the alienation from the world of appearances is imposed on him as gruesome inescapable lot against which he often struggles for some time until he submits and slowly begins to feel at home in his autistic world, which is enriched by his delusions. For the contemporary artist alienation from the once familiar and courted reality may also result from and overpowering experience, but at least it involves conscious and rational decisions. It occurs because of painful self-analysis and because the surmounted relationship to society become repulsive. (Prinzhorn [1922] 2019, 271)

[5] Jung referred to this process as "active imagination" (Sharp 1991, 12).

Playful Drawings with a Predominant Ordering Tendency

"Playful drawings with a predominant ordering tendency" is a category that refers to pictorial configurations which combine formal tendencies to unobjective and unordered scribbles. Alongside the expressive urge, it conveys a dominant playful urge that produces ornamental and decorative features, sometimes with a rhythmic movement of line. When referring to playful drawings, Prinzhorn describes "play" as an activity which follows specific rules but fulfils no purpose, other than to entertain and pass the time. According to him, play is an intuitive activity of which the "whole personality resonates sympathetically" ([1922] 2019, 16). This playful urge presents itself as an incorrect perception of an object in undefined forms, such as seeing shapes in clouds or faces in abstract patterns. This free-association game is called "pareidolia" and is a common human tendency in which naturally occurring or playfully created forms are not accepted for their objective face value. Prinzhorn described:

> Suppose that one scribbles aimlessly on a sheet of paper while averting his eyes and covers as much of the sheet as possible with a confusion of lines of variously strong and variously projecting curves, and only then, looking for the first time, lets himself be inspired by to some composition or other, whether figure or landscape. ([1922] 2019, 19)

According to Prinzhorn, the playful urge is a psychological fact which stems from the fantasy function. He believed it was crucial to "underline the relationship of fantastic activity in its many ramifications to that simple, playful urge which appears in every child and all kinds of adults when they compose something" ([1922] 2019, 18). Prinzhorn believed that the inspiration that arises from pareidolia is not limited to childish drawings but also expresses itself in great art. To prove this point, he quotes Leonardo da Vinci, who in his lifetime discussed a 'newly invented kind of seeing which may appear narrow and almost ridiculous' but nevertheless, inspires the mind to invent.

> It consists of this, that you look at many walls which are covered with all sorts of spots, or at a mixture of…stones [or] into the ashes in the fire, into the clouds of mud—if you observe them closely you will discover wonderful inventions in them: compositions of battles, of animals and men; terrifying things like devils, various landscapes ornamented with mountains, streams, rocks, trees, great plains, valleys and hills; lively arrangements of peculiarly strange figures, facial expressions, dress and uncounted things which you can bring to completion…through entangles and undefined things the mind is opened to new inventions. ([1922] 2019, 18)

Prinzhorn also described how ornamental and decorative features can arise as formal elements from playful activity. He labelled this as the "ornamental urge" which is the desire to enrich the outer world by adding visual elements; he wrote "it is the urge in man not to be absorbed passively into the environment, but to impress on it traces of his existence beyond those of purposeful activity" ([1922] 2019, 21). The ornamental urge presents itself as decorated objects that are produced without any consideration for its practical purpose. Rules and order dominate these objects, but these rules do not derive from the real and objective world but rather, from abstract order. Prinzhorn described how the precise meaning of the ornament is "that it first decorates" and secondly it "is governed by an intrinsic law, an order not dictated by the object but by abstract formal principles." These formal principles include "linear arrangement, regular pattern, symmetry and proportion" ([1922] 2019, 21). In addition to these formal principles, Prinzhorn distinguished a free and autonomous order which he called "rhythm"—a living uniform movement of line only comparable to the pure melody of music. In his view, this rhythmic flow can create a more substantial effect than all other formal elements.

It presents itself as a gradual development of line, separate from the mechanical and exact uniformity of mathematical rules. He explained:

> One might object that such a loose definition of 'rhythm' would promote an imprecise use, but the distinction between rhythm, meaning the sequence of similar quantities in similar chronological or special segments, and rules, meaning the exact and measurable sequence of equal quantities in equal of chronological spatial segments ([1922] 2019, 23).

Wassily Kandinsky (1866–1944) is an ideal example of a modern artist who engaged with this configuration type—specifically his abstract paintings, such as *Improvisation 10* (1910) and *Composition 8* (1923). In his publication *Wassily Kandinsky: Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (1910) Kandinsky described how spirituality and the theosophical work of Helena Blavatsky inspired his creative practice. He wrote, "literature, music and art are the first and most sensitive spheres in which this spiritual revolution makes itself felt. They reflect the dark picture of the present time and show the importance of what at first was only a little point of light noticed by the few" ([1910] 2000, 20). This interest in spirituality was a reoccurring theme in early abstract art, for example Georgina Houghton's (1814–1884) *Spirit Drawings*, Hilma af Klint's (1862–1944) *Paintings for the Temple*, and Madge Gill's (1882–1961) *Mediumistic Art*.

Likewise, many artists promoted by the Outsider Art genre engage with this configuration type of playful drawings with a predominant ordering tendency. One of the foremost creators, Laure Pigeon (1882–1965) is an ideal example for this category. Her work remains untitled and depicts abstract figures within a complex web system in blue or black ink. She began her endeavor at the age of fifty-two, under the guidance of spirits. This initial experience inspired the production of 500 large drawings and additional notebooks, many of which feature a melancholy female silhouette. After her death, the collection was acquired by Dubuffet for his *Collection de l'Art Brut*. Other outsider artists that fit into this category include Alice Schwager (1933-2015), Thornton Dial (1928–2016), Victória Domingues (b. 1944), and Cathy Ward (b.1960).

Interestingly, the topic of spiritualism was an early influence for Jung and the development of analytical psychology. This is evident by the title of his doctoral thesis *On the Psychology and Pathology of So-Called Occult Phenomena* (1902). It is also interesting to note that in the early twentieth century, many psychiatrists saw an investigation of the psyche as being related to psychical research—the study of spiritualist phenomena. For example, Theodor Flournoy, who in 1899 argued that regardless of whether the spiritual experience of a medium was valid, it still allowed for far-reaching insight into human psychology and the subliminal mind (Jung 2010, 195). In this view, spiritual art can be understood as an individual's indirect attempt to engage with the unconscious and to interact with archetypal figures.

Playful Drawings with a Predominant Copying Tendency

This category refers to the copying tendency, which is not directed towards a real and existing object but draws freely on the fund of preconceptions. In his text, Prinzhorn used the term "eidetic image" to explain an individual's perceptual comprehension of their environment. He considered how, through the act of observation, an individual's perception is shaped by their attitude and personality. He stated that "our eidetic image is not formed by the individual real, and external object: instead, we form a personal eidetic image out of this object by applying a personal system" (Prinzhorn [1922] 2019, 31).

According to Prinzhorn, eidetic images can give form to intricate ideas or purely abstract concepts which arise from an individual's attempt to interpret their experience of the external world through their five senses. He described how the psychological process of understanding an image is unavoidable, as "perception does not immediately result in the formed image,"

there also exists "compulsions running counter to its aims" ([1922] 2019, 30). Therefore, in this view, realistic configurations require an artist to transfer this eidetic image into a spatial and tangible format.

An artist's inclination towards depicting an eidetic image characterizes the copying tendency. Prinzhorn described, "what is of primary psychological importance is that the artist is determined by the eidetic image." He continued, "whether an object is painted realistically or abstractedly is…completely secondary" ([1922] 2019, 24). Prinzhorn declared that the real importance lies in the artist's ability to realize and convey their theme effectively to the viewer.

> It is relatively unimportant which real objects are included…everything now depends on whether the formed components in the eidetic image suggest the theme powerfully enough that they bring others to mind by association…the eidetic image is made most intense not by the addition of all parts to be found in memory but through the selection and hierarchal arrangement of the visually most important. ([1922] 2019, 31)

The copying tendency can present itself as a representation of an eidetic image using the narrowest realism or the broadest abstraction. Prinzhorn described "when it comes to objective representation there exists only a simple polarity between a materially bound proximity to nature and a more abstract and formal remoteness from nature" ([1922] 2019, 33). He also described these two configurative processes as "a physioplastic one which sticks to nature, and an ideoplastic one which adheres to conception and knowledge" ([1922] 2019, 33). This polarity depends on whether the playful urge dominates or submits to the copying tendency.

When the artist allows the copying tendency to dominate, he creates configurations which are intended as a reflection of the natural object or its immediate memory image. Prinzhorn described this category with a level of contempt, stating that it has for "far too long…and continues to be the most popular" ([1922] 2019, 23). He described how this tendency has been the most important goal in pictorial configuration for millennia and can be seen in abundantly in Dutch paintings and Realism which were guided by the traditions of art schools. He believed that the "ingenuous imitative urge" matched "the outlook of the times, which were increasingly dedicated to a materialistic 'reality' cult, very damaging to artistic culture" ([1922] 2019, 23). However, when the playful urge dominates the copying tendency, the configuration is no longer directed towards the real and objective world and instead draws freely from the imagination. In this category, mental processes remodel natural subjects, resulting in a more unique and personalized configuration.

Pablo Picasso and George Braque's analytical cubist paintings are a relevant example of this configuration type. This style involved a structured dissection of an object or subject, resulting in a fragmentary image of overlapping planes with multiple viewpoints; for example, Braque's *Violin and Candlestick* (1910). This painting can be interpreted as a still life which has been playfully remodeled to convey a sense of ambiguity and illusion. This painting's inspiration stems from an externally existing object and reflects the artist's inclination towards depicting the eidetic image with a playful twist.

Likewise, the artist Georgia O'Keefe is known most notably for her unique ability to combine realism and abstraction. She attempted to picture her inner experience by playfully engaging with imagery of landscapes, flowers, and other natural objects. Her painting *Jimson Weed* (1932) depicts a flower, relatively unedited by abstraction. In contrast, her painting *Blue Flower* (1918) slightly turns away from the objective image and playfully emphasizes color and the subject's characteristics, resulting in a more unique composition. Both paintings belong to this category as an image of nature inspired them.

Sam Doyle's (1906–1985) paintings are an example of this configuration type within the genre of Outsider Art. Doyle was an African American artist from South Carolina. His paintings were produced on discarded materials—metal roofing and plywood—and were intended as

colorful depictions of the history and people of St. Helena's Gullah community. For example, his painting *Jackie Robinson* (1978) shows an individual wearing a Dodger's baseball uniform with his left hand triumphantly in the air. Likewise, his painting *Ladsen, Nurse Midwife* (1980) shows a crude depiction of a seated woman holding a large baby. Within these images, the artist is summing up momentous events with simplicity. These paintings belong to this category as the content was inspired by the artist's conscious life and contains little ambiguity. Other celebrated outsider artists who create works in a similar manner include James Edward Deeds Jr (1908–1987), Alcides Peirera dos Santos (1928–2018), and William Scott (b.1964).

Interestingly, this configuration type is reminiscent of Jung's conceptualization of the psychological mode of creativity, which exists dichotomously with the visionary mode. According to Jung, the psychological mode works with materials inspired from an individual's conscious life—it is called "psychological" because it "remains within the limits of the psychologically intelligible" (Jung 1954, 107). He described how these works originate completely from an artist's intention to produce a specific result. He wrote:

> He submits his material to a definite treatment with a definite aim in view; he adds to it and subtracts from it, emphasising one effect, toning down another, laying on a touch of colour here, another there, all the time carefully considering the overall result and paying strict attention to the laws of form and style. He exercises the keenest judgement and chooses his words with complete freedom. His material is entirely subordinate to his artistic purpose; he wants to express this and nothing else (1954, 109).

Visual Fantasies

According to the previous category, when the playful urge dominates the copying tendency, mental processes remodel natural subjects resulting in a more unique and personalized configuration. However, in this group "playful drawings with a predominant copying tendency" is combined with the need for symbols resulting in the depiction of visual fantasies.

In this category, the external object loses inherent value and is instead a primary material of which to project inwardly directed psychic processes. Prinzhorn described, "although objects have lost their inherent value and are no longer anything of and by themselves, they serve as bearers and representatives for the psychic movements of the artists" ([1922] 2019, 236). According to Prinzhorn, this habit of using external objects as a primary material "leads even relatively modest talents into a more or less symbolic but nevertheless firm and consistent language of form—into a personal style" ([1922] 2019, 236). Prinzhorn stated that the more naturalistic the work, the more unlikely it is to have symbolic significance. However, "if, on the other hand, there appear combinations of forms or familiar objects which are not in common experience, some kind of psychic process must have taken place within their author from which the combination resulted" ([1922] 2019, 27).

Configurations of this type have a strange and eerie quality, and because of the ambiguity, it is impossible to attribute any rational meaning to it. Prinzhorn declared, "it crumbles into numerous single motifs, each of which seems to want to say something original without finding the saving expression" ([1922] 2019, 68). This category can present itself in two ways—the artist relies on traditional symbols to convey the meaning, or they create new ones for themselves. In the first instance, churches and popular customs become the source of inspiration for the artists; they move within a customary conceptual world. In the second instance, the artist is preoccupied with a personal philosophical battle and intends on combining their instincts with cultural forces. Prinzhorn described this as "obscure and fascinating…they use traditional symbols…spontaneously or, from another point of view intuitively add new meanings to old symbols or even create new ones out of their own conflicts" ([1922] 2019, 237).

This configuration type can be seen abundantly within Surrealism—a twentieth-century art movement that explored the workings of the mind through literary, philosophical, and artistic means. These artists and philosophers rejected the rational mind, favoring the unconscious and dreams; for example, Salvador Dali's *Swans Reflecting Elephants* (1937) and Max Ernst's *Oedipus Rex* (1922). Likewise, Leonora Carrington (1917–2011) is an example of an artist who successfully depicted her visual fantasies by intuitively combining her unique vision with cultural forces. Her painting titled *The House Opposite* (1945) depicts a cutaway view of a domestic environment. The multi-chambered dwelling is full of female figures, many of whom are busily engaged in preparing, presenting, and consuming food. Carrington is exploring the female role in the domestic environment with invented symbolic characters and pre-existing symbols such as the Virgin Mary in the upper left-hand corner. The inclusion of symbolic imagery adds ambiguity to the imagery, allowing for numerous interpretations.

Henry Darger (1892–1973) is an example of a celebrated outsider artist known for his imaginative creations. One of his most famous projects is the epic fantasy novel which consists of more than 15,000 pages with 300 colorful, often disturbing watercolors and collages—referred to as *The Realms of the Unreal.* The story follows seven girls—the Vivian girls of the catholic nation Abbieannia—who attempt to rescue kidnapped children enslaved by the atheistic villainous Glandelinians. The tale is loosely based on events from the civil war and sets heroic children against evil and abusive adults. The watercolor paintings remain untitled, but they bring the tale of destruction and heroism to life. The paintings illustrate children's vulnerability against abusive captors within fantastic landscapes and complex compositions, reminiscent of the great Hieronymus Bosch. Other celebrated outsider artists that work in this manner include Reverend Mckendree Long (1888–1976), Myrtice West (1923–2010), and Norbert Kox (b.1945).

The visual fantasies depicted in these examples fit into Jung's visionary mode of creativity as they are not directed towards the real and objective world; instead, the artists use external objects and experiences as source material to project their inwardly directed psychic processes. Jung described how a visionary experience is often cloaked in a historical or mythical event, which can be mistakenly taken for the real subject matter. However, in his view, the deeper meaning of the work does not lie in the mythical or historical material but in the visionary experience it expresses. He stated that the artist must have an extensive collection of visual material to communicate a fraction of what he experienced and make use of difficult and contradictory images to express the strange paradoxes of his/her vision. According to Jung, the visionary product is "sublime, pregnant with meaning, yet chilling the blood with its strangeness, it arises from timeless depths; glamourous, daemonic, grotesque, its bursts asunder our human standards of value and aesthetic form" (Jung 1954, 141). In this view, the visionary expression represents a deeper and more impressive experience than the human passion depicted in works created with the psychological mode.

Increased Symbolic Significance

The previous category explored "the need for symbols" by referencing external and cultural elements, such as the domestic environment in Carrington's *The House Opposite* or the natural environment in Dalí's *Swans Reflecting Elephants.* However, Prinzhorn described this characteristic as 'rational content' which increases "the significance of the scene beyond the impression which the drawing alone is able to give" ([1922] 2019, 27). He continued by stating that the rational content distracts attention from the pure psychic expression which can only be depicted symbolically, "in the sense that rhythm of lines, the relations between lines, and the symbolism of colours communicate emotional experience to us" ([1922] 2019, 27).

"Increased Symbolic Significance" refers to a category of configuration which depicts purely symbolic content with limited reference to external forces. This category combines emotional and psychic elements through abstraction and symbolic content. This configuration type emphasizes

"formal convention, rhythmical solemnity, and the dominance of abstract geometric elements" ([1922] 2019, 27). The superiority of the need for symbolic content promotes order and uses conventional or unique symbols to express the artist's psychic experience.

Hilma af Klint (1862–1944) is an example of an artist who successfully depicted pure symbolic content with limited reference to external forces; for example, *The Dove, No. 2, Group IX* (1915) from her series *Paintings for the Temple*. This painting shows a variety of shapes with perfect symmetry and a soft pastel color palette. It depicts a perfect circle, a Fibonacci heart, and a double helix suggesting a duality—a theme which runs through most of her paintings. The image is highly ambiguous and leaves little for the rational mind to contemplate.

Af Klint's abstraction developed between 1896 and 1906—during this time, the artist joined four other women to form a group called "The Five." The five women were acting as mediums to reach a higher level of consciousness. Thankfully, minutes were kept during these meetings describing how "beings" identified themselves by name to convey messages to humanity through pictures. They introduced themselves as Gregor, Amaliel, Clemens and Ananda (Muller-Westermann 2013). They communicated through automatic drawings which required a state of passivity and a rejection of habitual patterns. When af Klint was 43 she accepted the commission by Amaliel to produce *The Paintings for the Temple.* She created this commission between 1906-1915 and it became her central body of work. The artist describes how, as a medium, her hand was guided while creating these paintings: "The paintings were painted through me, without any preliminary drawings and with great force. I had no idea what the paintings were supposed to depict; nevertheless, I worked swiftly and surely without changing a single brushstroke" (Muller-Westermann 2013, 38).

Likewise, Jung produced several watercolor paintings published in *The Red Book: Liber Novus* (2009)—a manuscript style text which documents his personal exploration of the visionary mode of creativity. This book is filled with bizarre stories and imaginative configurations, many of which depict visual fantasies. However, there are numerous examples of increased symbolic significance such as his painting *Mandala 107* and *Illustration 16*. This creative process began with Jung recording his inner life in a series of notebooks he called *The Black Books*, first drafted in 1913. In these, he wrote down his fantasies with date entries and reflections of his state of mind. However, this book was not a diary of events, and very few dreams are mentioned in them. Instead, they are a record of an experiment, his personal confrontation with the unconscious. He wrote:

> To grasp the fantasies which were stirring in me 'underground,' I knew that I had to let myself plummet down into them, as it were. I felt not only violent resistance to this, but a distinct fear. For I was afraid of losing command of myself and becoming a prey to the fantasies. (Jung 1963, 202)

After this initial experiment, Jung transferred and altered some of the material into a more presentable format that has since been published as the *Red Book: Liber Novus* (2009). Within this, he portrayed his protagonist's inner states metaphorically—he then commented on them allegorically, attempting to interpret the experiences to reveal a hidden meaning. Jung felt that by engaging with active imagination and encouraging the fantasy function he could experience the mythopoeic imagination which was missing in the rational age.

Adolf Wolfli (1864–1930) is a well-known outsider artist—often referred to as the "quintessential outsider artist" (Maizels 2002)—who engaged with this configuration type. In 1909 he began a large narrative project which continued until his death. This project encompasses more than 25,000 pages of text, 1,600 drawings, and 1,600 collages. According to his psychiatrist Walter Morgenthaler, Wolfli's work conveyed the impression of necessity and urgency. He wrote:

> Wolfli never takes a break; as soon as one sheet in finished, he immediately begins another, ceaselessly writing and drawing. If one asks him at the outset what he intends to draw on the sheet, he will sometimes answer hesitantly, as it were self-evident, that he is going to draw a giant hotel, a high mountain, a great goddess or whatever. But often on the other hand, he cannot even tell you what he wants to draw when he is about to start; he does not yet know, he will have to wait and…Wolfli is in many ways kinesthetic: he thinks with his pencil, however it is often movement alone that inspires him. (Morgenthaler [1921] 1984, 14)

Wolfli's first project took the form of a travelogue, whose principal hero was a boy called "Doufi"—Wolfli's nickname. This epic is titled *From the Cradle to the Grave* and contains 1,970 pages of text and 752 illustrations. In this tale, Wolfli transforms his miserable childhood into a glamourous story of wonderful adventures, discoveries, and bizarre hazards, all of which are overcome. Again, many of the paintings depict visual fantasies, however, there are several which reflect this category of "increased symbolic significance;" for example, *Giant City, Band-Wald-Hall* (1911) and *South London* (1911). These images are dominated by abstract geometric elements, rhythmical solemnity, and formal convention. Other celebrated outsider artists who have created imagery in a similar manner include Joseph Crepin (1875–1948) and Vasily Romanenkov (1953–2013).

This configuration style fits neatly into Jung's concept of the visionary mode of creativity, not only the content but the nature of the creative practice. Each of these examples were uncontrollably directed by spirits, haunting memories, or a sheer force of will—resulting in a body of work that perplexed both the viewer and the artist. One of the ways Jung described the visionary mode, is that it forces itself upon the artist, bringing its own form, "his hand is seized, his pen writes things his mind contemplates in amazement." He continued, "while his conscious mind stands amazed and empty before this phenomenon, he is overwhelmed by a flood of thoughts and images which he never intended to create and which his own will could never have brought into being" (Jung 1954, 110). However, Jung described, "yet in spite of himself he is forced to admit that it is his own self speaking, his own inner nature revealing itself and uttering things which he could never have entrusted his tongue" (1954, 110).

Conclusion

This article introduced the problematic associations and inconsistencies within the Outsider Art genre particularly the emphasis on mental illness and marginalized individuals. This study aimed to assess this doctrine by re-focusing on Prinzhorn's psychiatric research, the pioneering text which influenced Jean Dubuffet's conceptualization of l'Art Brut. By examining Prinzhorn's text *Artistry of the Mentally Ill*, it becomes clear that he did not ascertain that mental illness or marginalization is necessary for the creative style promoted by Outsider Art. Prinzhorn instead rejected this assumption and stated that creative power is present in every creative person. He believed that we must view training and tradition as external cultural embellishments that affect the primary configuration process.

Additionally, Prinzhorn hypothesized five categories which he described as being part of the primary configuration process. He labelled these as 1) unobjective and unordered scribbles, 2) playful drawings with a predominant ordering tendency, 3) playful drawings with a predominant copying tendency, 4) visual fantasies, and 5) increased symbolic significance. These categories suggest a gradation scale based on the increased complexity of the configuration and the artist's ability to express a unique vision. This 'scale' could help art criticism to understand and organize the large variety of creative imagery within Outsider Art and related genres.

It may also be beneficial for art criticism to consider the polarity of the creative process suggested within analytical psychology—the visionary and psychological mode of creativity.

On one side, there is a desire to imitate and react to the objects, experiences, and traditions in the external world. On the other side, there is a creative process that turns away from objective reality and sets free subjective tendencies—reminding us of dreams and night-time fears as opposed to our experiences in everyday life. This creative impulse is universal and not limited to "outsiders." Nonetheless, the connection between Prinzhorn's and Jung's research needs to be examined further in a future study.

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