

GrandPalais

Rmn

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Centre Pompidou

After four years of work, the Grand Palais, an emblematic Parisian monument, gradually reopened for the Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2024. It hosts exhibitions and events as part of a generous, festive program organized by the GrandPalaisRmn.

In 2025, the Centre Pompidou begins its metamorphosis. Its iconic building, located in the Beaubourg district of Paris, will undergo a thorough renovation, which by 2030, will allow it to reconnect with its original utopia. During this unprecedented period, the spirit of the Centre Pompidou will continue to thrive through its Constellation programme, which offers a vast array of exhibitions, live shows, films, meetings and workshops in France and abroad.

The GrandPalaisRmn and the Centre Pompidou are thrilled that the Grand Palais takes on such a central role in this Constellation.

## Exhibition

**Curators:** Bruno Decharme, collector and filmmaker, and Barbara Safarova, lecturer at École du Louvre and researcher

**Associate curators:** Cristina Agostinelli, conservation officer and head of programming, contemporary collections department, Musée national d’art moderne – Centre Pompidou; Céline Gazzoletti, art historian; Valérie Loth, conservation officer, prints and drawings department, Musée national d’art moderne – Centre Pompidou; Diane Toubert, archivist, Bibliothèque Kandinsky, Musée national d’art moderne – Centre Pompidou.

**Project manager:** Christelle Terrier, GrandPalaisRmn

**Architect-scenographer:** Corinne Marchand, Centre Pompidou

**Graphic designer:** Floriane Lipsch-Pic, Studio Matters

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Extend your visit in sounds with France Culture and its content linked to the exhibition

Lighting for part of the exhibition is made possible thanks to the support of Sammode, manufacturer of lighting solutions.

## Visitor information

June 20 to September 21, 2025  
Tuesday to Sunday, 10am to 7.30pm

Late opening on Friday until 10pm

Grand Palais, Gallery 8,  
entrance via Square Jean-Perrin

## Entry

**Full price:** €15

**Reduced price:** €12 (subscriptions, youth aged 18-25, students up to age 30 inclusive, family discount)

**Group price:** €42 (four people including two aged 18-25)

**Free** (under 18s, job-seekers, visitors with a disability, Pass GrandPalais, Carte Pop)

## Guided tours and Workshops

To get any information on tours and workshops organised by Centre Pompidou, visit the website:  
[www.centrepompidou.fr](http://www.centrepompidou.fr)

To get any information on tours and workshops organised by Grand Palais, visit the website:  
[www.grandpalais.fr](http://www.grandpalais.fr)

## Podcast

Explore the exhibition further by listening to Bruno Decharme, who gifted the Collection, and Cristina Agostinelli, conservation officer at the Centre Pompidou. Available in French and English at the Centre Pompidou website and on the Grand Palais app. Transcript available for download from the Centre Pompidou website.



## Catalogue

*Art Brut, Dans l'intimité d'une collection. La donation Decharme*  
Publishers Grand Palais Rmn/Centre Pompidou, Paris, June 2025 (Only in French)  
350 p., €45

## Insider-Outsider

The “Insider-Outsider” project is an interactive musical experience in virtual reality, inspired by the work of self-taught artist Henry Darger, and brought to life by musician Philippe Cohen Solal (Gotan Project).  
**12 to 15 minutes, €7**  
Experience co-produced by GrandPalaisRmn, Centre Pompidou, Lucid Realities and Science & Mélodie. With the support of CDA d’Enghien-Les-Bains, CNC and Pictanovo

## Visitor guide app

Available on the App Store and Google Play (French, English), the Grand Palais app is an indispensable tool for keeping abreast of the latest news, preparing your visit and experiencing exhibitions and events at the Grand Palais to the full. It offers guided tours of the building and exhibitions at the Grand Palais.

Download the Grand Palais application and find all the audioguide tours for the exhibition

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Share #ExpoArtBrut



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Centre Pompidou

# Art Brut

“It’s clear to everyone that art brut is art brut.”  
(Jean Dubuffet, 1947)

What was so clear to Jean Dubuffet when, in the aftermath of the Second World War, he named the works he collected “art brut”? Works that exist outside the accepted boundaries of fine art, academic tradition, artist studios, stylistic currents and influences. Art brut is vehemently “elsewhere”!

Its creators have no idea that they are artists, no idea of who we are, absorbed in their deepest self, grappling with a psychic reality that is spangled with stars, disconnected from the world around them. Drawing on nothing but their own experiences, as though invested with a secret mission, these solitary prophets, most often of humble origin, accumulate, decipher, scribble, construct or bring order to a universe whose geography, structure and forms are entirely of their invention.

From its beginnings in the late 1970s, the Bruno Decharme collection has been part of a global project. Extending his gaze beyond that of a collector and a filmmaker, in 1999 Bruno Decharme founded the abcd (art brut connaissance & diffusion) association, presided by Barbara Safarova. It considers the questions art brut raises: its nature as well as its indistinct borders with the margins or dissidences of our societies.

The exhibition is a travel journal, a kaleidoscope of questions. Viewed through the prism of the collection, it relates part of the history of art brut through four hundred works, from the 17th to the 21st centuries, selected from the one thousand of the Decharme donation made to the Centre Pompidou in 2021.

GrandPalais from 20th June to 21st September 2025 #ExpoArtBrut

Interview

*The Bruno Decharme art brut donation to the Centre Pompidou contains a large number of works, 1,000 in total, by 242 artists. You selected 400 of these for the exhibition. How were they chosen?*

Bruno Decharme: We chose a representative group of works that cover the historical and geographic scope of art brut. It includes the “classics” — Aloise Corbaz, Adolf Wölfli, Jeanne Tripièr, Henry Darger, Augustin Lesage and many others — as well as a broad selection of “contemporary” art brut, some of which the public will not have seen before.

*The exhibition has several sections. How did you decide on its structure?*

B.D.: The exhibition is a travel journal, a kaleidoscope of questions. It relates part of the history of art brut through the prism of this collection. Barbara Safarova: Rather than a chronological structure, we wanted to form families of works with “elective affinities” that reflect our interests and preoccupations as a collector and a researcher. This thematic approach spotlights universal questions and shows the particular way in which these art brut artists engaged with them.

*Art brut is hard to pin down. Can you define its contours?*

B.D.: Art brut should be seen as a complex creative sphere that changes shape across different eras. It’s a tool for thinking the margins. B.S.: Most of all, it’s a group of very different authors/artists/creators who repurpose “cultural” signs rather than carry on a tradition or share a culture or language. I think we see this most clearly when we consider the individual context.

*Does the exhibition touch on art brut as an inspiration for artists and artistic movements?*

B.S.: We prefer to talk about shared “connections” or “questions” — specific to a given era. As humans, we are all preoccupied by more or less the same things: the mystery of creation, our relationship with God, with death, the desire for peace, et cetera. Art brut artists clearly share these preoccupations but their interpretations, their reading of them, is radically different to that of the so-called “cultural” artists, to borrow from Jean Dubuffet. Often, they invent languages or redefine history, geography or science. These different ways of seeing the world — those of the artists in art history and those of art brut artists — would be an exhibition in their own right; one that would be fascinating to imagine.

*Is the exhibition accessible to all visitors? What do you want people to take from it?*

B.D. and B.S.: Art brut creators address questions that concern us all, hence we can relate to them regardless of our age, background or knowledge. We want people to see that there is nothing “dark” about art brut, even though many of these creators led dramatic lives: the creative energy radiating from these works signals a form of rebirth, of triumph over life’s difficulties, over the impossible. Lastly, we want to show that these works — which are, by essence, of the people, the “common man” as Jean Dubuffet wrote — are the opposite of elitist, intimidating art. Yes, it is accessible to all.

Repair the world

As though singled out by some mysterious authority, the artists in this first section seem intent on accomplishing an impossible task: to save humanity from disaster, whether real or imagined; from present and future catastrophes, and whatever else might befall us. Would we be wrong to consider art brut creators as shamans engaged in rituals of a personal nature, yet relating to public affairs? Could this be a form of self-repair; to repair a self projected onto, becoming one with, the world. Isolated, excluded even, these artists do not harbour resentment. On the contrary: their determination to save the world is an act of generosity and altruism.

“Mine are the tongues of fire that inflame” Madge Gill

It seems many art brut creators are intent on using and inventing languages; as though the ones we already have were insufficient. No other art brut production is as mysterious or as fascinating as writings. Their incoherence makes them difficult to read but their graphic, rhythmic or linguistic form releases sonorities that resonate with the raw material of language — an audible material with no meaning whose meaning we feel compelled to find.

Order, for God’s sake!

Does disorder loom? Are we prey to some destructive underground chaos? How do we take back control; prevent the world and our own existence from crumbling? Science is searching for the answer but the creators in this section are all too aware of the terrible imprecisions, the fateful margins of error that become wide-open doors for a devil seeking out the tiniest crack. Some spend a lifetime trying to perfect a calculation, solve the supposedly unsolvable equation, discover the magic formula, the foolproof strategy, invent extraordinary machines and tools with which to measure the invisible. Their logic is one of systems whose vocabulary they employ, multiplying formulas, lists, figures and equations — many of which they invent. Their works form scrupulously organised closed circuits whose inner coherency suffices.

Art brut around the world

Jean Dubuffet confined his gathering of art brut, and his initial reflections, to Europe. The directors of Collection de l’Art Brut in Lausanne would later extend their considerations to the rest of the world.

For more than three decades, their holdings — as well as those of other private and institutional collections — have been enriched with works from different geographical zones. How do these works, from heterogeneous historical and cultural contexts, shape our comprehension of art brut? Which factors fostered their emergence? This section presents three countries that illustrate the extent and diversity of art brut production: Japan, Cuba, Brazil.

Chimeras, monsters and supernatural beings

Mutant insects, hybrid creatures, monsters, revenants, dismembered bodies, apocalyptic landscapes: there are worlds marked by confusion, strange combinations, patchworks of styles, elements which are disarticulated then recomposed. Familiarity vanishes, disconcerting strangeness takes its place. Unlikely scenarios are fuelled by collective imagining of the threats that hang over humanity. No less intimidating but more mysterious still, a peculiar and invisible otherness emerges from art brut works. What are these nightmarish images telling us? Are they the hidden side of the dehumanisation they represent, of the savagery that threatens to take us back to the prehistory of civilisation? Is this the diabolical face of the destructive forces buried in us all?

Bricolage

Typewriter keys, bits of wood, plastic dolls, inner tubes, car tyres, pebbles, feathers, plaster... Art can be made from any old odds and ends. Anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss distinguishes between the engineer, who has a specific project in mind, and the bricoleur, who adapts to whatever resources are at hand. Necessity is the mother of invention for art brut’s many bricoleurs, who find their materials discarded on the pavement or in dustbins, to then recycle them in ingenious ways. Bricolage is also the simple pleasure of combining the objects around us into new forms, the way children do, and offers infinite possibilities for constructions guided solely by the imagination.

Brut | Studios

The distinction should be made between occupational art therapy, for which artistic criteria are a secondary consideration, and creative workshops whose purpose is to provide artists with a supportive environment

and help remove obstacles linked to their disability or mental health. There is debate over whether productions from these studios should be termed art brut. Some maintain that works produced in a sheltered environment do not have art brut’s characteristic raw dissidence. Others counter that dissidence is connected to the psyche, not a social context. Among the many workshops that exist around the world, three studios are presented here: the ‘S’ Grand Atelier in Belgium, the Creative Growth Art Center in the United States and the Haus der Künstler in Austria.

Orphaned works

The majority of art brut productions are unsigned. Most of the time, their maker’s name is revealed to us by an “agent”, a cultural conduit. Once all trace of the maker’s name has been lost, these works are consigned to the hand of fate. Only a few clues can sometimes set out to lift the cloak of anonymity. Equally anonymous are those who sign their work under cover of a borrowed name. Anonymous too are the artists who have withdrawn from mainstream art, as well as the artisans, smallholders or labourers who became artists.

Dancing with spirits

Spiritualism, a vast topic, is at the heart of art brut collections. The works gathered here date from the mid-19th century to the present and come from around the world. They are evidence of the interest all these cultures show in communicating with the hereafter. Are these works an answer to metaphysical questions or are they a more or less discreet expression of the unconscious? The latter is also a catalyst for 20th-century art — surrealism in particular —, becoming a source of inventive, spontaneous, “uncontrolled” creations that break with academic conventions.

Private worlds, wider worlds

While often socially or psychologically marginalised, art brut creators maintain a heightened but very particular connection with the world. Exposed, or not, to artistic culture, they take elements from their surroundings — cultural, historical, even political events — and weave them into their own life story, hence the presence in their work of collages, press clippings, advertisements or extracts from books. This section makes space for photography, a medium that expresses the juncture between the artist’s

most intimate perceptions and how they look at the world. Among contemporary issues, gender is powerfully expressed here, often as an undecidable sexual identity behind the social mask.

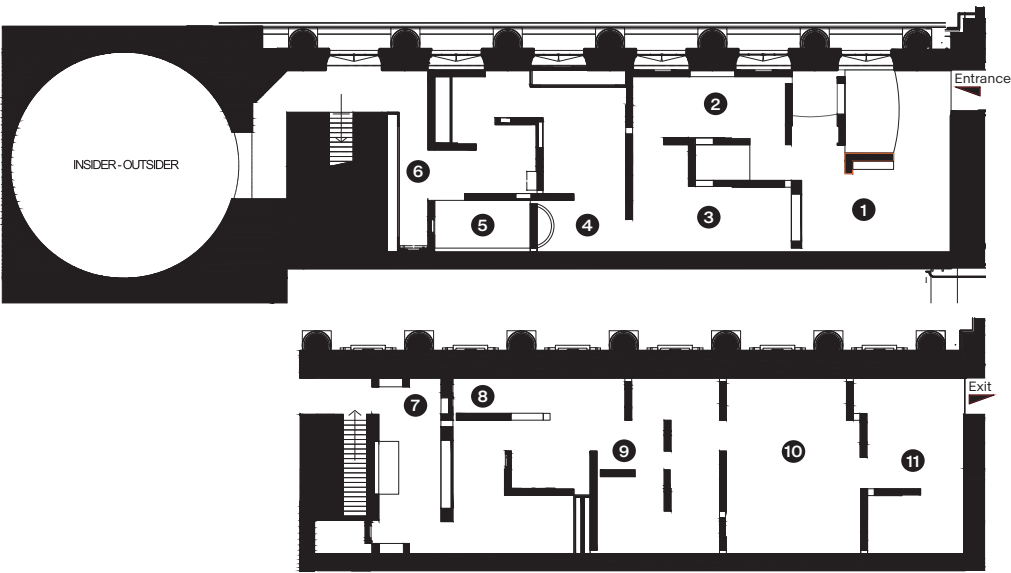
The stars and beyond

The artists in this section fly close to the sky. They invite us on fabulous and endless voyages. Caught up in their sheer immensity, we enter parallel worlds which they endlessly complexify, filling thousands of pages, reinventing history, geography, science or language. Adolf Wölfli is, through his phenomenal written and drawn production, the most representative figure. As he himself declared, “There is so much to do! You cannot imagine how tiring it is for the head not to forget anything. If we weren’t already, it would drive us mad, for sure.” Behind this exacerbation often lies the darker side of personal disaster, transformed by megalomania into a triumphant creative act.

**“Insider-Outsider”, an interactive musical experience in virtual reality**

Henry Darger spent nearly his entire life reclusive, hidden away in the confines of his small room in Chicago. There, over more than thirty years, he created an all-encompassing universe — one of the most fascinating in the history of outsider art — which remained undiscovered until after his death in 1973. Inspired by Darger’s world and driven by musician Philippe Cohen Solal (Gotan Project), “Insider-Outsider” is an interactive musical virtual reality experience blending pop music, animation, and artistic performances. “Insider-Outsider” invites participants to immerse themselves in the fantastical and unsettling universe of the Vivian Girls, warrior-like young girls engaged in a struggle against the cruelty of the world. A dreamlike journey grounded in extensive documentary research, drawing from photographic sources and numerous personal accounts.

Exhibition plan



1. Repair the world
2. “Mine are the tongues of fire that inflame” Madge Gill
3. Order, for God’s sake!
4. Art brut around the world
5. Chimeras, monsters and supernatural beings
6. Bricolage
7. Brut | Studios
8. Orphaned works
9. Dancing with spirits
10. Private worlds, wider worlds
11. The stars and beyond