

GALERIE GUGGING: 20 YEARS

Founded in 1994, Galerie Gugging not only presents renowned international Art Brut and self-taught artists but is also committed to introducing and building up newcomers

By NINA KATSCHNIG

The East Lower Austrian Psychiatric Clinic of Klosterneuburg-Gugging was founded in 1885. Hundreds of people with a variety of mental and physical health problems lived there. From 1946, psychiatrist Dr Leo Navratil (1921–2006) began working in what had been re-named the Gugging Convalescent and Nursing Home. Navratil soon initiated the use of drawing tests for diagnostic purposes, after being inspired by the work of American psychologist Karen Machover. He would ask patients to draw a person or tree on a blank postcard, and would then trace their psychological conditions and any progress by analysing how their images changed over time. The drawings of some patients caught his attention with their particularly expressive power and originality, which ultimately prompted Navratil to pursue art psychotherapy.

In 1965 Navratil published his book *Schizophrenia and Art* (*Schizophrenie und Sprache*, Munich 1976), which aroused great interest at the time, particularly among members of the Austrian art world such as Arnulf Rainer, who supported Navratil and saw great artistic value in many of the works.

Navratil visited an Art Brut exhibition in Paris in 1967, and from 1969 onwards he began corresponding with French artist Jean Dubuffet (1901–1985), who in 1948 had coined the term Art Brut to describe an “unspoiled, rough” form of art, stemming from an internal need of expression, free from academic aesthetics and created outside the cultural mainstream. The collective term did not denote a particular artistic direction or style; the artists’ individuality is the only thing they all had in common. Immediately after the end of

World War II, Dubuffet travelled to Switzerland where he discovered works by Adolf Wölfli, Aloïse Corbaz and Heinrich Anton Müller, who were to become central figures of his Collection de l’Art Brut. Navratil had sent Dubuffet an etching *Negress* (*Negerin*) by his patient Johann Hauser. Dubuffet was clearly impressed by the artists discovered by Navratil and confirmed that they fell into the category of Art Brut.

In 1970 the first sales exhibition, *Pareidolia*, was

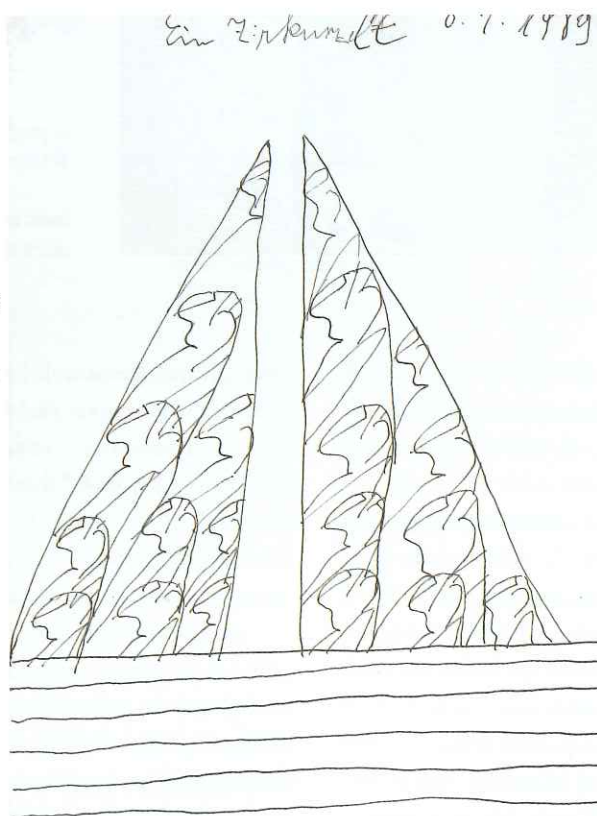
held at the Galerie nächst St Stephan in Vienna, with works by fourteen then-patients. Many books and documentary films came out in connection with this event, and other exhibitions followed.

In 1972 the curator Harald Szeemann exhibited the work of the best-known Art Brut artist, the Swiss Adolf Wölfli (1864–1930), at “documenta 5” in Kassel, placing it for the first time in the context of international and contemporary art. In the same year Roger Cardinal introduced the term “outsider art,” which was used as an extension of the designation Art Brut, particularly in the English-speaking world.

Navratil wanted to provide his gifted patients with a place to

live and work that was separate from the hospital complex.

In 1981, Pavilion 11, a disused building on the outermost edge of the hospital grounds, was opened as a Centre for Art and Psychotherapy. Eighteen patients moved in,



inset:

Oswald Tschirtner, *A Circus Tent*, pen and ink, 1989, 8.3 x 5.8 ins., 21 x 14.8 cm

right:

Johann Hauser, *Woman*, pencil, n.d., 12.1 x 8.7 ins., 30.7 x 22 cm