

try me – six american artists

Opening: Wednesday, November 3, 2009

Duration: November 4, 2009 until March 13, 2010

American representatives of self-taught art, shown for the first time in Austria, are the focus of the special show "try me. - six american artists". The artists are united by an unusual career and the incorruptible power of the self-taught.

Bill Traylor (1854-1949)

Born in 1854 as the child of slaves on a cotton plantation in the southern states, Bill Traylor did not begin to work artistically until the age of 82. In an extremely short creative phase, he created his colour-intensive figurative works of authentic simplicity.

Mary T. Smith (1904-1995)

Mary T. Smith, born in Brookhaven, Mississippi, worked as a cook. It was only after she retired that she began to paint. Smith used what she found: scraps of plywood, scrap metal, or other materials served her as painting grounds. Most of her paintings show people or animals, sometimes with words or letters.

Laura Craig McNellis (1957)

The self-taught McNellis, who never attended school due to her intellectual impairment, began her creative work at the age of eight. Like many of her "self-taught" colleagues, she uses undemanding materials for her expressive works. She isolates the portrayed objects, which she surrounds with firm contours, from their surroundings, creating powerful works with an unmistakable character.

Purvis Young (1943)

Purvis Young is one of the most active representatives of the contemporary American art scene. Countless exhibitions accompany the path of the self-taught painter and installation artist from Miami, Florida. In 2006, "Purvis of Overtown" was a documentary film about the life of the "urban expressionist" Purvis Young.

William Hawkins (1895-1990)

William Hawkins saw the reason for his artistic talent throughout his life in his ancestry, as he can refer to Indian ancestors in addition to black and white. He began to work seriously as an artist when he was old, after a restless life that made him travel around with a travelling circus and work as a truck driver. Motifs that refer to a peasant life can be found in his broad oeuvre as well as colourful reflections on the Bible and his home country, the USA.

Sam Doyle (1906-1985)

Sam Doyle was born on Saint Helena Island, South Carolina, the eighth of nine children in a Gullah family (African Americans with their own Creole language). After his retirement Doyle began to dedicate himself intensively to painting. He painted with facade paint on large wooden boards and corrugated tin roofs, using materials he could find on his island. He often placed figures without contours in front of monochrome backgrounds, inscriptions lend his paintings tension.

