

Epiphanies

The uncompromising visions of art brut and outsider art empower **DJ Marcelle/Another Nice Mess** to go her own way on the turntables



DJ Marcelle/Another Nice Mess with Johann Hauser's *Girl In Yellow Dress 2 (1967)*

Recently I got a mail from De School, the reopened Amsterdam night club, in which they asked if I was willing to give DJ workshops. They wanted me to give lectures about how to sync tracks, how to build up a set, and all these other clichés. I was both surprised and shocked by this request, and thought to myself: what have I done wrong? Over the years, I never hid my opinion that DJ workshops, rock academies and 'how to boost your music career by seeing yourself as a brand' courses are the antithesis of what I stand for – they discourage creativity and authenticity, create clones and fakeness, and put the DJ in a straitjacket.

On the other hand, maybe I should just accept the offer and, instead of talking about all kinds of stale rules, take the students to an outsider art museum. Because it's at one of these museums, Collection de l'Art Brut in Lausanne, that I found true inspiration for my own music and DJing. Art brut (raw art) was a description given in 1947 by French painter and sculptor Jean Dubuffet to art made by outsiders, including psychiatric patients. Such artists are untrained and have no contact with the standard art world. It is art produced compulsively, for individual satisfaction and expression, and with no implicit wish for it to be sold, exhibited or ever seen by others.

Obviously, one can argue that dubbing something or someone as an outsider is saying more about the people who make this claim than about the subject itself. The norms and values of the ones with power decide what is in or out, and what definitions we use.

However, for me it's refreshing to see how artists remain their own authentic, visionary self. Take Dutch artist Jefke Dijkstra. Her drawings of high rise buildings are a riot of colour, rhythm and movement. Japanese artist Shuji Takashi works more or less unaware of the size limitations of the paper, so often

his compositions come to an abrupt end.

In art brut I see anxiety and obsessions, but also humour, lightness, an expression of how the world really is or should be. On our walls in our Amsterdam house I have many postcard examples of this: a moving drawing by Frédéric Bruly Bouabré of two vulnerable standing figures, their arms entangled with each other. The full title: *Les Hommes S'aiment, Mais Parfois Il Arrive Des Cas De Folie Où Ils Se Font La Guerre. Mais Ici L'amour Domine*. Another drawing is of a doubled face with four ears, two mouths and four eyes. It's funny and disturbing at the same time. Next to it hangs a drawing of a woman's head with a big hairdo containing a woman with a big hairdo. I can look at them endlessly.

In terms of music, one of my favourite artists is Bryn Jones, aka Muslimgauze, who died in 1999 at the age of just 37. He surely had some of the traits of an outsider artist: he had an almost innocent, open and unlearned perspective on how to make music. He was an artist totally unto himself, his style was unique. Beats would come out and in during tracks at unexpected moments. Jones lived in his own world, not caring what anyone thought of him. He made up to six albums a month, not bothered if they would all be released, and his interest in the Israel/Palestine situation bordered on the obsessive. As with the most valuable artists, for instance Mark E Smith, there was some provocation and unpleasantness involved – in Muslimgauze's case, some of his track and album titles, all taken from news and facts about the occupation – but good art should not be taken literally, it should get one thinking.

Art brut did not have a culture of art schools or try to fit the system, and I can relate to that: I have always refused to ask for financial or other help from

institutions, and I will never explain myself to or be at the mercy of someone sitting behind a desk. A few years ago someone working for Dutch television wanted to produce a mini documentary about me as part of an overview of that year's edition of the famous Amsterdam Dance Event. He took it for granted I was booked for ADE, even though I told him I wasn't. In the end, I ended up in a documentary about a festival I didn't participate in. I loved that! It was very Marcelle-like.

Did this make me an outsider or insider? Perhaps both. A remark I regularly get after my sets is people saying that they never thought club music could be this strange, but also far more exciting – starting a set with someone shouting for help for several minutes, playing weird techno, a cappella singing and music concrète all at the same time, and drastically changing musical styles at any given moment, so the audience can never rest on their laurels. They never realised how bored they had become with conventional club nights and probably had a similar epiphanic feeling as me when I first saw a whole collection of outsider art.

After my visit in Lausanne, I subscribed to the magazine *Raw Vision*, and during future DJ travels I visited outsider art museums in, for example, New York and Paris. I bought, as well as numerous posters, postcards and books, outsider art music by artists like Adolf Wölfli, Jean-Marie Massou and Hans Krüsi. But most of all, I stayed true to my own musical identity, and my belief of how my work should be: open, free and ungraspable, existing in a world of its own. □ DJ Marcelle/Another Nice Mess tours locations across Europe this month: see *Out There*. *DJ Marcelle: The Musical* is released by Play Loud! Productions anothernicemess.com

Courtesy DJ Marcelle/Another Nice Mess