



Callan Park Gallery

For Self-Taught and Outsider Art

FRESH CREATION - GÉRARD SENDREY

'All demonstrations of knowledge must be destroyed as they try to impose themselves. Never succumb to the comfort of the reflex. It is rather too easy to learn. One must dismiss this avenue.' So writes Gérard Sendrey, a committed artist for over forty years, founder of the Musée de la Création Franche (Museum of Fresh Creation) in Bègles, France, and one-time civil servant in the Bordeaux and Bègles municipalities. Born in 1928, he left school at fourteen. Always physically and psychologically fragile, he suffered from compulsive obsessions (in particular after his father's early and violent death) that have dogged him all his life. The experience of psychoanalysis in 1967 both alleviated his psychological suffering and triggered an irrepressible need to create. For ten years he painted alone, until in 1979 he held his first exhibition and founded the 'Groupe Pluriel'.

Sendrey is completely self-taught, though he balks at being called an 'autodidact' because, as he says, 'it characterises someone who has reached, by himself, knowledge derived from the established culture.' His

goal, he argues, is rather to 'visit the unknown, which is the opposite of knowledge.' He works obsessively, every day, and in a year, can produce around 8,000 works! In this way, he transmutes, in his words, 'his deep anxieties into a show reflecting the absolute thirst to live.'

In 1989, a year after he retired, Sendrey and the Bègles mayor, Noël Mamère opened the Musée de la Création Franche, which is devoted to self-taught and outsider art. The term Création Franche was coined to distinguish it from 'art brut' since the term was so closely associated with Dubuffet's collection. For Sendrey, Création Franche includes all forms of creation, parallel to 'cultural' art, from folk art to surrealism, and from naïve art to the latest developments in contemporary art, going beyond theoretical boundaries and definitions. Since its inception, it has concentrated on living artists who have one thing in common: their inventiveness fuelled by a rebellious state of mind.

The works in this exhibition fall into two parts. In one room there are 50 works from two recent series of drawings (20 from late 2008 and 30 from early 2009). Together they form a powerful testament to Sendrey's ability to work through a focused and intense preoccupation with a particular medium and theme during a defined period. These striking black-and-white works explore the elements of love, human relationships and family that are at the very heart of the artist's work and worldview. Their subtleties are actually magnified when seen en masse, playing out a drama that is as fresh and young in these works as it is timeless in its essence. The other room contains a mix of work spanning the last decade, including a series of stunning acrylic paintings of faces, into whose surface frenetic calligraphy has been scrawled whilst the paint was still wet. Once again, though a number of 'styles' are in evidence in this space, the underlying content is the same. This is in no small part





a result of the automatic techniques utilised by Sendrey for forty years. Characteristically, he says, 'When I draw, I have no preconceived ideas', preferring dissatisfaction with the resulting image to anything that felt like it belonged to his personal 'schemes'. As a result he never destroys anything, since these 'proposals from the unknown require several looks' before they allow themselves to be 'somewhat tamed'. This is why he distinguishes between what he calls art and creation: 'One is the antithesis of the other. Art presupposes knowledge and an acquired craft obtained from education, experience and training. The desire to create is based on a deep challenge to knowledge.' It is also, he says, 'an enormous pretension', which must be accompanied by 'the utmost humility'.

Colin Rhodes

Gérard Sendrey's work can be found in many public and private collections, including:

Collection de l'Art Brut, Lausanne, Switzerland; Collection Philippe Eternod and Jean mermod, Lausanne, Switzerland; Museum Charlotte Zander, Bönningheim, Germany; Collection Arnulf Rainer, Vienna, Austria; Musée d'Art Brut L'Aracine, Villeneuve d'Ascq, France; Ville de Bordeaux, France; Anthony Petullo Collection, Milwaukee, USA; Milwaukee Art Museum, USA

Select Bibliography

Daniel Boisserie et al, *Exposition Gérard Sendrey: la ré-création du monde*. Exhibition catalogue, Centre Culturel Jean-Pierre-Fabrègue, Saint-Yrieix, France, 2006

Sylvie Guéniat et al, *Exposition Gérard Sendrey: Figures libres*. Exhibition catalogue, Galerie Âme Couleur, Fleurier, France, 2007

Gérard Sendrey, *Exposition Gérard Sendrey: «Non-Artiste»*. Exhibition catalogue, Galerie Le Triangle d'Art, Libourne, France, 2006

Gérard Sendrey, *Histoires de Création Franche*. Spézet. Editions l'Authenticiste, 1998

Fresh Creation - Gérard Sendrey, will be on display until Saturday 3 October.

Gallery hours: Saturday, 11am to 4pm. By appointment on other days.

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Images: (front page) Gérard Sendrey, *Effect of the Breast*, 2009,

(back page) Gérard Sendrey, *Composition*, 2009.



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