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At the Outsider Art Fair, Artists at the Margins Become the Market Stars

From Sam Doyle and Janet Sobel to Frank Diaz Escalet, the artists generating the most excitement at this year's edition are long overdue for their time in the spotlight.

By [Elisa Carollo](#) • 03/21/26 11:00am



If you're tired of seeing the same names circulating at fairs across geographies, the [Outsider Art Fair](#) is where you can still discover alternative minds that are often more radical, more intuitive and, at times, more visionary, all while remaining refreshingly accessible in price. What begins as a quick visit might easily stretch into hours, or pull you back the next day, as each booth opens onto a distinct and often deeply personal universe that resists easy categorization, with unique stories and world-building practices. As the notion of outsider art has expanded beyond its origins in Art Brut, so too has its institutional and market recognition. Today, the category encompasses folk, outsider and progressive art, as well as self-taught artists once relegated to the margins. Outsider artists are now increasingly featured in major museum exhibitions and biennials; some are even represented by blue-chip galleries, reflecting a cultural appetite for alternative perspectives.

Just before the exit, one arrives at London-based Gallery of Everything, which has built a reputation across major international fairs for discovering and repositioning visionary figures—from Madge Gill at Frieze Masters to Afro-Caribbean Surrealist painter Hector Hyppolite at Art Basel Paris. At the Outsider Art Fair, the gallery presents a full booth dedicated to Sam Doyle (1906-1985), drawn from the collection of Bob Roth. Born into the Gullah community of St. Helena Island, South Carolina, Doyle was a self-taught artist who transformed the front yard of his home into the St. Helena Outdoor Art Gallery, covering it with bold, graphic paintings on corrugated tin, scrap metal and found wood. A natural storyteller, he captured the lives of friends, neighbors, local heroes and healers through vivid portraits often paired with sharp, witty captions, while also reflecting the broader history of Black emancipation and cultural life. His work gained national attention following its inclusion in the landmark exhibition “Black Folk Art in America: 1930-1980” (1982), later entering the orbit of Jean-Michel Basquiat, who collected and displayed Doyle’s works in his studio. Today, Doyle is recognized as a central figure in 20th-century African American art, with works held in major institutional collections including the Smithsonian, LACMA and the High Museum.

