

EXTRAMENTALE

HENRY DARGER SUMMER CAMP
May 23rd – June 6th 2019

Biographies

Henry Darger (1892 - 1973)

Born and died in Chicago (1892 – 1973), Henry Darger is an artist and writer known for his posthumous work, *The story of the Vivian Girls*.

Darger spent most of his life in Chicago. His childhood can be considered as tough. Her mother died in childbirth when Darger was four years old. Until he was eight, Darger lived altogether with his father. Educated in a catholic private school, he was frequently mocked and sidelined, as Darger often spoke alone, couldn't restrain verbal insults and frequently practiced pyromania and onanism. He was reluctant to any form of authority. In 1905, Darger was placed at the Lincoln Institute, a psychiatric refuge for the mentally handicapped. He nearly spent seven years there and lived a contrasting period. The Lincoln Institute was known for its harsh ill-treatment, like forced labour and experiments on humans). Yet, in his partial autobiography, *The History of My Life*, Darger admitted enjoying making friends or working on certain tasks there. When he was sixteen, Darger escaped from The Lincoln Institute and moved back to Chicago. His godmother welcomed him. He first worked modestly in a Catholic hospital as a doorman. Except for a brief stint in the U.S. Army during World War I, he spent his whole life working in modest positions, his life going like clockwork: masses up to five times a day, collecting rubbish and papers reused in his works during his walks, methodical records of weather changes.

From 1930 to 1973, Darger occupied the same room in Chicago. There, he secretly wrote three unique works (*The Story of The Vivian Girls*; *Crazy House* and his incomplete autobiography *The History of My Life*), progressively illustrated by large panoramas, frescos, portraits and even flags.

The Story of the Vivian Girls emphasized Henry Darger's iconoclastic artistic practice. Forming an epic tale made of nearly 15,000 pages, this story recounts the struggle of the "Vivian Girls", young girls often doted endowed with male sex, against the evil forces led by the demoniac John Manley in the imaginary land Abbieanna. Darger illustrated each chapter into large frescoes, although he didn't know how to draw. He traced figures and motifs from newspaper, magazines and children's books using carbon paper, which he then reproduced and enlarged in his compositions, before coloring them with watercolor and gouache. At first sight, his works may seem colorful, joyful and phantasmagorical. But the superposition of universes, the sequence of adventures and his imagination inscribed his stories both in fairy tale and a wider consideration on human violence, childhood and sexuality.

Darger never tried to show his work. His inspirations still remain unknown today, but they somehow recall medieval illuminations from *The Book of Kells*, sinful scenes by William Blake and iconography from the Massacre of the Innocents.

Discovered and popularized by his landlord - and photographer - Nathan Lerner, his work is now owned and split into private and public collections, especially The American Folk Museum and MoMA (New York), The Collection d'Art Brut de Lausanne or The Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris. The latter presented the artist's latest retrospective (2015) in France. Extramentale presents the first exhibition in France solely dedicated to Darger's contemporary heritage.

Paul Kindersley (*1985)

Using paint, make-up and costumes Kindersley's work is a kind of living open sketchbook . His work has been considered as an irreverent queering of modernist avant-garde. Best known for his make-up tutorials (*Extreme Dream (Makeover)* at Nottingham Contemporary 2014), the artist also makes theatrical performances, drawings, and film, such as *Das Spiel Der Hoffnung* (2017), an amateur horror films.

The low-rent quality of his video and his webcam makeovers bears testimony of an autonomous economy of "making". So do his costumes that often play as theatrical props. Those are made out from second-hand fabrics. His recent projects include a performance "camp", *The Shop of Fool in the Selfridges space*, a wall-painting presentation and a performance cycle shown within the collective exhibition *DRAG: Self-Portraits and Body Politics*, designed by Vincent Honoré for The Hayward Gallery. In France, Paul Kindersley has exhibited his make-up tutos at MAC-Val (2019)

Paul Kindersley is a graduate of Cambridge Regional College (2004) and the University of Arts London (2009). Born in 1985 (Cambridge) Paul Kindersley now lives and works in London.

Thomas Liu Le Lann (*1994)

Thomas Liu Le Lann's work forms an attempt to undo masculinity, proving how softness and passivity can be progressive. The artist represents both his own uncertain genre and his fiancé's in sculptural works and poems based on autofiction. In recent works, the artist has introduced the figure of "*soft hero*", seeking to deconstruct in the vision of dominant heroic model and its oversized representations. He collaborated with Lili Reynaud Dewar on the film *Beyond The Land Minimal Possessions*

Thomas Liu Le Lann graduated from the Master of Arts at HEAD. He received the BNP Paribas Art Awards Foundation prize and the Prize Head Gallery at Galerie Xippas. His upcoming exhibitions will take place at Lubov Gallery, New York, Xippas Gallery, Geneva and la Vin, Vienna. Born in 1994, Thomas Liu Le Lann lives and works in Geneva.

Matthias Garcia (*1994)

Matthias Garcia has grown a taste for “pictural ambiguity”, muddling up in his works childish imaginations, evasive figures and unreal atmospheres. His oil paintings borrow from Unica Zurn (1916-1970) to Léonard Tsuguharu Foujita (1886-1978) to tales by Andersen (the little mermaid) as well as the teenagers dolls such as Monster High. His installations (*Death Yourself*, shown at the Do Disturb Festival, Palais de Tokyo, 2018) and his digital narrations also explore the notion of death and its associated social rites. His work has been shown at the KG Gallery in Tokyo, Japan in the exhibition “*Sombre Printemps*”.

Matthias Garcia is currently studying at École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts Paris. He’s also preparing a B.A Art Therapy at the Saint-Anne Hospital in Paris. Born in 1994, he lives and works in Paris.

Jennifer May Reiland (*1989)

Jennifer May Reiland's work builds narratives with a fluid and naïve aesthetic, close to medieval illuminations. Based on drawings, her works questions sexuality, cultural rites (*The Arena*, video, 2017) as well as black magic and apocalyptic imaginaries (*The Voisin Tarot*). Her works superimpose collages and drawings of her own, playing with a naïve, sometimes violent, universe. Questioning violence and sexuality, bring her close to Darger's topics, just like her technique made of bright colours and thin lines.

Graduated from Cooper Union (2011) and Universitat de Barcelona, Jennifer May Reiland is a former resident of The United States Foundation in Paris. She was part of several exhibitions, including The Drawing Center (New York) and Thaddeus Ropac Paris gallery. Born in 1989, she lives and works in New York.

Gaël Sillère (*1994)

Gaël Sillère's work combines images, videos, performances and objects. Beforehand, drawings prepares each plastic intervention. Questioning his relationship with the modern world, Gaël Sillère draws on the vast production of mass culture to imagine actions full of poetic and absurd characters. Standard and manufactured spaces, discount and hyper-transformed food or objects produced in industrial quantities are his territories. Attached to different forms of narratives, Gaël Sillère tries to bring microfictions into these uniform and smooth spaces.

First graduated from the Toulouse School of Fine Arts (isdaT), he's a recent graduated from the Ecole Nationale Supérieure de la Photographie d'Arles (ENSP). His work will be presented as part of the Rencontres Internationales de la Photographie 2019 in the exhibition "*Une attention particulière*".