



Eugene Von Bruenchenhein



Eugene Von Bruenchenhein was born in Marinette (Wisconsin) in 1910 and died in Milwaukee, Wisconsin in 1983. He was a visionary artist who created a vast number of paintings, photographs and sculptural objects that overfilled his modest house in Milwaukee, a collection undiscovered until shortly after his death. He worked at a bakery during the day and privately made his obsessive art in virtual isolation, with the exception of his wife, Marie, and select relatives and friends.

Although he did not finish high school, Von Bruenchenhein became fascinated with botany and science, and wrote extensively on his own metaphysical theories of biological and cosmological origins, as well as the primal genesis of a genetically encoded collective knowledge.

In 1939 Von Bruenchenhein met Eveline Kalke, "Marie," at a state fair in Wisconsin, and they were married in 1943. Marie was his muse, and they collaborated in staging hundreds of passionate and provocative, yet playful and loving, pinup-like photographs and slides of Marie. Von Bruenchenhein's resourcefulness played a central part in both the assembling and the effect: a luxurious setting fashioned from five-and-dime supplies. Their relationship found a sort of sideshow glamour in his carefully considered, and often erotic photographs. These intimate vignettes exemplify a subject/object dynamic, where Marie is immortalized while he occupied the part of voyeur. When seen together as a series, her response to his approach becomes a visual narrative. Acting as a model, and taking on the roles of goddess, queen, star, seductress and ingénue, she explores her own place in this work, often defining the look of an image through a glance or a smile.

Eugene Von Bruenchenhein purchased standard photographic paper in the 1940s. Therefore, most of the photographs are sized at 10 x 8, 7 x 5, or 4 1/2 x 2 3/4 inches. All photographs are untitled, unsigned and undated as is consistent with the work. On the verso of each are two inventory numbers written in graphite: one from Works from the Estate of Eugene Von Bruenchenhein and the second from the John Michael Kohler Arts Center, Sheboygan, Wisconsin who inventoried works from the artist's home after his death.

A limited release of original works is now available.

- | | |
|-----------|--|
| 1930's | Begins to write poetry and prose. (Continues writing throughout lifetime.)
Pursues interest in horticulture. Makes small number of still life and Portrait paintings. |
| 1939 | Meets Marie K. Kalke. The two are married in 1943. |
| 1940's | Produces photographs. Begins to create ceramic objects, continuing through the 1970's. |
| 1944 | Finds employment in large bakery. |
| 1954 | Begins "H-Bomb" painting series. Paintings develop into visionary series (chronologically dated and numbered), continuing into the 1960's. |
| 1959 | Retires from employment at bakery. Meets Dan Nycz, friend and ardent supporter. |
| 1960 | Concrete Mask-Monuments
Ceramic Crowns
Bone Chairs |
| Late 60's | stops painting |
| 1970 | Bone Towers |
| Late 70's | Resumes painting with "Rejection" or "Repulse Phase."
Begins "Complex" painting series of visionary architecture. |

EXHIBITIONS

- 2013 Alternative Guide To The Universe, Hayward Gallery (London, England), June 11 - August 26
55th International Art Exhibition, Venice Biennale, Giardini and at the Arsenale (Italy), June 1 – Nov. 24
Great and Mighty Things: Outsider Art from the Jill and Sheldon Bonovitz Collection , Philadelphia Museum of Art (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania), March 3 - June 9
Women's Studies, American Folk Art Museum (New York, New York), January 24 - May 26
- 2011 Eugene Von Bruenchenhein: From the Wand of the Genii, Intuit: The Center for Intuitive and Outsider Art (Chicago, Illinois) and Inova/Kenilworth, a gallery of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (Milwaukee)
- 2010 Eugene Von Bruenchenhein: "Freelance Artist-Poet and Sculptor-Innovator-Arrow maker and Plant man-Bone artifacts constructor-Photographer and Architect-Philosopher", American Folk Art Museum (New York)
Out Of This World, American Visionary Art Museum (Baltimore, Maryland), March 2010 – March 2012
- 2008 After Nature (Group Exhibition), New Museum (New York)
- 2007 Eugene Von Bruenchenhein, Feigen Contemporary (New York)
- 2004 Eugene Von Bruenchenhein, Feigen Contemporary (New York)
- 2001 American Anthem: Masterworks from the AFAM, American Folk Art Museum (New York)
- 1999 Botanical Explosions: The Paintings of Eugene Von Bruenchenhein, Ricco/Maresca Gallery (New York)
Obsession, Kölnischer Kunstverein (Cologne, Germany)
Eugene Von Bruenchenhein Photography, Aurel Scheibler Gallery (Cologne, Germany)
Self-Taught Artists of the 20th Century, sponsored by the Museum of American Folk Art (New York) to the :
Philadelphia Museum of Art (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania)
High Museum of Art (Atlanta, Georgia)
Anon Carter Museum/Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth (Fort Worth, Texas)
Memorial Art Gallery - University Of Rochester (Rochester, New York)
Wexner Center for the Arts - Ohio State University (Columbus, Ohio)
Museum of American Folk Art (New York, New York)
- 1998 Ceramic Sculptures: Eugene Von Bruenchenhein, Fleisher/Ollman Gallery (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania)
Naked, Ricco/Maresca Gallery (New York)
- 1997 Eugene Von Bruenchenhein: Works in Clay, Fleisher/Ollman Gallery (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania)
- 1996 Biennale de Lyon (Lyons, France)
Looking Beyond the Mirror, Carl Hammer Gallery (Chicago, Illinois)
Eugene Von Bruenchenhein: Paintings, Ricco/Maresca Gallery (New York)
- 1995 A World of Their Own: Twentieth-Century American Folk Art, Newark Museum (Newark, New Jersey)
Obsession: Photographs by E.V.B., Michael Lord Gallery (Milwaukee, Wisconsin)
- 1994 Experience the Fantasy, Carl Hammer Gallery (Chicago, Illinois)
Marie, Ricco/Maresca Gallery (New York, New York)
- 1993 Eugene Von Bruenchenhein, Fotografien, Galerie Susanne Zander (Cologne, Germany)
E. Von Bruenchenhein Photographs, Edward Thorp Gallery (New York)
- 1992 Eugene Von Bruenchenhein: Utopic Dreams, Carl Hammer Gallery (Chicago, Illinois)
- 1991 Dreams, Lies and Exaggerations: Photomontage in America, Traveling Exhibition: The Art Gallery of the University of Maryland at College Park; John M. Kohler Arts Center (Sheboygan, Wisconsin)
- 1990 Outsiders: Artists Outside the Mainstream, Octagon Center for the Arts (Ames, Iowa)
Eugene Von Bruenchenhein, Carl Hammer Gallery (Chicago, Illinois)
Chicago New Art Forms Exposition (Chicago, Illinois)
Visions: Expressions Beyond the Mainstream, Arts Club of Chicago (Chicago, Illinois)
Chicago International Art Exposition (Chicago, Illinois)
E. V. B.: Paintings and Photographs, Edward Thorp Gallery (New York, New York)
- 1989 Departures: Photography 1924-1989, Hirschl and Adler Modern (New York, New York)
Paintings of Utopic Vision, Carl Hammer Gallery (Chicago, Illinois)
- 1988 Eugene Von Bruenchenhein: Obsessive Visionary, Milwaukee Art Museum (Milwaukee, Wisconsin)
Eugene Von Bruenchenhein, Carl Hammer Gallery (Chicago, Illinois)
Chicago International Art Exposition (Chicago, Illinois)
Chicago New Art Forms Exposition (Chicago, Illinois)
- 1987 Chairs as Art, Arts Club of Chicago (Chicago, Illinois)
Material Obsessions, Carl Hammer Gallery (Chicago, Illinois)
A Thousand and One Nights, Landmark Gallery (Milwaukee, Wisconsin)
Chairs, Expressways Children's Museum (Chicago, Illinois)
Chicago International Art Exposition (Chicago, Illinois)
Chicago New Art Forms Exposition (Chicago, Illinois)
- 1986 Eugene Von Bruenchenhein, Carl Hammer Gallery (Chicago, Illinois)
- 1984 Von Bruenchenhein: A Retrospective, Landmark Gallery (Milwaukee, Wisconsin)
Eugene Von Bruenchenhein: Wisconsin Visionary, John Michael Kohler Arts Center (Sheboygan)
- 1983 Remains To Be Seen, John Michael Kohler Arts Center (Sheboygan, Wisconsin)

COLLECTIONS

High Museum of Art, Atlanta, GA – Milwaukee Art Museum, Milwaukee, WI – First National Bank of Chicago, Chicago, IL – John Michael Kohler Arts Center, Sheboygan WI – Mr. and Mrs. Michael Brillson, Chicago, IL – Mr. and Mrs. Russel Bowman, Milwaukee, WI – Dan Cameron, NY – Jay Chiat, NY – Diego Cortez, NY – Carroll Dunham and Laurie Simmons, NY – Eric Fischl, NY – Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Goldberg, NY – Robert Greenberg, NY – Marc Happel, NY – Jefferson Holt, Athens, GA – Dean Jensen, Milwaukee, WI – Timothy Keny, Columbus, OH – Andrew Masullo, Jr., NY – Frank Maresca, NY – Natasha Nicholson, Madison, WI – Myron B. Shure, Chicago, IL – Michael Stipe, Athens, GA – Phillip, Taafe, NY – Edward Thorpe, NY – John Yau, NY – Claire Zeisler, Chicago, IL

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- 2011 Lisa Stone. "From the Wand of the Genii," *The Outsider*, Fall 2011: 11-19.
Brett Littman with preface by Maria Ann Conelli. "Eugene Von Bruenchenhein: 'Freelance Artist-Poet and Sculptor-Inovator-Arrow Maker and Plant Man...'" . Published catalogue in conjunction with exhibition at the American Folk Art Museum.
- 2008 Lisa Stone. "Thoughts on the Art of Eugene Von Bruenchenhein," *Folk Art*.
- 2002 William Swislow. "Three Outsider Photographers: Lee Godie, Eugene Von Bruenchenhein and Morton Bartlett", *Folk Art Messenger*, Winter 2002: 28-31.
- 2001 Stacy C. Hollander and Brooke Davis Anderson. *American Anthem: Masterworks from the American Folk Art Museum*, Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers (New York), 2001: 229-232.
David Ebony. "Visionary in the Basement," *Art in America*, September 2001: 130-133.
- 2000 Carol Squires. "King of Hearts," *American Photography*, May-June 2000: 28 and 111.
- 1998 Joanne Cubbs and forward by John Ollman. *Ceramic Sculptures: Eugene Von Bruenchenhein*, Catalogue for Fleisher/Ollman Gallery (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania), 1998.
Gerard C. Werkin, et al. *Self-Taught Artists of the 20th Century: An American Anthology*, Chronicle Books (San Francisco) 1998: 121-125.
- 1997 W. M. Hunt. Guest editor and curator of "Delirium", a photographic exhibition for Aperture, Summer 1997, No. 148. Referenced in "Art & Auction," 30 November 1998: 20-21.
Victoria Pedersen. "Outsider Art: Raw Power," *Art and Auction*, October 1997: 128-129.
Lyle Rexer Uwe Scheid et al. *Nudes 2*, Graphis Inc. (New York), 1997: 212-215.
- 1995 *A World of Their Own: Twentieth-Century American Folk Art*, Newark Museum (Newark, New Jersey), 1995 cover and catalogue entry no. 74.
Lisa Stone. "Eugene Von Bruenchenhein," *Raw Vision*, Winter 1994/5: 32-38.
- 1994 Lori Gray. "Von Bruenchenhein's Work Looks To The Far East," *Chicago Tribune* 1994.
- 1993 Frank Maresca and Roger Ricco with a forward by Wilson Lanford. *American Self-Taught: Paintings and Drawings by Outsider Artists*, Alfred A. Knopf (New York), 1993.
- 1991 Cynthia Wayne. *Dreams, Lies and Exaggerations: Photomontage in America*.
John Yau. "Eugene Von Bruenchenhein, Edward Thorp Gallery," *Art Forum*, Jan. 1991, XXIX, No. 5: 124.
- 1988 Joanne Cubbs. *Eugene Von Bruenchenhein: Obsessive Visionary*, Milwaukee Art Museum. 1988.
- 1987 Margo Guralnick. "Out of this World: Eugene Von Bruenchenhein's Very Personal Paradise," *Art and Antiques*, February 1987: 65-66.
- 1986 Alan G. Artner. "Sampling a Fall Explosion in City's Exhibition Range." *Chicago Tribune*, 2 October 1986, Section 5: 9.
Norma Lifton. "Eugene Von Bruenchenhein," *New Art Examiner*, November: 50.
Sue Taylor. "Science, Love Inspired Milwaukeean," *Sun Times*, 18 September 1986: 72.