“A collection of naïve art by Jean-Marc Luce”

On permanent loan from the General Council of Yonne

to the Musée des Arts Naïfs et Populaires de Noyers sur Serein in Burgundy

The General Council of Yonne has extended the Yankel collection by adding the work of his friend, who is just as knowledgeable as him.
I was born in 1951, and grew up in the Pyrenees. After a short stint at the fine arts, I became a restorer of antiques (marquetry, gilded wood, statuary, polychromes, primitive art etc.). Alongside this, I have always crafted my own creations in the field of sculpture and furniture.

For a long time now, I have lived and worked in the department of Drôme in southeast France, and have always been passionate about art, particularly (although not exclusively) by non-conformist works. I have collected outsider, folk and primitive art, as well as fairground art and naive paintings. I’ve been collecting naive paintings for over twenty years, predominantly from flea markets in the South of France.

It goes without saying that I am delighted to see this collection exhibited in the beautiful setting of the Musée de Noyers and in such good company; especially Yankel to whom I owe so much for my artistic eye.
With regards to the paintings and painters, the word “naive” presents us with more questions than answers. This overused term is a lucrative trademark and all too often refers to pleasant, decorative, trivial paintings, mass produced and enriched with nostalgia.

During 20 years of sometimes dull mornings at flea and bric-a-brac markets in France and elsewhere, I passionately sought out something very different.

We often do not know anything about these anonymous and self-taught painters; we can only hazard a guess. We assume that some modest and patient individuals picked up the basics of academic pictorial science. One can imagine that they began as regular Sunday painters during the course of their quiet lives. Their only escape was to the corner of the dining room or the garden shed.

This produces works where only slight errors of perspective, proportions, stiffness in rendering and attention to detail, betray the self-taught. We find ourselves on the brink of that which separates these works from those in museums.
However, these are just faults which bring a poetic subtlety that a more accomplished artist would render opaque.

On the contrary, a great number of these paintings are works of absolute primitivism, often in a brutal manner. Should this style be regarded as a total ignorance of academic techniques? Or a creative freedom from art history? Or from these paintings can we also decipher the consequences of an unstructured life and pathological moments, and therefore emergency pictorial responses? We are still struck by such unconventional ideas and shortcuts, which the great artists of the 20th Century produced only after long hours of research and careful examination.

Not only does this collection offer works from both extremes, but it also encompasses various styles in between.
It’s often the disarming candour of the subjects which sparked my interest; my dog, my house, my bull. Even the more anecdotal works bear witness to periods and situations from which we only have evidence through bourgeois and conventional works. These pieces of art bring a new look and a different point of view, to the interplay of allegories.

When thinking about the humorous creations "Fanny", one must put them in perspective with the libidinous, sad although often virtuous paintings of Cabanel and Domergue.

In this case, there are many reasons why critics and cultural institutions often do not know and understand this type of art. Like the majority of the public, they despise these works which were never subjected to the clichés of good taste and high thought.

From this point of view, any sensitive and uninhibited amateur must pay homage to those who allow this museum to exist.

Jean-Marc Luce
Museum Opening Times

1st October - 31st May:
2.30 p.m. to 6.00 p.m., weekends, public and school holidays, except Tuesdays

June and September:
11.00 a.m. to 12.30 p.m. and 2.00 p.m. to 6.00 p.m., every day except Tuesday

July and August:
10.00 a.m. to 6.30 p.m., every day except Tuesday

Weekly closures: Tuesday
Annual closures: January

Entry: Adults €4, Senior citizens €3, Students €2, Children under 11 go free.

Group tours: €2 per person by reservation during museum opening hours.
School package: €23 for up to 40 children under the age of 11. Reservations to be made for usual museum opening hours.
Age 11+: €2

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