

Takashi Murakami Teams Up With Outsider Art Fair for “Super-Rough”

The master of flower power hand-picked nearly 200 works for the show in New York City

By Lila Allen

June 9, 2021



Installation view of “*Super-Rough*,” Olya Vysotskaya

The smiling flowers of artist Takashi Murakami are some of the most recognizable images of 21st-century art—but this week, the Japanese superstar is applying his talents to an entirely different endeavor: outsider art. In New York City, Murakami has been tapped as curator for a new exhibition produced by the Outsider Art Fair, a nearly 30-year-old organization that champions and presents the work of self-taught and outsider artists.

Running June 9–27, “*Super-Rough*” displays nearly 200 objects culled from exhibitors including Ricco/Maresca Gallery, Dutton, and Fleisher/Ollman. Most are displayed on a runway-like installation in a 4,000-square-foot space at 150 Wooster Street in SoHo.



Hans Schmitt, *Little Pig*, circa 1970s. Wood. 18 x 10 x 7 in. Courtesy Galerie Lange.

Don't let the term *outsider art* fool you, though: There are artists in "Super-Rough" with major star power. They include Howard Finster, the Alabama-born sculptor whose work is in the collections of the Smithsonian and MoMA; Judith Scott; and Monica Valentine, whose cherry-red sequin-dotted disc stands out as a must-see.

The "Super-Rough" name is a cheeky reference to *superflat*, a term Murakami coined in the early 2000s to refer to his graphic, manga-inspired aesthetic. Grinning daisies are nowhere to be found at 150 Wooster. Instead, you'll find pickaxe-wielding figures made of compacted sawdust, thrones built out of chicken bones, and other delights.

Andrew Edlin, the owner of the Outsider Art Fair, tells AD PRO that Murakami has been in his sights for years—the artist is a collector of outsider art, including works by Henry Darger. "It's always interesting to get a dynamic perspective from outside the field of self-taught and outsider art," says Edlin. "And of course, Murakami's overseeing things and it just adds a whole level of accessibility for the whole project."

For Murakami, artists outside of the canon offer unique insights into creativity and talent, even for the pros. "In baseball or soccer you have excellent scouts who can watch young athletes play, they are able to see even then that they have great muscle, agility,



build, or physique,” he says in a press release, “and when we look at self-taught art we can also appreciate this kind of physicality in their work, the agility and flexibility of their hand and brain.” The artist adds that “the physical perfection is there, they are not trained but they can do it. As artists we train so hard it is sometimes difficult to get out of our shell, we have to think of careers and money, to be able to play by a certain set of rules that allow less creative freedom.”

Eugene Von Bruenchenhein, *Throne Chair*, circa 1960. Chicken bones, paint, airplane glue, and varnish. 6 x 4 x 4 inches.
Courtesy The Gallery of Everything.