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Gentlemen,

I thank you for dedicating the September issue of New Art Examiner to a discussion of Folk Art, or "OUTSIDER" art. It is a topic which is enchanting to me, and at the same time I find some of the existing language to be challenging.

As I read SPEAKEASY by Leroy Almon, Sr., I became alarmed when I heard him refer to the Folk Artist as the *other*. For me, he was presenting a dichotomy. The Arts incorporate a multiplicity of forms and styles. Although Folk Art has specific qualities, I find it hard to believe that it is entirely foreign to other Art forms.

Art of the academy employs perspective, scale, texture, color, etc. The untrained artist is willing to skip over some of these elements of design. He breaks the rules because he doesn't know them.

The results are stunning and startling. Basic to the OUTSIDER artist is his unbridled enthusiasm. He remains untethered by stylistic cliches.

For me, reading SPEAKEASY, I found it to be a convoluted article which got lost among the philosophical shades of gray and our cultural struggle for identity and security. It made me remember a statement by Louis Armstrong when he was asked for a definition of jazz. His response was, "If you have to ask, you'll never know."

All of the Arts share a vitality. The OUTSIDER Art has a lyrical embodiment, a contrast between material and theme; poetry in concrete. Counterpoint of rocks against the lustrous candy-colored broken china. The eyes, enlivened, move. Thirsty for more delicious details. The observer becomes hungry for the new vision; starved for the new flavor; yearning to drink deeply of the medley of color, form, texture and startling juxtaposition of images.

Then I turn to my Professor Jansen. His The History of Art is filled with art from the academy. Is their impact any less? Not really. The Art of El Greco also stirs my spirit and touches my heart. In my experience, most Art forms are able to do this.

Art is ART when it successfully communicates with the observer. It breaks the barrier between people. For that moment, I am able to see what the Artist saw. There is a bonding. He is not the *other*. He has enriched my experience and therefore, he is now a part of me. I will always have a way of seeing through his eyes. His vision is part of my visual vocabulary.

For me, Art makes my heart beat faster and makes me glad to be alive. I had to respond when I heard Mr. Almon distance himself from the Artist and the Art Experience, because that approach reduces Art to a commodity, and then we are speaking about another subject.

Sincerely,

Marion Blake