



‘Confusingly Unique’: A Labelling History of Willem van Genk

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In 2016, the Rijksmuseum acquired an impressive drawing, titled *Moscow* (fig. 1), via a transfer of custody from the Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands (RCE).¹ It is a large frontal perspective of Moscow’s Kiyevsky Station and its immediate surroundings, rendered in minute detail, without the maker ever having been there. The drawing was made in or around 1955 by the Dutch artist Willem van Genk (1927–2005). Curators Allied Ottevanger and Ludo van Halem, who took the initiative for the transfer, immediately hung *Moscow* in the permanent display of the twentieth-century collection, along with two works by his contemporary Constant, both dating from 1956: the wire sculpture *Spatial Circus* and the painting *La Ville noyée*. Together they were meant to convey the ambivalent mood prevailing in the nineteen-fifties Netherlands.² While Constant’s ‘spatial circus’ reflected an optimistic take on technological progress, both his ‘drowned city’ and Van Genk’s murky drawing seemed to evoke something of the oppressive paranoia of the Cold War.

Considering Van Genk’s admiration for the Soviet Union as a protector of the weak (at least up until the Prague Spring of 1968), his intention was unlikely to draw an ominous picture of Moscow.³ Rather than analysing his

< Fig. 1
WILLEM VAN GENK,
Moscow, c. 1955.
Pen and gouache on
paper, 119.5 × 151.5 cm.
Amsterdam,
Rijksmuseum,
inv. no. RP-T-2016-4,
transfer of custody
from the Cultural
Heritage Agency of
the Netherlands (RCE),
inv. no. K89320.

possible motives, however, this article aims to explore the status of the man and his work in the art world. The phrase ‘the Dutch artist Willem van Genk’, as it appears in the previous paragraph, may at first seem unremarkable – in Van Genk’s case, however, to be described as a bona fide artist was anything but a given. Even those instances in which he was referred to as an artist were invariably accompanied by disclaimers citing psychiatric disorders and/or descriptions of his work in dismissive, classifying terms like naive, amateurish, outsider art, in effect declaring both the man and his work *hors catégorie*. The question then arises: what role did the classification of Van Genk’s art (and person) play in his career and reception?

With the acquisition of *Moscow*, the Rijksmuseum not only added an impressive artwork to the collection. It also placed a new milestone (perhaps unwittingly) beside the long and laborious road to Van Genk’s recognition. He himself would never have dared to dream that his work would once be shown in, of all places, the permanent collection of the national treasure house. What follows is a reconstruction of that laborious road, a reception history, or rather a sort of ‘labelling history’, as it focuses on the manifold labels pinned on Van Genk by critics, supporters and others.⁴

To my mind, the importance of this (possibly new) subgenre extends beyond Van Genk's case alone. Historiography, after all, relies to a significant degree on classification and labelling, on appellations that all have their communicative use but never without complication. Art historian Robert Rosenblum spoke of 'semantic straitjackets' that 'have become impossible either to live with or to live without'.⁵ Far too often, Van Genk unwillingly experienced that labels are not without consequence; they are difficult to peel off, often leaving nasty and persistent marks.

Between 'Disabled' and 'Genius'

Van Genk's first appearance in the news occurred at the end of 1958, when art critic Rudolf Ernst Penning wrote the story of his discovery for the *Haaagsche Courant* (illustrated with one of his other drawings of the Kievsky Station). Having spent his days in a workshop for the mentally disabled ('Arbeid voor Onvolwaardigen') since 1947, Van Genk paid a visit to the Royal Academy of Art in

The Hague in late 1958. The then director of the academy, Joop Beljon, spotted an extraordinary talent, but, as he thought, not the kind that could be developed in art school. He decided to allow Van Genk to do his own thing during the evening class. In his article, Penning characterized Van Genk as a 'mixture of dogged obsession, indicating mental strain, and on the other hand, a certain childlike naivety and primitiveness'.⁶ This description established two of the categories to which Van Genk's work would often be designated: psychiatric art and naive art.

Subsequently, designer Pieter Brattinga, prompted by Beljon, staged a one-man exhibition of Van Genk's drawings at Steendrukkerij De Jong & Co in Hilversum in early 1964. Also exhibited were nine works, among them the present drawing, bearing the title *Mockba*, written in Cyrillic letters. In hindsight, the name given to the exhibition was remarkably neutral: *Willem van Genk's fantastische werkelijkheid* (Willem van Genk's Fantastic Reality). In the catalogue, Beljon described him first as an 'artist' and then, as if he felt that this was not really appropriate, as a 'Sunday painter', which basically means (merely) an untrained hobbyist or amateur painter. On the other hand, he sung Van Genk's praise. In response to 'a psychiatrist' who thought that 'Willem van Genk's mental content amounts to nothing at all', Beljon sneered that 'the restricted awareness that occurs in many psychiatrists in their hunt for adjustment' blinds them to 'some characteristics of the genius painter'. He thought that Van Genk's state of mind was completely irrelevant to his art.⁷

Van Genk himself must have had great expectations of his exhibition debut. It was, it should be noted, initiated by the director of an art academy, and opened by one of the Netherlands's most famous writers, W.F. Hermans, who declared the

Fig. 2

Willem van Genk at the opening of the exhibition *Van Genk's fantastische werkelijkheid*, Hilversum (Steendrukkerij de Jong & Co), 18 January 1964. Photograph by Eddy de Jongh. Rotterdam, Nederlands Fotomuseum, inv. no. EDJ-2775-01.



artist's work to be 'terrifyingly beautiful'.⁸ His portrait was taken by respected photographers like Eddy Posthuma de Boer and Eddy de Jongh (fig. 2), and he was interviewed for a major weekly magazine by journalist Bibeb, as well as for television. The prices for his work were also set notably high (by Brattinga).⁹

Media attention, however, did not equal artistic appreciation, and some criticism was far from gentle. *De Tijd* daily newspaper asked for the opinion of Van Genk's psychiatrist, Nico Speijer, who had already told Beljon that Van Genk's mental content was non-existent. Speijer now also publicly wrote off Van Genk's work as sterile, uncreative and typical of the mentally ill, with a reference to his colleague Johannes Plokker.¹⁰ Two years before, in 1962, this psychiatrist had achieved great success with his dissertation *Geschonden Beeld: Beeldende Expressie bij Schizophrenen*, published in English two years later with the title *Artistic Self-Expression in Mental Disease: The Shattered Image of Schizophrenics*. Plokker argued, partly based on his own collection of patients' creative expressions, that mental disease and art rule each other out, perhaps despite the occasional exception.¹¹ When asked, Plokker told *De Tijd* that Van Genk's great attention to detail in his work could be seen as a sign of social maladjustment. A subsequent television report, capitalizing on the stubborn romantic topos of the mad genius, left it to the viewer to decide whether the work of the 'mentally disturbed' Van Genk was an expression of 'a sick, manic mind' or a 'great artistic discovery'.¹²

When Van Genk saw himself on tv, he was so shocked by his unsettled appearance that he shunned the media thereafter. He was also painfully touched by the psychiatric diagnoses in the media. This emerges, among other things, in his *Microcollage* '73,



which contains a quote from the English title of Plokker's book, written on a banner over the picture of a suicide, which could be a self-portrait. In conjunction with the medallion of a child being beaten by its father, this can be read as a bitter accusation against the people making decisions about his life (fig. 3).¹³ It is a quite harrowing example of a label having consequences, a medical and artistic rejection that pained the artist and prompted him to hit back in the only place available to him: his work.

Nonetheless there was also support for Beljon's vision. 'Genius Discovered' was the heading above art critic Lambert Tegenbosch's positive review in *de Volkskrant*, which does not appear to have been intended ironically.¹⁴ Art critic Hans Redeker of the *Algemeen Handelsblad* tried to unite Penning's two categories and described Van Genk rather laboriously as a 'mentally handicapped ... Sunday painter with the obsessiveness of a real "naivist" ... who has retained the individual creativity of the child'.¹⁵ It does not sound very flattering, even if it was well meant.

Fig. 3
WILLEM VAN GENK,
Microcollage '73
(detail), 1973.
Oil and mixed
media on
cardboard,
72 x 132 cm.
Ghent, Museum
Dr. Guislain
(on loan from the
Stichting Collectie
De Stadshof).
Photo: Marcel
Köppen

Paradise of the Naives

At the end of June 1964, *Moscow* hung at the exhibition *Nieuwe Realisten* in the Hague Gemeentemuseum, where, amidst mainly Pop Art and *nouveau réalisme* (from Rauschenberg and Warhol to Dubuffet and Bacon), it represented the subcategory of the 'naive and Sunday painters' in the 'traditional realism' department.¹⁶ However, Van Genk's work was not included in the comprehensive overview exhibition of international naive art that Museum Boymans-van Beuningen opened in July of the same year. With 195 works by 62 essentially self-taught artists, more than 25,000 visitors, and a press running out of superlatives, *De Lusthof der Naïeven* was a resounding success. 'The phenomenon of naive art was discovered relatively late in the Netherlands', senior curator Renilde Hammacher-van den Brande drily remarked later, referring to the then already decades-old fame of Henri Rousseau in France.¹⁷

Van Genk's absence from *De Lusthof* perhaps stemmed from his very recent discovery and his association with an art academy (though he technically never attended lessons). In any event, the exhibition paid little attention to Dutch naive artists, as a number of Dutch critics acidly remarked. Perhaps his work also did not look 'naive' enough, even though some of the exhibited works similarly came across as *faux-naïf*, surrealist or psychiatric, as was also observed.¹⁸ Anyway, art critic Ed Wingen, in *De Telegraaf*, stated his belief that 'our Willem van Genk' would have been more at home here than 'among the professionals' in the *Nieuwe Realisten* exhibition in The Hague.¹⁹

The success of *De Lusthof*, however, did allow Van Genk to surf along on the wave of interest in naive art that persisted in the Netherlands for many years. The immediate cause was a desire to now start placing the Netherlands' own naive artists in the

spotlight. The remarkable enthusiasm for this endeavour can perhaps be attributed to the spirit of the times – or the response to it. The Netherlands of the nineteen-sixties at least proved to be not only the well-known, playfully rebellious country of Provo and Wim T. Schippers's peanut butter floor, but also clearly a paradise for the lovers of naive art.

Sunday Painter

In the autumn of 1965, on the initiative of the art historian Louis Gans, the women's magazine *Eva* organized a competition for (Dutch) Sunday painters, the first of its kind.²⁰ From 840 entries, an exhibition of work by eleven entrants was put together in Amsterdam's Bols Tavern. It had not been easy, explained jury member Jan Eijkelboom in *Vrij Nederland*, to separate out the real naive artists from all the kitsch, ordinary and amateur artists. Behind the characteristic technical and formal flaws in the works' execution, he argued that there also had to be a deeper urge, a surrender to art that manifests itself, often at a late age, as a pent-up need that is much more deeply rooted than a simple leisure activity, and in a sense determines the work's quality. How this urge precisely translated into paint, Eijkelboom did not explain, but he was certainly delighted with the exhibition.²¹

Van Genk's name appeared only during the second edition of the competition, in 1966, for which Gans had roped in the VARA television network and the Frans Hals Museum as partners. Now some 8,000 photographs of the work of 1,700 participants were submitted, from which 112 works by sixty-five artists were finally selected for the exhibition *Nederlandse zondagschilders: De droomwereld der naïeven* (Dutch Sunday Painters: The Dream World of the Naives) in Haarlem's Vishal (an exhibition space linked to the Frans Hals Museum). Van Genk was one of them, with two works,

Prague and Railways, the latter receiving an honourable mention.²² Now his work was hanging among that of recognized Sunday painters like Sipke Houtman and Sal Meijer (on loan from the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam) and newcomers like Willem Cramer, Anne Zomer, Willem Poelman Bram Doorgeest and Leo Neervoort, who also all won prizes or received honourable mentions.

Redeker, who succeeded Gans as jury chairman, regarded this 'first large-scale national overview of naive painting' to be a 'revelation', a 'paradise for weary souls, an oasis in the desert of pretentious effect making', both because of the 'charm of ineptitude' and the 'deeper urge' that distinguished the 'several dozen valuable naive artists' from the 'tens of thousands of inept "Sunday painters"'. Redeker also did not explain how this urge could be identified (nor why both terms had been retained in the name of the exhibition), but from his next remark it becomes clear that there was something of a difference of opinion within the jury on the question of what mattered more, naivety or quality:

At this first great exhibition, a Th  a G  rard, a W. v. Genk, an L.A. [Arie] Visser, a [Siebe Wiemer] Glastra did not receive big prizes as they were supposedly not 'naive' enough, although they are among the most remarkable figures because of their artistic abilities.²³

Some jury members probably used chiefly formal (or biographical) criteria to judge whether an entry (or entrant) was or was not naive, while Redeker thought it was a shame that artistically more interesting work, such as Van Genk's, was thereby ruled out. It is noteworthy that the jury described the naive as 'the inherent possibilities and qualities of an expression or depiction in paint stemming from the greatest possible absence of traditional, academic or

official influences'.²⁴ Such influences are always there, responded disgruntled art critic Cor Blok, 'because no naive starts painting without ever having seen a painting'.²⁵ It was indeed a poorly thought-out definition, because the naive, Sunday and hobbyist art that was pushed into the spotlight every single year in the Netherlands between 1964 and 1968 was obviously bursting with tradition.²⁶

Amateur Art

It may have been at Redeker's prompting that Van Genk took part in the painting and drawing competition for amateurs that the CO-OP supermarket chain staged in 1967 under the motto 'Just be creative':

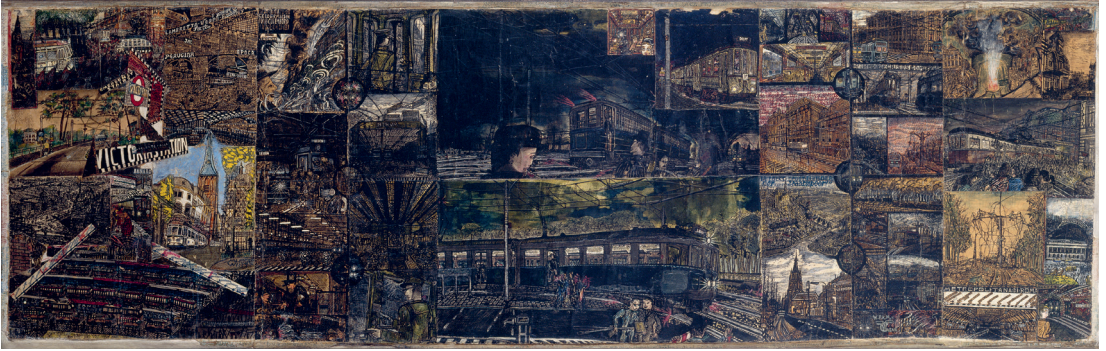
everything is allowed ... so long as it relates to 'OUR NETHERLANDS – YOUR NETHERLANDS'. Trees, forests and heathland, houses, harbours and hills, streams, lakes and beaches, animals, people and city views, street scenes, panoramas and cosy corners... anything.²⁷

Van Genk won the regional first prize for South Holland (fig. 4) and then the national first prize. The jury found his *Tram and Railways*, a collage of some forty individual drawings (fig. 5), the best of all the 13,024 entries, because it:

Fig. 4

Art critic, painter and member of the jury George Lampe presents the first prize of the de CO-OP painting and drawing competition for the province of South Holland to Willem van Genk during the opening of the exhibition *Kunstenaars in eigen tijd* (Artists on their own time), Schiedam, Stedelijk Museum, 4 November 1967. Photo: Nationaal Co  peratie Museum, Schiedam





constantly drew the jury's attention with an original and fantastical composition in which the problematic nature of the subject is depicted in a completely consistent idiom, fierce and aggressive sometimes, yet with a controlled, apposite and sensitive manner of drawing that makes the work all the more convincing.²⁸

Once again, the jury seems to have had a difficult time (fig. 6). With its many nocturnal scenes and its drawing style evidently perceived as 'aggressive', *Tram and Railways* had little in common with the sunnier and better-humoured looking work of the great majority of amateurs. Nevertheless, it apparently fascinated the jury, and so Van Genk eventually received the first prize in Rotterdam's convention hall De Doelen from the hands of the television presenter Mies Bouwman (fig. 7). He was now the best amateur in the country, with work at the 'best-attended exhibition of recent years', according to the Rotterdamse Kunststichting.²⁹ Whether he himself believed he had now reached the pinnacle of his career, however, can be questioned. Soon after, he drew his own portrait (derived from Eddy de Jongh's Hilversum photograph, fig. 2) into the logo of the earlier *Nieuwe Realisten* exhibition, as if to say that he actually preferred belonging to the 'professionals' (fig. 8).

Art Brut

So, Van Genk was regarded as a naive or Sunday painter, even though his work did not easily fit either category. At that time, however, there was no alternative. True, there had been some attention to work from psychiatric contexts since Plokker's book, but this remained very limited, and even then, it offered Van Genk no new opportunities. In 1967, Museum Fodor in Amsterdam, under the auspices of the Stedelijk Museum, first exhibited work from Plokker's collection and subsequently works by one of the most famous creative psychiatric patients, the Swiss Adolf Wölfli. In 1968, this continued with a selection from the renowned collection of work from psychiatric institutions that art



Fig. 5
WILLEM VAN GENK,
Tram and Railways,
1966.
Ink, coloured pencil,
felt tip and gouache
on brown paper
mounted on canvas,
72 x 222 cm.
Villeneuve d'Ascq,
LaM, musée d'art
moderne de Lille
Métropole
(Collection
de L'Aracine),
inv. no. 999.51.2.
Photo: Philip Bernard

Fig. 6
The jury of the co-op
competition studies
Willem van Genk's
Tram and Railways,
with from left to
right Jan Eijkelboom,
unknown (not a
jury member),
André Kloos,
Mies Bouwman,
Metten Koorstra
and Louis Gans.
Photo: Nationaal
Coöperatie Museum,
Schiedam



Fig. 7

Television presenter and jury member Mies Bouwman presents the first prize of the national co-op competition to Willem van Genk during the opening of the exhibition *Kunstenaars in eigen tijd*, Rotterdam, De Doelen, 25 November 1967. Photo: Nationaal Coöperatie Museum, Schiedam

historian and psychiatrist Hans Prinzhorn had compiled in Heidelberg before 1922.³⁰ In 1977, the Stedelijk Museum itself followed with a small presentation on Wölfli, who by then was already seen as one of the greatest names in both psychiatric art and *art brut*.³¹ This latter concept, which might have suited Van Genk's work and perhaps could have brought him further recognition, was not used, however, by either Fodor or the Stedelijk Museum. Its entrance in the Netherlands seemed rather late.

The term *art brut* had been coined in 1945 by the French artist Jean

Dubuffet for individualistic work that was, or seemed, immune to what he disparagingly called *art culturel*, or 'cultural art'. Dubuffet put together a collection of what he regarded as the real, raw thing, *art brut*, and thus also determined the use of this term. The fact that around half of this collection originated from psychiatric institutions was irrelevant to him, because, or so he argued, creativity is healthy by definition, and there was 'no more an art of the mentally ill as an art of people with stomach problems or pain in their knee'.³² Nevertheless, the identification of *art brut* as work from a psychiatric context remains persistent to this very day.

For the time being, all this went unnoticed in the Netherlands. Art correspondent Frans Broers did report from Paris about Dubuffet's first *art brut* exhibition in 1949, but his article on it in the *Kroniek voor Kunst en Cultuur* did not prompt a response, perhaps because it was quite critical.³³ Tegenbosch's observation in 1959, in a review of the international exhibition *Documenta II*, that Dubuffet appeared



Fig. 8

WILLEM VAN GENK, *Airports III - Garuda-Indonesia* (previously *Arthur Hailey Airport 2*), detail, c. 1968. Mixed media on board, 91 x 129 cm. Haarlem/Amsterdam, Museum of the Mind / Outsider Art (on loan from the Stichting Willem van Genk).

to have a huge collection of “art brut”, the art of the mentally ill’ was not picked up either.³⁴ It was only when the Stedelijk Museum, under director Edy de Wilde, devoted an exhibition to Dubuffet in 1966 that the term began to be used more often, particularly by Tegenbosch and Redeker, and from 1974 by Wingen too, albeit mostly as an aside in discussions of Dubuffet’s own work.³⁵ The explanation was almost always limited to a quick summing up of three categories of makers: children, the mentally ill, and a group variously described as naive artists, Sunday painters, amateurs, primitives, outsiders, eccentrics or maladjusted people.³⁶

Even at a journal like *Museum-journaal*, they did not know any better. In 1974, following the placement of Dubuffet’s *Jardin d’email* in the garden of the Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller, curator Paul Hefting wrote about his notion of *art brut* as a collective term for, again, children’s drawings, naive art and the work of psychiatric patients. He also thought that Dubuffet’s *Jardin* belonged to the same category as the constructions of Ferdinand Cheval, Clarence Schmidt and Simon Rodia.³⁷ This brought him a reprimand from architectural historian Maarten Kloos, who thought that a professional artist like Dubuffet could not in any way be

compared to these real ‘sauvages’. Hefting responded by asserting that Dubuffet was a real ‘sauvage’ or ‘naive’, but that he had been forced to become a professional artist against his will.³⁸

Neither critic evidently knew that Dubuffet had already explicitly rejected children’s drawings and naive art in 1951 as imitative rather than *brut*, made by the copycats and stooges of ‘cultural art’.³⁹ This probably was also why he had no interest in Van Genk, because true *art brut* should solely spring from inner sources, whereas Van Genk’s work clearly reflected interaction with the outside world. In 1971, Dubuffet reclassified such work, placing it in an ‘annex collection’, as a kind of second-rate art brut that he should not have collected.⁴⁰ When De Wilde, who had acquired Van Genk’s *Metrostation Opéra* for the Stedelijk Museum in 1965 (fig. 9), sent him photographs of work by Van Genk, assuming he would be interested, Dubuffet never responded.⁴¹

Para-Naive

Van Genk continued to fall between two stools in the Netherlands as well. When Tegenbosch was asked to introduce him in 1976 for an exhibition at the De Ark Gallery in Boxtel, he clearly did not know where to put him: Van Genk seemed to him to be a

Fig. 9
WILLEM VAN GENK,
Metrostation Opéra,
c. 1963.
Ink, ballpoint and
watercolour on paper,
67,5 x 160 cm.
Amsterdam,
Stedelijk Museum,
inv. no. A 24243.



Fig. 10
 WILLEM VAN GENK,
Cologne, c. 1960.
 Ink, pencil, coloured
 pencil and chalk on
 paper mounted on
 canvas, 66 x 98 cm.
 Ghent, Museum
 Dr. Guislain (on
 loan from the
 Stichting Collectie
 De Stadshof).
 Photo: Marcel
 Köppen



Sunday painter, someone 'with time off from official culture', but then a very special one, an idiot perhaps, but certainly an eccentric who (despite that time off) 'is passionately involved with the current culture', but then again not with current 'visual culture'. In sum, he was 'confusingly unique', the critic concluded, being at wit's end, 'because he does not fit anywhere'.⁴²

That same year, the Amsterdam gallery owner Nico van der Endt, who had just started to represent Van Genk, came up with an alternative, calling him and seven other artists 'para-naive'. While their work was usually designated as naive art, it was out of tune there because of an 'indefinable "Fremdheit"', Van der Endt argued. He thought that Dubuffet might call it *art brut*, that is, according to Van der Endt, 'the art of the "cultureless" and "mentally diseased"', but he himself viewed them as 'not or barely mentally ill', as this would have to be evident from chaos and internal emptiness in their work, which was not the case: Van Genk's work clearly did not stand outside of culture and was even 'bursting with meaning'.⁴³ Van der Endt misinter-

preted Dubuffet's interpretation of *art brut* here by putting an emphasis on mental illness that, as we have seen, Dubuffet believed was irrelevant. Instead, it was Van Genk's figurative approach and many references to the outside world that, in Dubuffet's view, disqualified his work as *brut*.

When the Frans Hals Museum, still in 1976, included an early drawing by Van Genk (fig. 10) in yet another overview of *Nederlandse naïeve kunst*, co-curator Van der Endt noted that this was a 'borderline case between naive art and "Art Brut"' and that he could be counted among the para- or 'fringe naives' ('randnaieven' in Dutch).⁴⁴ Both terms failed to strike a chord however, and as *art brut* also failed to catch on, the Netherlands for the time being held on to the classical naives, as demonstrated by the exhibition *De Grote Naïeven* (all of French origin) that the Stedelijk Museum presented in 1974.⁴⁵ Van Genk reacted rather scathingly to this exhibition with *The Great Naives*, appropriating this title for a scene of himself standing in a dirty pissoir, above the text 'Harpic reinigt de wc' (Harpic cleans the toilet, fig. 11).⁴⁶



Fig. 11
WILLEM VAN GENK,
The Great Naïves,
c. 1974.
Oil on an assembly
of cardboards,
54.5 x 88.5 cm.
Amsterdam,
Galerie Hamer.

That the Netherlands also still wished to see native Dutch naïves becomes evident from the success of the publication *Naïeve schilders zien ons land* (Naïve Painters See Our Country), which was published in a large edition as book of the month in 1978, accompanying an exhibition in the Singer Museum in Laren and a television report by the NCRV.⁴⁷ Daily newspaper *Het Parool* wrote rather disparagingly of ‘a bewildering quantity of little houses, boats, trees and bridges’ (e. g. fig. 12), but otherwise the reception was favourable.⁴⁸ The same was true of the book *Naïeve kunst*, also published in 1978, in which Gans went to great lengths to distinguish this ‘fringe phenomenon’ from children’s drawings, the artistry of the mentally ill, amateur art, folk art and kitsch.⁴⁹ Van Genk, however, was not named in any of these categories.

As Van Genk’s champion, Van der Endt did include him in his 1979 book *Nederlandse naïeve kunst*. As Redeker before him, Van der Endt here opposed what he called the ‘silly belief in holy incompetence’, but no longer spoke of para-naïves. Instead, he introduced a new, third link, to modern art:

[Van Genk] has one foot in modern art, because he has created an image of angst. Technically however, he can be listed under naïve art, especially with his early work. His more recent work can perhaps be better classified as Art Brut, because here the emotion often breaks through to devastating effect.⁵⁰

Van der Endt did not say which modern art he had in mind, but several options are tenable. Van Genk appears to have admired Robert Rauschenberg, who also often mixed collage with painting and drawing.⁵¹ Comparison with various Soviet posters or what was called an ‘agitation panel’ from the nineteen-twenties by the German communist Heinrich Vogeler could also make sense (fig. 13).⁵² For his earlier cityscapes, work by the Flemish James Ensor might be more eligible (fig. 14).

Brute

In Van der Endt’s *Kroniek van een samenwerking* about his working relationship with Van Genk, for the year 1979 we read:

I still see no conclusive objections to classifying his work as naïve painting. There are also some formal charac-

teristics that justify this, and in any event, it gives him a platform. But both Van Genk and I know better and in this very year an initial contact with La Collection de l'Art Brut in Lausanne came about.⁵³

Precisely what Van Genk and Van der Endt knew better remains unclear, but the following reference to Dubuffet's collection in Lausanne implies that a degree of justice was expected from this institution. It would indeed be this young museum, with Michel Thévoz, not Dubuffet, as its director, that brought Van Genk into *art brut*.

What struck the Netherlands most about the opening of this museum in 1976 was that it was in far-off Switzerland: 'No interest in "brute art" in Paris', was the headline of a report in *Het Vrije Volk*, which consistently translated 'brut' as 'brute' or 'brutal' ('bruut' in Dutch).⁵⁴ A year later, reviewer Dolf Welling wrote in the *Haaqsche Courant* that around half of the collection consisted 'of work by patients in psychiatric institutions' and other 'outsiders' [*sic*].⁵⁵ Generally, however, attention was so meagre that art historian Trudy Zandee in *Museumjournaal* in 1978 started out with complaints about this neglect, before explaining – succinctly, but at last well-informed – what this 'rough art' ('ruw', in Zandee's translation) actually stood for, based on Thévoz's 1975 book *Art brut*.⁵⁶

That Thévoz was convinced of Van Genk's qualities appears from a series of purchases in 1980, 1984 and 1985 and a one-man show in 1986.⁵⁷ Thévoz was less strict, reassessing Dubuffet's annex collection as 'Neuve Invention' in 1982, and raising no objections to Van Genk's realism.⁵⁸ The recognition from 'Lausanne' meant a turning point in the appreciation for Van Genk, internationally in particular. For Van der Endt, however, it was no reason to start presenting him as *art brut* in the Netherlands.

Here, naive art offered a more reliable platform than this untranslatable and difficult to explain French concept. When the Stedelijk Museum exhibited its two works by Van Genk, *Metro-station Opéra* (fig. 9) and *Nieuw Japan* (or *Tokio Osaka*, acquired in 1972), for the first time in 1985 (!), it was as part of an overview of the 'naives' held in its collection, albeit with the note that Van Genk 'balances – among other things because of the horror vacui... – on the edge of what is called Art Brut'.⁵⁹

Outsider Art

Despite the wavering Netherlands, it seems as if the attribution of the label 'art brut' in 1986, after twenty years of naivety, meant justice at last for Van Genk, as if granted an *appellation contrôlée*. Nevertheless, this label was rapidly eclipsed by a more attractive English alternative: *outsider art*. This term was coined in 1972 by the English art historian Roger Cardinal as the title for his book on *art brut*, because his publisher deemed the original French term unsuitable for the English-language market.⁶⁰

The publication of Cardinal's book was a new milestone, but this went unnoticed in the Netherlands.

Fig. 12

PIETER HAGOORT,
Hofplein Rotterdam,
1971.
Oil on panel,
59 × 71 cm.
Ghent, Museum
Dr. Guislain (on
loan from the
Stichting Collectie
De Stads Hof).



In 1986, art critic Renée Steenberg, writing in *Metropolis M*, appears to be the first to mention ‘outsider art’, but she clearly did not know about Cardinal. According to her, it related to work that was discovered by American collectors of naive and folk art around 1960 and now showed up in New York galleries, and emphatically not to ‘*Art Brut* in the European sense, that is to say completely associated with psychotics’.⁶¹ For Van der Endt, however, the new term was a welcome solution to abandon the hair-splitting in discussions of differences between naive and *brut*. In 1989, he showed work by Van Genk and eleven other artists under the double heading of “art brut” or “outsider art”.⁶² By 1991, however, it had definitely become *outsider art* as a broader term to

accommodate all forms of ‘free’ art.⁶³ All’s well that ends well, one might think, were it not for the fact that around the time Van der Endt embraced ‘outsider art’ as a useful, broad and seemingly neutral umbrella term, outside the Netherlands this concept had become the subject of ‘terminology warfare’ for quite some time already.⁶⁴ Critics argued that this label could only be bestowed by insiders and that the unconsulted recipients thereof were *a priori* sidelined by it. Moreover, the fact that the qualifier ‘outsider’ seemed to relate only to (the identity or position of) the maker, rather than to (the nature or aesthetic of) the work, also appeared – though not unusual in art history – inappropriate in this context.⁶⁵

This quarrel has still not been resolved, in part because both sides in the debate are talking at cross purposes. On the one hand, the supporters of outsider art emphasize (supposedly beneficial) immunity with respect to the (accursed) art circuit and see this label as either neutral or positive, because it finally gives these previously invisible artists a platform. On the other hand, critics (not so much of this art, but of its supporters) argue that this romanticizing stamp locks these people up in a (conceptual) reservation, ghetto, cabinet of curiosities or freak show, shutting them out even more than they already were; in their ears, the effect of the term is not emancipating, but denigrating, stigmatizing and marginalizing.⁶⁶ Both sides have a point, but are clearly fighting a different injustice. The call for an alternative label, resounding already for decades, has produced many suggestions (‘self-taught’, ‘marginal’, ‘spontaneous’, ‘visionary’, ‘singular’, etc.), but none have proved complete, understandable or appealing enough to be able to replace the contested word ‘outsider’.⁶⁷ Nevertheless, in 2015 *The Huffington Post* began to demonstrably write about ‘the “O”-word’.⁶⁸

Fig. 13
HEINRICH VOGELER,
*Karelia and
Murmansk (Russian
Federation)*, 1926.
Oil on canvas,
125 x 90 cm.
Berlin, Staatliche
Museen zu Berlin,
Nationalgalerie, inv.
no. A III 273/960158.
Photo: bpk/
Nationalgalerie,
SMB / Elke Knopf





sider, because ‘real’ outsiders should not show in art galleries, work with an audience in mind or sell work to museums.⁷⁰

Contemporary Folk Art

Meanwhile in the Netherlands, a foundation for a Museum for Naive Art had been set up in 1985, expanding its field of collection two years later to also include ‘children’s drawings, folk art, and Art Brut (art of the mentally ill)’.⁷¹ Despite this broadening of the concept, the foundation still presented Van Genk in 1990 under the heading of ‘unquestionably naive’.⁷² Responding to the developments, the name was changed in 1992 to the Museum for Naive and Outsider Art Foundation (Stichting Museum voor Naiëve en Outsider Kunst). By now, the latter category had rapidly gained interest in the Netherlands as well, even threatening to overshadow naive art, which, by comparison, by no means looked as original and authentic. Then again, it might have seemed odd had the foundation changed horses midstream overnight. In practice, naive art soon came to be treated as a subcategory of outsider art.

In 1994, the foundation’s efforts were crowned with the opening of the Museum De Stadshof in Zwolle as ‘Museum for Naive and Outsider Art’. In 1998, the major retrospective *Willem van Genk: Een getekende wereld* (translated as *A Marked Man and His World*) was staged here, organized by director Ans van Berkum, who also published a comprehensive monograph on Van Genk.⁷³ Despite the fittingly ambiguous title (‘getekend’ means ‘drawn’ as well as ‘marked’ or ‘scarred’), reviewers felt compelled to choose sides in the name war. Art historian Pieter de Nijs in *De Groene Amsterdammer*, for instance, preferred outsider art over older terms such as naive and primitive with their pejorative connotations.⁷⁴

The other oft-heard suggestion to escape this impasse is henceforth simply to speak of (just) ‘art’. Whether the sizable sector that has grown around outsider art will allow itself to be sidelined like this is doubtful, however.⁶⁹ Another complication is that the outsider status of many of these outsiders is not just a romantic myth or topos that can be dispensed with at will. In many cases, it is also a reality, whether people like it or not. By definition, the outsider does not stand up for himself. Van Genk’s successes were always the result of initiatives by others, insiders, who found platforms for him. This does not, however, alter the fact that Van Genk himself undoubtedly would rather have been represented on the main stage of ‘true’ art. And as if the devil was playing tricks, it was precisely this desire which in the eyes of the compilers of the major international exhibition *Parallel Visions: Modern Artists and Outsider Art* of 1992 disqualified him as an out-

Fig. 14
JAMES ENSOR,
The Cathedral, 1886.
Etching, 245 x 185 mm.
Amsterdam,
Rijksmuseum, inv. no.
RP-P-1910-3054.

In the *NRC Handelsblad*, art critic Pam Emmerik did not agree: 'The work of Willem van Genk is called outsider art, a term that has taken the place of *art brut*, as if being shut out is not as bad as being called raw.'⁷⁵

In the meantime, Van Genk had become highly appreciated within the outsider art circuit. At the New York *Outsider Art Fair* of 2002, 'one of his paintings went for at least a six-figure sum', which according to Van der Endt made him 'the most expensive living outsider artist'.⁷⁶ In 2014, he was the subject of a highly praised solo exhibition in the American Folk Art Museum in New York, which landed him in yet another category.⁷⁷ In 2019, this was followed by what was by then Van Genk's sixth solo exhibition *WOEST: Willem van Genk 1927-2005* in the Outsider Art Museum (OAM) in the Amsterdam Hermitage.⁷⁸ It was a great honour, organized by Van Berkum and the Haarlem Museum of the Mind, which, in the first decade of the twenty-first century, had added outsider art to its areas of focus and had launched the OAM in 2016. Perhaps the greatest criticism concerned the title, 'woest', meaning

'fierce' or 'savage' – a quite inappropriate term for both the man and his work.

But this was nothing new, of course, as Van Genk had already been declared unfit for so many categories, being insufficiently trained for the one and insufficiently mad for the other, insufficiently naive, insufficiently *brut*, insufficiently 'outside' and insufficiently 'inside'. More interesting than the question as to precisely what Van Genk was or was not, is whether all these labels influenced his mental state and career, whether they enhanced, impeded or changed the direction of his artistic development, and whether his work would have been received differently had it been presented under different umbrellas. 'Willem van Genk was schizophrenic, paranoid and autistic, and was therefore not allowed to call himself simply an artist', art critic Sandra Smalenburg concluded on his death in 2005.⁷⁹

And this is why the much more modest honour bestowed on Van Genk by the Rijksmuseum in 2016, when it included *Moscow* for a year in its presentation of twentieth-century Dutch art, is so much more significant (fig. 15). Despite being described on the museum label as a schizophrenic patient (which seems doubtful as well as irrelevant), his work hung here like that of any other artist, as he had most likely always wanted.⁸⁰ The somewhat bitter irony is that the art brut and outsider art circuit, which did so much to get Van Genk recognized, is unable to take this last, ultimate step, based as it is on the distinction and separation of outsiders from insiders. Exclusiveness, by definition, precludes inclusiveness.⁸¹

Fig. 15
View of gallery
with young visitor
in front of Willem
van Genk's *Moscow*.
Department of
twentieth-century
art, Rijksmuseum
Amsterdam,
August 2017.
Photograph by
the author.



ABSTRACT

Given the reception of his work, transfer of the custody of the drawing *Moscow* (c. 1955) by Willem van Genk (1927-2005) to the Rijksmuseum is more remarkable than it might seem. A 'labelling history' shows that the man and his work were volleyed back and forth between the categories of psychiatric art, hobbyist art, naive art, art brut and outsider art – this, even though the artist himself would most likely have preferred to be recognized simply as 'an artist'. The Rijksmuseum finally succeeded in doing so (albeit perhaps unwittingly). At the same time, Van Genk's 'case history' reveals aspects of recent Dutch art history that have long been overlooked, such as the remarkable enthusiasm for naive art in the late nineteen-sixties. It also highlights some of the problems that can arise from our urge to categorize and label, both within and outside art history.

NOTES

- 1 The precursor of the RCE, the Netherlands Office for Fine Arts (Rijksdienst voor Beeldende Kunst), acquired *Moscow* together with another work by Van Genk in 1989 from the Hamer Gallery in Amsterdam. See Nico van der Endt, *Willem van Genk: Kroniek van een samenwerking*, Eindhoven 2014, p. 63.
- 2 *Moscow* hung in the museum from 9 December 2016 until 23 November 2017. Constant's *Spatial Circus* was still on view there in 2024; his *La Ville noyée* is in the depot.
- 3 Nico van der Endt, 'Ik wil een gezonde schilder zijn', *Kunstlicht* 16 (1995), nos. 3/4, pp. 9-12.
- 4 What follows is based on Jos ten Berge, 'Naive and Outsider Art in the Netherlands: A Chronicle of Facts and Views', in Frans Smolders et al., *Solitary Creations: 51 Artists out of De Stadhof Collection*, Eindhoven 2014, pp. 293-320, supplemented with search requests in www.delpher.nl and Jack van der Weide's indispensable website *Het wereldwijde web van Willem van Genk*, see <https://willemvangenk.net>. Van der Weide also wrote a biography of Willem van Genk, which is forthcoming: *Willem van Genk: De eenheid van het spinnenweb. Biografie van een ongekennd genie*, Boom Uitgevers 2024.
- 5 Robert Rosenblum, *Transformations in Late Eighteenth Century Art*, Princeton 1969, p. vii.
- 6 'mengsel van geobsedeerde verbeterheid, die op geestelijke spanningen wijst en aan de andere kant een zekere kinderlijke naïviteit en primitiviteit'. Rudolf Ernst Penning, 'Reiziger in verbeelding, een eigenaardig geval', *Haagsche Courant*, 6 December 1958.
- 7 'zondagschilder', 'een psychiater', 'de geestelijke inhoud van Willem van Genk gelijk staat met nul komma nul', 'de bewustzijnsvernaauwing, die bij tal van psychiaters optreedt bij hun jacht naar het aangepast-zijn', 'enkele kenmerken van de geniale schilder'. Joop J. Beljon, 'Tien hoofdstukken schaal 1:100: Over de wereld van Willem van Genk, kunstschilder', in *Van Genk's fantastische werkelijkheid*, exh. cat. Hilversum (Steendrukkerij de Jong & Co) 1964, no page numbers. Also see Jack van der Weide, 'De eenheid van het spinnenweb: Willem van Genk bij Steendrukkerij De Jong & Co.', *Desipientia* 24 (2017), no. 2, pp. 30-33.
- 8 'huiveringwekkend mooi'. Willem Frederik Hermans, 'De werkelijkheid van Willem van Genk', *Kunst van nu* 1 (March 1964), no. 5, pp. 8-9.
- 9 Bibeb, 'Wim van Genk: Ik ben een stuk grijs pakpapier', *Vrij Nederland*, 4 April 1964, pp. 3-4, also included in *Bibeb & Vip's*, Amsterdam 1965, pp. 111-23.
- 10 Anon., 'Geniaal of vreemd? Van Genks panorama's', *De Tijd*, 8 February 1964.
- 11 Johannes H. Plokker, *Geschonden beeld: Beeldende Expressie bij schizofrenen*, The Hague 1962, p. 88 (translated as *Artistic Self-Expression in Mental Disease: The Shattered Image of Schizophrenics*, The Hague 1964, and in French as *Le Créateur schizophrène*, The Hague 1968).
- 12 See Dick Walda, *Koning der Stations: Episoden uit het leven van Willem van Genk*, Amsterdam 1997, p. 26, on the reportage in KRO's current affairs programme *Brandpunt*, included almost in its entirety in Dick Walda and Jan Keja's documentary *Ver van Huis*, broadcast by the IKON on 31 October 2001.
- 13 See also Ans van Berkum, 'Een vogel boven de stad', in idem, *Willem van Genk bouwt zijn universum*, Tiel 2010, pp. 46-52.
- 14 L.T. [Lambert Tegenbosch], 'Genie ontdekt', *de Volkskrant*, 1 February 1964.
- 15 'geestelijk gehandicapte... zondagsschilder met de bezetenheid van een echte "naivist"... die de eigen creativiteit van het kind heeft

- bewaard'. Hans Redeker, 'In de fijn dicht-gekrabbelde volte', *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 22 Februari 1964.
- 16 *Nieuwe Realisten*, exh. cat. The Hague (Gemeentemuseum) 1964, p. 7.
- 17 'In Nederland werd het verschijnsel naïeve kunst pas betrekkelijk laat ontdekt.' Renilde Hammacher van den Brande, 'Nederland', in Drago Zdunic (ed.), *De Naïeve Schilderkunst* (translation of *Primitive Painting*), Munich 1981/1986, p. 153. See Ten Berge 2014 (note 4) on earlier Dutch interest in naive art.
- 18 *De Lusthof der Naïeven*, exh. cat. Rotterdam (Museum Boymans-van Beuningen) 1964.
- 19 Ed Wingen, 'Rousseau: meester onder de zondagsschilders', *De Telegraaf*, 28 August 1964.
- 20 Anon., 'Wedstrijd voor zondagsschilders', *Eva* 44 (30 October 1965), p. 57.
- 21 Jan Eijkkelboom, 'Naïeven bij Bols: Ik ging schilderen toen ik ophield met drinken', *Vrij Nederland*, 25 December 1965.
- 22 *Nederlandse zondagsschilders: De Droomwereld der naïeven*, exh. cat. Haarlem (Frans Hals Museum/Vishal) 1966, no page numbers.
- 23 'eerste grootscheepse nationale overzicht van naïeve schilderkunst', 'openbaring', 'lusthof voor vermoedte zielen, een oase in de woestijn van pretentieuze effectmakerij', 'charme der onbeholpenheid', 'diepere drang', 'enkele tientallen waardevolle naïeven', 'tienduizenden onbeholpen "zondagsschilders"'. 'Op deze eerste grote expositie viel een Théa Gérard, een W. v. Genk, een L.A. Visser, een Glastra buiten de grote prijzen, omdat zij niet voldoende 'naïef' zouden zijn, hoewel zij om hun artistieke capaciteiten tot de meest opmerkelijke figuren behoren.' Hans Redeker, 'De Droomwereld der Hollandse Naïeven: Eerste overzicht in Haarlemse Vishal', *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 17 November 1966.
- 24 'het naïeve', 'de eigen mogelijkheden en kwaliteiten van een schilderende expressie of uitbeelding voortgekomen uit het zoveel mogelijk ontbreken van traditionele, academische of officiële invloeden'. Els de Haas, Han Mes, W.D. Kuik, Peter Vos and Hans Redeker, 'Uitslag VARA prijsvraag zondagsschilders: Jury-rapport', in *Nederlandse zondagsschilders 1966* (note 22).
- 25 Cor Blok, 'De droomwereld der naïeven', *De Groene Amsterdammer*, 10 December 1966.
- 26 In 1967, the Frans Hals Museum staged *De eigen wereld van 12 vrijetijdschilders* (The Idiosyncratic World of 12 Sunday Painters) with works by the winners of 1966, including eight works by Van Genk, which, after a tour of other locations in 1968, ended at Gans's Albert Dorne Gallery in Amsterdam.
- 27 'Wees eens creatief', 'alles mag... als het maar betrekking heeft op "ONS NEDERLAND - UW NEDERLAND"'. Bomen, bossen en heide, huizen, havens en heuvels, beekjes, meren en stranden, dieren, mensen en stadsgezichten, straatatafeereltjes, vergezichten en sfeervolle hoekjes... ga zo maar door'. *Coop Nieuws* 18 (May 1967), Netherlands Institute for Art History (RKD).
- 28 'voortdurend de aandacht van de jury heeft getrokken door een originele en fantasierijke voorstelling waarin de problematiek van het onderwerp in een volledig consequent idioom wordt verbeeld, fel en agressief soms, maar toch met een beheerste, trefzekere en gevoelige wijze van tekenen die het werk des te overtuigender maakt'. *Kunstenaars in eigen tijd: CO-OP schilder- en tekenwedstrijd - Toekening der prijzen*, folder, s.a. [November 1967]. The same text had already been used in Schiedam, see Louis Gans et al., 'Jury-rapport', in *Kunstenaars in eigen tijd*, exh. cat. Schiedam (Stedelijk Museum) 1967, p. 7. *Tram and Railways* (in Dutch *Tram en Spoorwegen*) has also been called *Treinen, Blauwe Tram, Victoriastation and Bahnhöfe van weleer*.
- 29 'drukt bezochte tentoonstelling van de laatste jaren'. Anon., 'Kunstenaars in eigen tijd', *CO-OP Maandblad* 22 (December 1967), no. 12, p. 182.
- 30 *Vertekening*, exh. cat. Amsterdam (Museum Fodor) 1967, and *Kunst van geesteszieken*, exh. cat. Amsterdam (Museum Fodor) 1968. Wölfl was first brought to people's attention by the psychiatrist Walter Morgenthaler in his *Ein Geisteskranker als Künstler*, Bern/Leipzig 1921. Hans Prinzhorn, *Bildnerlei der Geisteskranken*, Berlin 1922, offered a first, influential survey and analysis of this art. See Ten Berge 2014 (note 4) for earlier dealings with psychiatric art in the Netherlands.
- 31 Marja Bloem, folder *Adolf Wölfl*, part of exh. Amsterdam (Stedelijk Museum) 1977.
- 32 '...il n'y a pas plus d'art des fous que d'art des dyspeptiques ou des malades du genou'. Jean Dubuffet, 'L'art brut préféré aux arts culturels' [1949], in *L'homme du commun à l'ouvrage*, Paris 1973, p. 92. See further Lucienne Peiry, *L'Art brut*, Paris 1997, p. 57.
- 33 Frans Broers, 'Naar aanleiding van de tentoonstelling "L'Art brut" in de Galerie Drouin', *Kroniek van Kunst en Cultuur* 10 (1949), no. 12, pp. 407-08.

- 34 L.T. [Lambert Tegenbosch], 'Beelden en grafiek op Documenta 11', *de Volkskrant*, 5 September 1959.
- 35 *Dubuffet*, exh. cat. Amsterdam (Stedelijk Museum) 1966.
- 36 Derived from www.delpher.nl with 'art brut' as the search term. Art brut was also confused with Dubuffet's own work, with style characteristics such as a rough skin of paint, and with an art movement, usually from the nineteen-fifties.
- 37 Paul Hefting, 'Een tuin in een tuin', *Museum-journaal* 19 (1974), no. 3, pp. 127-30.
- 38 Maarten Kloos, 'Dubuffet naïef?', *Museum-journaal* 19 (1974), no. 5, pp. 226-27, including Hefting's response.
- 39 Jean Dubuffet, 'Honneur aux valeurs sauvages' [1951], in *L'homme du commun à l'ouvrage*, Paris 1973, p. 108.
- 40 Peiry 1997 (note 32), pp. 143-44.
- 41 Sarah Lombardi, 'Willem van Genk and the Collection de l'Art Brut', in *WOEST: Willem van Genk 1927-2005*, exh. cat. Amsterdam (Outsider Art Museum) 2019, p. 33. See for example Roger Cardinal, 'Toward an Outsider Aesthetic', in Michael D. Hall and Eugene W. Metcalf (eds.), *The Artist Outsider: Creativity and the Boundaries of Culture*, Washington/London 1994, pp. 20-28, on the development in Dubuffet's thinking and terminology.
- 42 Lambert Tegenbosch, 'De waarheid van Willem van Genk', in *Willem van Genk*, exh. cat. Boxtel (Galerij 'De Ark') 1976, p. 3.
- 43 'para-naïeven'. Nico van der Endt, 'tussen waan en zin': *para-naïeven*, invitation Amsterdam (Galerie Hamer) 1976. The other para-naïves were Ilja Bosilj, Henk Lamm, Eduard Monsiel, Friedrich Schröder-Sonnenstern, Scottie Wilson, Josef Wittlich and Alan Silverstein.
- 44 'randnaïeven'. Mabel Hoogendonk, *Nederlandse naïeve kunst*, exh. cat. Haarlem (Frans Hals Museum/Vishal) 1976-1977, p. 9.
- 45 *De Grote Naïeven*, exh. cat. Amsterdam (Stedelijk Museum) 1974, presenting works by Henri Rousseau, Louis Vivin, Séraphine, André Bauchant and Camille Bombois.
- 46 See Van der Endt 2014 (note 1), p. 45, and Van Berkum 2010 (note 13), pp. 42-47, which also point to a quotation from Plokker in this work.
- 47 W.A. Braasem et al., *Naïeve schilders zien ons land*, Amsterdam 1978.
- 48 'een verbijsterende hoeveelheid huisjes, bootjes, boompjes en bruggetjes'. Emile Meijer, 'Hoe naïef zijn onze naïeve schilders?', *Het Parool*, 9 September 1978.
- 49 Louis Gans and W.P.H. Russelman, *Naïeve kunst: Aspecten van een randverschijnsel*, Utrecht/Antwerp 1978. Gans did, however, have a place for 'naïve' work of his own (pp. 63-64).
- 50 'onnozele geloof in de heilige onkunde'. 'Hij staat met één been in de moderne kunst, omdat hij een beeld van de angst heeft geschapen. Formeel is hij echter, zeker in zijn vroege werk, bij de naïve kunst onder te brengen. Zijn recente werk valt wellicht beter als Art Brut te klassificeren, omdat daarin de emotie vaak verwoestend doorbreekt.' Nico van der Endt, 'Inleiding: Begrip en onbegrip', in idem (ed.), *Nederlandse naïeve kunst*, Venlo 1979, pp. 12-14.
- 51 Van der Endt 2014 (note 1), p. 21. Van Genk could possibly have seen Rauschenberg's work in the *Nieuwe Realisten* exhibition of 1964, in which Van Genk took part with *Moscow*.
- 52 As suggested by Ans van Berkum, *Willem van Genk: Een getekende wereld* [A marked man and his world], Zwolle 1998, p. 100.
- 53 'Nog altijd zie ik geen doorslaggevende bezwaren om zijn werk bij de naïeve schilderkunst in te delen. Er zijn ook enkele formele kenmerken die dit rechtvaardigen en het verschaft hem in ieder geval een podium. Maar zowel Van Genk als ik weten wel beter en nog in ditzelfde jaar ontstaat een eerste contact met La Collection de l'Art Brut te Lausanne.' Van der Endt 2014 (note 1), p. 43.
- 54 Anon., 'Geen interesse voor "brute kunst" in Paris', *Het Vrije Volk*, 23 March 1976. Andere curieuze vertalingen zijn 'Onbeschaafde Kunst' (Paul Groot, *NRC Handelsblad*, 12 January 1979) and 'harde kunst' (Eric Bos, *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden*, 17 May 1985).
- 55 'uit werk van verpleegden in psychiatrische inrichtingen en andere "oudsiders"'. Dolf Welling, 'Art Brut, kunst buiten de cultuur in Lausanne', *Haagsche Courant*, 1 August 1977.
- 56 Trudy Zandee, 'Art Brut: Een museum en twee boeken', *Museumjournaal* 23 (1978), no. 3, pp. 116-20.
- 57 Exhibition *Willem van Genk*, Lausanne (Collection de l'art brut) 1986.
- 58 Peiry 1997 (note 32), pp. 214-16; Van der Endt 2014 (note 1), p. 53.
- 59 'balanceert – o.a. vanwege de horror vacui... – op het randje van wat Art Brut genoemd wordt'. Marja Bloem, 'Naïeven in de collectie van het Stedelijk', *Stedelijk Museum bulletin*, Amsterdam 1985, no page numbers.

- 60 Roger Cardinal, *Outsider Art*, London 1972, and Willem Volkersz, 'Roger Cardinal on Outsider Art', *Raw Vision* 22 (1998), p. 24. That countless artists of Romantic and Avant-Garde persuasion labelled themselves as outsiders is of a different order because it was self-selected and cultivated.
- 61 'Art Brut in de Europese zin, dat wil zeggen geheel geassocieerd met psychoten'. Renée Steenbergen, 'Outsiderkunst: De aktualiteit van het spirituele', *Metropolis M* 7 (1986), no. 3, pp. 34-36.
- 62 Nico van der Endt, *Jubileumtentoonstelling 20 jaar galerie hamer, deel II: "art brut" of "outsider art"*, invitation Amsterdam (Galerie Hamer) 1989.
- 63 Nico van der Endt, *Outsider Art*, brochure Amsterdam (Galerie Hamer) 1991. In his *Lexicon Nederlandse naïeve kunst van de twintigste eeuw*, Venlo/Antwerp 1995, Van der Endt wrote of 'forms of spontaneous and non-intellectual visual art' (p. 139), with which two new and far from clear terms were added to the debate.
- 64 Jenifer Penrose Borum, 'Term Warfare: Can the familiar appellation "self-taught" offer new possibilities for detente in the raging battle over terminology in the field?', *Raw Vision* 8 (1993/94), pp. 24-31.
- 65 Sociologist Gary Alan Fine, *Everyday Genius: Self-Taught Art and the Culture of Authenticity*, Chicago/London 2004, pp. 3-4, talks of 'identity art'. See Cardinal 1994 (note 41), for a plea in favour of its own 'outsider aesthetic'.
- 66 See e.g. the essays by Lucy Lippard, Joanne Cubs, Eugene Metcalf and Kenneth Ames in Hall and Metcalf 1994 (note 41).
- 67 See further 'Raw Vision's Definitions', *Raw Vision* 7 (1993), pp. 18-19; Cardinal 1994 (note 41), pp. 21-22; or Nico van der Endt, 'Termen à la carte', in Patrick Allegaert et al., *Verborgene Werelden: Outsiderkunst in het Museum Dr. Guislain*, Tiel 2007, pp. 65-71.
- 68 Priscilla Frank, 'Artists Discuss the Problem with the "O" Word: Outsider Art', *The Huffington Post*, 21 May 2015.
- 69 See Raw Vision's *Outsider Art Sourcebook* (third, revised edition, 2016) for lists of the museums, galleries, journals and organizations devoted to outsider art.
- 70 Carol S. Eliel and Barbara Freeman, 'Contemporary Artists and Outsider Art', in *Parallel Visions: Modern Artists and Outsider Art*, exh. cat. Los Angeles (Los Angeles County Museum of Art) 1992, pp. 224 and 229, note 63. The idea of selling only to museums was suggested to him by his gallery owner, Van der Endt 2010 (note 1).
- 71 Anon., *Artistiek beleidsplan Museum voor naïeve kunst*, 1 May 1987, p. 2.
- 72 Marjolijn van Lynden-Bloem, "'Onbetwist Naïef" toont de rekbaarheid van het begrip', *Rotterdams Nieuwsblad*, 13 October 1990.
- 73 Van Berkum 1998 (note 52). See Jos ten Berge, 'Dromen en nachtmerries, of hoe de outsiderkunst Nederland verliet', *Jong Holland* 19 (2003), no. 2, pp. 4-7, on the demise of the museum, which closed its doors in 2001.
- 74 Pieter de Nijs, "'Ik teken flauwekul" [Willem van Genk]', *De Groene Amsterdammer*, 14 October 1998.
- 75 'Het werk van Willem van Genk wordt outsider-kunst genoemd, een term die de plaats ingenomen heeft van *art brut*, alsof buitengesloten zijn minder erg is dan rauw genoemd worden.' Pam Emmerik, 'Eénpersoonsdromen: De outsider-kunst van Willem van Genk en Tito Zungu', *NRC Handelsblad*, 30 October 1998.
- 76 'een bedrag met tenminste zes cijfers', 'de duurst levende outsiderkunstenaar'. Van der Endt 2014 (note 1), p. 125. This was Van Genk's *Keleti Station*, now in the collection of the Museum of Everything, London.
- 77 Exhibition *Willem van Genk: Mind Traffic*, New York (American Folk Art Museum) 2014. See also Fine 2004 (note 65). It should be noted here that American folk art, or 'contemporary folk art', more closely resembles outsider art than what Europeans traditionally understand by folk art.
- 78 *WOEST* 2019 (note 41).
- 79 'Willem van Genk was schizofreen, paranoïde en autistisch, en mocht zich daarom niet gewoon kunstenaar noemen'. Sandra Smalenburg, 'Willem van Genk (1927-2005): Afweer tegen onzichtbare machten', *NRC Handelsblad*, 17 May 2005.
- 80 Psychiatrist Jim van Os, 'De labels van Willem van Genk', <https://museumvandegeest.nl/dossier/stichting-willem-van-genk/de-labels-van-willem-van-genk> [2022] (consulted 16 January 2023), quite convincingly argues that a position on the autism spectrum is more likely than the diagnosis of schizophrenia.
- 81 For the most recent moves in this regard, see Jan Hoek, 'Ook "outsiders" verdienen plek in museum', *NRC Handelsblad*, 8 April 2023, and Hans den Hartog Jager, 'Iedereen mag meedoen, iedereen is kunstenaar', *NRC Handelsblad*, 20 April 2023.

