

This Section of *Epidemiology and Psychiatric Sciences* appears in each issue of the Journal and is dedicated to all forms of creative production born of an intimate and individual urge, often secretive, unbound from the conventional art system rules. Through short descriptions of the Outsider art work of prominent artists and new protagonists often hosted in community mental health services, this Section intends to investigate the latest developments of the contemporary art scene, where the distances between the edge and the centre are becoming more and more vague.

Carole Tansella, *Section Editor*

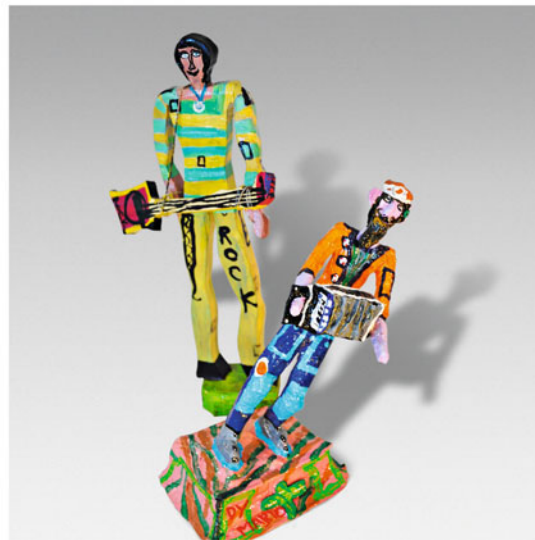
## Heinz Lauener – Urban Folklore

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*Received 1 August 2015; Accepted 15 August 2015*

**Key words:** Contemporary art, mental health, outsider art, psychiatric services, social inclusion.



On the left: Heinz Lauener Portrait, 2015 - © Mario Del Curto. On the right: © Sophie Brunner, is about two sculptures of Heinz Lauener: *Guitarist*, 2012, Papier maché, H 45 cm; *Accordeonist*, 2015, Papier maché, H 31 cm.

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The wood and papier-mâché sculptures of Bernese artist Heinz Lauener incorporate the contemporary Swiss Outsider Art landscape. The fruits of his

passionate relentless work convey his views on the society and city in which he lives. His sculptures retain the freshness of Swiss popular art while replacing the rural stereotype with a colourful gallery of characters, architecture and urban furniture.

When visiting his studio, one is dazzled by the profusion of figures, buildings, aircraft and boats lined up in an orderly fashion on multiple cupboard shelves and swarming out to overtake the hallway. In search of a *fil rouge* that could link these characters and things, Heinz takes us on a disjointed narrative that leaves much to the imagination. First, he introduces us to a sculpture of a celebrity straight out of the tabloids, then to an acquaintance whose identity he prefers to keep secret. He guides us through a maze of a set design; there are buildings with interior finished to the minutest of detail, catholic and orthodox churches, kiosks, circus capitals, advertising panels and scattered road signs. The artist alternates between large and small sculptures; the mix of scale randomly put next to one another only underlines the surrealism of this arrangement.

The story of Heinz Lauener is similar to other outsider artists of his generation: managing to overcome hardship and find a place in the art world, thanks to the backing of fellow professionals, finally he finds support on his artistic journey.

Heinz Lauener was born in 1977. Growing up he enjoyed nothing more than making cardboard houses, planes and boats with his mother. He ardently pursues his fragile constructions despite being forced to live in a series of institutions from a very young age and facing the scorn of his young peers for his art. Each change in his living situation leaves Heinz confronted with the difficulty of finding a place – always leaving him feeling different and out of context. Each effort to make his voice heard is choked by calls to order or an enhanced dose of drugs (Brunner, 2015).

Like other institution patients he attended an occupation workshop. A great change came when one day he discovered some wood in a carpenter's workshop and he took them to sculpt the image of a woman he had fallen in love with. It marked the beginning of his creation of sculptures.

His first sculptures drew the interest of Art Therapy workshop 'Waldau' in Berne. The clinic is well known to the fans of Art Brut; it was here that Adolf Wölfli created his work under the tutelage of Professor Walter Morgenthaler in the early 20th century. Heinz was subsequently invited to participate and finally gave free rein to his passion for art. He discovered the work and life of masters such as painter Hans Erni. He admired the artist who continued to work daily in his studio, even if he was more than a 100 years old. Inspired by these role models, he decided

to devote all of his time to artistic creation – his only source of joy and pleasure.

In 2012, his decision was reinforced by an encounter with artist Sophie Brunner. She invited him together with three other artists also working in institutions, to take up residency in PROGR, a former local school. Initially an artists' collective squat, then legalised through a contract with the city, the school is nowadays home to many members of the independent art scene in Bern.

The workshop ROHLING ('roh' means crude, rough and is a reference to Art Brut) and the Association of the same name, have been created by Sophie Brunner and Diego Roveroni in order to support artists of social marginalisation. With their help, artists benefit from coaching to develop potential, a setup for their work, the opportunity to confront the cultural *milieu* of the city and the autonomy to create their own work.

The changes in his working conditions, the improved social environment and a reinforced belief in his abilities have all contributed to the artistic development of Heinz Lauener. Today, he aspires to exhibit his sculptures and be recognised as an artist – as much by his family as by the art scene. Recently Heinz Lauener received an Audience Award at an exhibition at the Bâtiment d'Art Contemporain in Geneva where a series of his sculptures was displayed (Maranzano, 2015). The award is another small affirmation that helps to further strengthen Heinz Lauener's passion.

## References

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## About the Author

Teresa Maranzano, Ph.D., is part of the Artistic Direction team of Out of The Box, the Art Biennial of Geneva and Project Manager at Mir'arts, the art centre of the ASA-Handicap mental association of Geneva, Swiss. She is part of the scientific committee of the Osservatorio Outsider Art journal, Glifo Edizioni, Palermo, Italy.

Until 2009 Dr Maranzano has been the Director of the well-known Italian Atelier Adriano e Michele, settled nearby Milan.

While historical Outsider Art gained high international recognition and remarkable market quotations, Dr Maranzano focuses toward the promotion of social equality and life quality by supporting

contemporary artists' competences and self-esteem, engaging both with influential sponsors and the local community.

Among her major exhibitions are: *Dix sur Dix*, Geneva, 2015; *Knitting dolls (in Geneva)*, Meyrin 2011; *Piccole Ali*, Follonica, Geneva, 2009; *Follie italiane*,

Geneva, 2008; *Acrobazie #3*. Sara Rossi, San Colombano al Lambro, Milan, 2007; *Acrobazie #2*. Marcello Maloberti, San Colombano al Lambro, Mi, 2006; *Outsider Art*, Arezzo, 2006; *Acrobazie*. Sandrine Nicoletta, San Colombano al Lambro, Milan, 2004.

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