

# The New York Times

## Arts

### Where Art's Outsiders Are Totally In

By ELAINE LOUIE

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AT the fourth annual Outsider Art Fair, which ended Sunday at the Puck Building in SoHo, it was sometimes the customers who found themselves to be outsiders.

At least that was a possibility at Bonnie Grossman's booth. As a co-owner of the Ames Gallery in Berkeley, Calif., she is the sole agent, she said, for the works of Achilles G. Rizzoli, a San Francisco draftsman who lived from 1896 to 1981. Rizzoli drew beautifully rendered imaginary buildings, which represented people he knew.

With a show of Rizzoli's work scheduled to open next year at the San Diego Museum of Art guaranteeing him greater recognition, Ms. Grossman chooses customers for his paintings. "They are only being sold to selected people," Ms. Grossman said.

What about a hypothetical wealthy, anonymous wife of an equally anonymous dentist? Would Ms. Grossman sell to her?

"No," Ms. Grossman said. "Because the work has to be available for a touring exhibition." And because she does not want to sell to people who want the art for its commercial or resale value. She insists on knowing who her customers are. She wants them to love the art.

But the fair, which is devoted to self-taught, visionary and intuitive artists, is still a place where fledgling collectors and investors can take a gamble and test their instincts. There is always the chance that the three-figure drawing by an unknown will be worth holding on to and that the art world's machinery will promote the artist and raise prices.

At the Henry Boxer booth, for example, there were Malcolm McKesson's dark, erotic drawings of androgynous childlike figures for as little as \$200. Mr. Boxer, a dealer from London, will sell drawings by Mr. McKesson, 86, who has spent the last 32 years working in seclusion in a Manhattan hotel -- to anyone.

"I can show about 30 a year," said Mr. Boxer, who bought 300 drawings in 1994 and is feeding the market carefully, year by year.

Some of the artists, while "outsiders," certainly prove themselves canny when it comes to market forces. One is Ricky Hagedorn, a 42-year-old artist represented by Margaret Bodell, a co-owner of the Bridges & Bodell Gallery in the East Village. Mr. Hagedorn, a resident at the Candee Hill Group Home for Autistic Adults in Watertown, Conn., went to a nearby airport in the early 1980's, photographed the planes and painted pictures of them. Each painting took a month, and Ms. Bodell sold them for \$500 apiece at the first Outsider Art Fair.

Three years ago he discovered that painting automobiles took only a week and a half, and that Ms. Bodell could sell them for \$400 each.

Speed, however, does not necessarily lead to greater art. "The quality has fallen off a little bit," Ms. Bodell admitted