

Art in America

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Spotlight on Outsider Art: 27 Self-Taught Artists You Should Know About (Part 1)

We asked nine experts in the field to talk about their favorite self-taught artists.\

KATHERINE JENTLESON

Merrie and Dan Boone Curator of Folk and Self-Taught Art, High Museum of Art, Atlanta

An artist I would love for more people to know about is [Joe Minter](#), whose work was in last year's Whitney Biennial. He's a truly remarkable living artist whose African Village in America art environment in Birmingham, Alabama, is one of the most breathtaking works I expect to see in my lifetime. It collects the history of African Americans and their continuing struggle for equality.

In recent years a lot of the artists I've been most excited about are coming out of studios run by helping organizations like [NIAD Art Center](#) in Richmond, California, [Creative Growth](#) in Oakland, and [Fountain House in New York](#). At NIAD, Marlon Mullen an artist with autism spectrum disorder, makes wonderful paintings based on the pages of popular magazines. And both Monica Valentine, whose work has been at Creative Growth's booth at the Outsider Art Fair for the past couple of years and [Alyson Vega](#), who works with [Fountain House](#), are artists whose use of material—sequins and beads in Valentine's case; fabric in Vega's—is really interesting to me. I'm excited to see more of their work in the future.



Alyson Vega, *City Garden*, fabric and fiber, machine pieced, appliquéd, painted, and embellished, 17 x 17 inches, 2019. Courtesy of the artist and [Fountain House Gallery, New York](#).

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(Part 3)

MATTHEW HIGGS

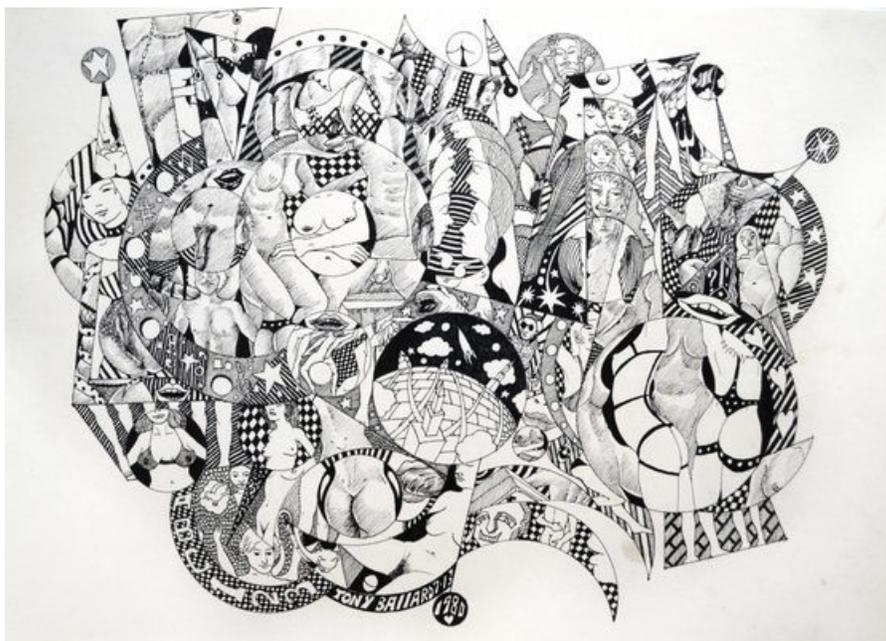
Director and Chief Curator, **White Columns**, New York

White Columns recently showed the work of Curtis Davis, and it got a fantastic response. Davis is a member of the studio program at the nonprofit organization [Visionaries + Voices](#) in Cincinnati, and he makes painted sculpture that is innovative in all kinds of ways. He is certainly someone whom I think that deserves greater recognition.

Another artist we worked with, who was associated with **Fountain House** here in New York, is **Anthony Ballard**. Ballard, who died in 2008, made remarkable black-and-white line drawings addressing his sexuality in ways that were quite complex.

Terry Williams, an artist from Australia who works with [Arts Project Australia](#) in Melbourne, makes beautiful soft sculptures. His show with us was organized by the Los Angeles–based artist Ricky Swallow. My interest in this field, initially at least, was driven by the enthusiasm of artists like Swallow.

And I'd like to say a word about **Alyson Vega**, whose work will be at **Fountain House's** booth at the Outsider Art Fair. We did a project with her in 2016 and I continue to follow her work with interest.



Anthony Ballard (1945 – 2008), *July 13, 1980, 1980*, pen & ink on paper, 12 x 17 inches. Courtesy of the Estate of Anthony Ballard, **Fountain House Gallery**, New York, and White Columns, New York.



Alyson Vega, *Rego Park Sleepover Grid*, 2019, layered fabric and fiber, machine-sewn, 20 x 18 inches. Courtesy of the artist and **Fountain House Gallery**, New York