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The Outsider Fair Once More Confirms That Art Is Everywhere

by Roberta Smith
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Excerpt from the article...

Other changes include the increasing presence of outsider artists in galleries where you'd least expect them. David Lewis, who oversees a large, pristine and hip gallery on the Lower East Side, is working with the Souls Grown Deep Foundation on a show of the work of Thornton Dial, a towering figure among outsiders of the South, known for his startlingly rough-hewed paintings whose surfaces can include basically anything: rugs, tree branches and wire. On Jan. 25 Mr. Lewis's gallery will inaugurate its representation of the artist with a show intriguingly titled "Mr. Dial's America." Until Sunday, there's a big Dial front and center at the fair: "A Bird Will Always Try to Fly" (1991), an avian creature with the markings of a tiger pursued by two figures, at Fred Giampietro.

Two major museum exhibitions signal greater inclusion in the art historical scheme. On Jan. 28, the National Gallery of Art in Washington will unveil "Outliers and American Vanguard Art," an exhibition of some 300 works by about 90 artists trained and self-taught. It will examine how attention to folk and outsider art – from artists, collectors and museums – has ebbed and flowed through the 20th century. And in May the Metropolitan Museum of Art, which has a large collection of mostly 19th-century American folk art will take the plunge with a show centering on the 57 works by black Southern outsiders – including Dial – it recently received from the Souls Grown Deep Foundation. It's inspiring title: "History Refused to Die." That refusal rings loud and clear in this year's Outsider Art Fair.