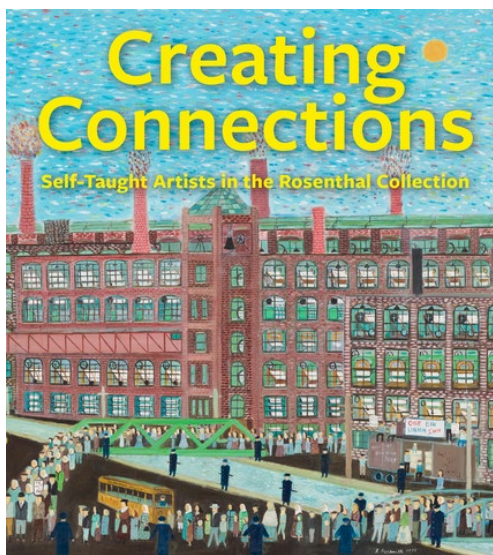


Review: Creating Connections: Self-Taught Artists in the Rosenthal Collection

edited by Julie Aronson et al. D Giles Limited, June 2023. 176 p. ill. ISBN 978-1-913875-41-1 (h/c), \$35.00.

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It can sometimes be daunting to consider the contributions of philanthropists. Richard Rosenthal and his family have been collecting art since the mid to late 1960s, and the Rosenthal Family Foundation has been committed to making art accessible and fostering creativity in Cincinnati. Recently, the Rosentals have gifted thirty-eight works from their collection to the Cincinnati Art Museum for an exhibition currently on display, which runs from June 9 - October 8, 2023.

Creating Connections: Self-Taught Artists in the Rosenthal Collection is about self-taught artists from diverse cultures and circumstances, connected by a desire to communicate through artmaking. The exhibition catalog is printed in full color on a thick,

matte paper. Photos include images of the work in the Rosenthal home, and an interview with Mr. Rosenthal establishes the collection as one borne of personal interest, rather than historical or monetary interests. There are no obvious themes, but many figurative works are in the collection and a full range of mediums are represented.

The catalog features two essays, the first by curator Olivia Sagan. Sagan writes of the desire to understand self-taught art. She is critical of the othering of artists and the hierarchies imposed on art. She is drawn to questions of the relationships between the artists' personal experiences and stories in art. In selecting art for the exhibition, she discusses the stories and identities of the creators. She also talks about psychology and the history of madness in self-taught art. The second essay by Charles Russell focuses more on art history and the role that self-taught art plays in understanding meaning in art.

Sagan's essay is followed by Julie Aronson's insightful interview with Richard Rosenthal. Rosenthal shares the stories behind the collection's development. He talks about growing up appreciative of art and the development of his collection, from American furniture to folk art, to

Outsider folk art. Rosenthal favors contemporary art that tells stories and evokes a personal reaction for him. He talks at length about the role of communication in art therapy; how the finished work has its own vivid stories, meaning, and message; how meeting artists adds to his enjoyment of the art; and how he displays and rotates art in his home, rather than keeping the art in storage. He takes a more active role as a collector and sees himself as a shepherd of art, not an owner.

Full color images are printed across most of a page, accompanied by the artist's info, the title, date, medium, dimensions, and a brief descriptive text that shares either a description, anecdote, or a description of the artist. This descriptive text provides both artistic context and a story for the image. The book also includes a checklist, bibliography, index, and photo credits.

The catalog does not seem to feature the exhibition itself, which makes sense given that it was published alongside the exhibition opening. The result is an intimate view of the Rosenthals' personal collection. While the artists themselves don't speak in this catalog, interest in the artists' stories are apparent. The collection (and the catalog) speaks to a shared love of storytelling, communication, and self-expression through both viewing and creating art.

This book is less for the academic reader and more for general readers who are interested in the topics of creativity, art therapy, and self-taught artists.