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### **Revisal of the Term Art Brut on the Basis of its History in Hungary**

**CONTEXT** The origin of art brut goes back to artists of the XX. century. Many of them lost their former sources of inspiration for different reasons (invention of photography, industrial revolution and its complex impact on society and everyday life in general, mass production, world wars, etc.). They were looking for something that could renew their vision. This was a broad claim when Jean Dubuffet discovered the drawings of patients of Swiss mental hospitals in 1945. He used the term „art brut“ first in a letter to a friend describing these instinctive and rough pictures. This discovery quickly shaped a movement in art, not only paying great attention to the creations of the mentally ill, prisoners, children as well as aboriginals, but also making an impact on the works of educated artists. But doctors precluded artists. Hans Prinzhorn published his paradigmatic book *Artistry of the Mentally Ill* in 1922 already.

In Hungary, the directors of mental hospitals followed this trend with curiosity and recognised not only the medical benefits of artistic work to their patients but turned to these creations with a collector’s eye. During selection, they paralelly utilised scientific and aesthetic points of view. Thanks to the enlightened and dedicated work of these people, today we have a large, wholesomely heterogenic – and typical - collection of artworks of Hungarian psychiatryc institutes that gives the classical definition of art brut: the works of the ones outside any kind of art education (not even being aware of it) creating only after primary impulse what indicates raw, rough, often agressive visual qualities.

**PROBLEM** How can we (if we can) use this definitional frame nowadays from an academic point of view? As artists and doctors stood for the relevancy of art brut, it could reach wide audiences, so it became more and more known and inevitably more and more popular. This resulted in the slow distortion, and in the end, the easy misunderstanding of the essence of art brut. All main styles in art history are at the beginning shaped and practiced by a small group of artists and get importance step by step, until they absorb in everyday visual language to be opposed by the next radical school. Art brut seem on one hand to follow this path, but on the other hand, real art brut always stays untouched by the dynamics of art history. The typical art brut artist works in a social and theoretical isolation, so can we analyze his work the same way as other artists living in the same age? An other phenomenon regarding art brut is that many artists seem to define themselves as art brut artists though they took part in academic education, only because they decided to turn their back on the knowledge acquired. What is more, we tend to call an artwork art brut if it seems naive, childish, expressive or poor, without having any information about

its genesis. How can we thematize art brut in academic discourse as long as an art brut artist himself cannot enter such a discourse?

PURPOSE During my research, I aim to find the practical method to recognize art brut in contemporary context if it still exists in the meaning declared by Dubuffet and used efficiently by theoretical followers decades ago.