

TREGER  
SAINT SILVESTRE  
COLLECTION

Art Brut

Umbigo<sup>o</sup>



Misleidys Francisca Castillo Pedroso

Profile



text: Christian Berst

# Misleidys Francisca Castillo Pedroso

This Cuban artist has no other means of expression than that of her creation. The walls of her home, where she lives with her mother, are covered with drawings of bodybuilders, randomly secured with brown tape along the outlines. A true community of men, women, hermaphrodites and wildlife creatures, Misleidys has built her sociality through her work. Discovered by the Christian Berst gallery in 2014, she has been featured in more than 10 international exhibitions since 2018, including *New Images of Man* in Los Angeles, *Flying High* in Vienna, and *Independent* in New York. Acclaimed by Matthew Higgs and Karen Wong (New Museum, NYC), the artist has been the subject of recent reviews in the *New York Times* and *Art in America*.

A significant number of her works were donated to the Centre Pompidou collection in 2021.

The Treger Saint Silvestre Collection owns seven artworks by Misleidys Francisca Castillo Pedroso and has shown the artist's paintings in several group exhibitions at Centro de Arte Oliva in São João da Madeira, Museu Nacional Soares dos Reis in Porto and Museum Gugging in Vienna. The contemporaneity of her works led us to suggest the Cuban artist for the cover of *Umbigo Magazine* as a way to introduce Art Brut and the Treger Saint Silvestre Collection to a wider audience.

Misleidys was born in 1985, not far from Havana, with a severe hearing impairment. Her father left home at an early age. The young girl showed signs of developmental difficulties, so her mother placed her in a specialised facility at the age of five. But as the symptoms of autism became more pronounced, she had to leave, returning home where she lived in

isolation with the exception of the bond she shared with her mother and younger brother. Even at a young age, Misleidys was particularly drawn to crayons and watercolour paints that she used for her own amusement.

One day, Misleidys began to paint silhouettes of bodybuilders with pronounced facial features and bulging muscles. Over time, the figures increased in size, eventually becoming larger than life. After painting the figures, she would cut them out and affix them to the walls of her bedroom with brown Scotch tape and, over time, other rooms in the house. Soon thereafter, the young woman also began to paint wildlife, devils, and animals, often insisting on representing their innards with painted cross-sections of their anatomy. Her inability to speak or verbally articulate the meanings behind her work ensures that her paintings, which possess a strong visual presence, remain absolutely enigmatic.

Those close to her claim that Misleidys has psychic powers, inherited from her mother, and that it is not rare to catch her in "conversation" with her works using hand gestures – a sign that these works are the bearers of some power which goes beyond the mere fascination they exert upon the eye of the beholder.

Karen Wong, deputy director at the New Museum (New York), on the topic of Misleidys Castillo Pedroso's works, raises the question of gender as well as their formal similarities with the art of Francisco Clemente. But rather than telling us about Misleidys' real intentions, this analysis primarily brings forth the issue of how we ourselves perceive it, essential to the discussion of Art Brut. //

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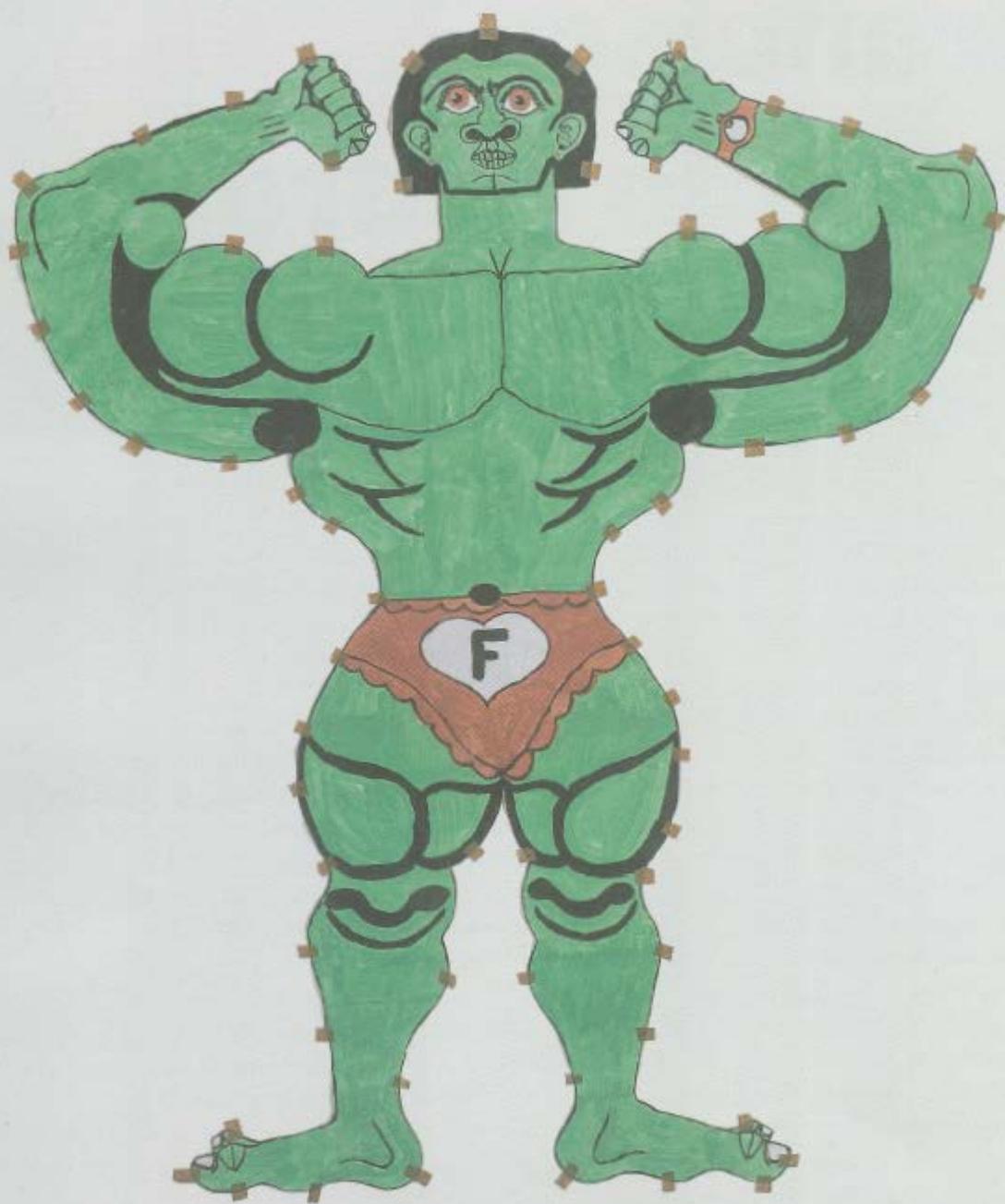
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## Visual Essay



project: Misleidys Francisca Castillo Pedrosa  
photography: André Rocha

Franco Bellucci, *Untitled*, c. 2008. Plastic, thread, fabric and recovered objects, 13x19.5x53.5 cm. Photography: André Rocha



## **Franco Bellucci**

(Italy, 1945-2020)

In 1962 at the age of seventeen Franco Bellucci became a victim of brain injury, which impaired his speaking ability and led him to be admitted to the Psychiatric hospital of Volterra, where he remained until 1998. He was deemed a complicated and aggressive patient and was frequently tied to his bed. His transfer to the Residential Center Franco Basaglia produced a positive effect: it allowed the family weekend visits and free circulation within the centre. It was there that Franco started crafting his first sculptures out of found materials discarded by the nurses: toys and utensils, socks and pieces of garments stolen from other residents, wires and other tools discovered in the facility garden. The artist Ricardo Bargellini encouraged Franco Bellucci and he was able to establish a friendly relationship with him, providing an opening to a world of textures and materials he had never seen before. Ricardo noted that once finished, Franco did not care for his creations and would discard them. The sculptures are Bellucci's way of interpreting and connecting with the world. As Gustavo Giacosa points out, the act of separating and uniting elements is the base for creation of Franco's own cosmology, a play of power and transformation.

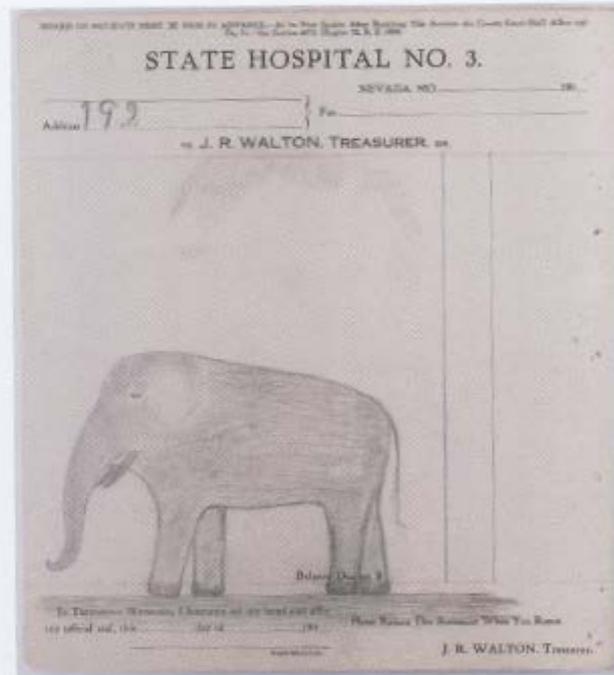
Source: Centro de Arte Oliva

## James Deeds

(United States of America, 1908-1987)

James Edward Deeds was born in Panama in 1908; here his family was stationed during his father's stint as a naval officer with the USS Marblehead. In 1920, together with his parents, his three sisters and his brother, the family emigrated to the United States, to their family farm in Missouri. Apparently, it was then that the first signs of Deeds Jr's mental troubles began appearing. At the age of 25, he got into an argument with his younger (by ten years) brother Clay, whom he pursued hatchet in hand. Fearing for their other children, and also for themselves, his parents decided to have him committed to the Missouri School for the Feeble Minded in Marshal (90 km/55mi east of Kansas City). Deeds Junior suffered from being distanced from his family, to the point of attempting suicide by swallowing antifreeze. The incident encouraged his family to commit him to The State Lunatic Asylum No.3 in Nevada. By 1972 he was declared "harmless if mentally retarded". Discharged from the psychiatric hospital, he was transferred to an old-person's home in Ozark, where he was felled by a heart attack in 1987, at the age of 79. Carried out on ledger pages with the "Nevada State Lunatic Asylum No. 3" official heading, his drawings on both sides of each sheet portray persons with gaping eyes, all elegantly dressed and sporting fancy headgear. A whole gallery of animals is also introduced - lions, wild cats, deer, birds (including an eagle carved on the entrance door to the hospital). Further still, there are ships, trains, bucolic landscapes and buildings full of architectural details (including the psychiatric institution to which Deeds himself had been committed). Most of the compositions are painstakingly numbered, and bear captions written out in capital letters; with respect to the portraits, many of the captions identified the person portrayed.

Source: Collection de l'Art Brut Lausanne



James Deeds, *Untitled (Miss Elvira, #191)* (front back). Graphite and colored pencils on medical prescriptions from State Hospital No. 3 in Nevada (Missouri), 23.2x21.2 cm. Photography: André Rocha

Jesuys Crystiano, *Untitled* (front/back), 2013. Graphite, colored pencils and collage on paper, 42x59,5 cm. Courtesy Delmes & Zander Gallery



## Jesuys Crystiano

(Brazil, 1950 - 2015)

There is much uncertainty surrounding the biography of the artist Jesuys Crystiano. Even the year of his birth was arbitrarily established by the court as 1950. It is likely that he grew up in Buerarema in the state of Bahia (Brazil) and that he went to school there. He probably spent his youth in Rio de Janeiro. His life and work are only documented after 2010, at which time he was living on the streets of Ilheus (Bahia). How Crystiano ended up here still remains unclear. It was then that a German hotel owner who lived in the area first caught sight of his monumental wall drawings in abandoned buildings. From then on he continuously supported and documented his artistic output and took him in until Crystiano's death in 2015. Hundreds of coals and pencil drawings, some of them in large format, collages, objects and notebooks were produced during this period. In his drawings he invents surreal worlds which he commits to paper with confident, dynamic strokes. Airplanes, crowned vultures, fish, umbrellas, upside-down chairs and tables, as well as uprooted tree trunks are the recurring subjects of his drawings.

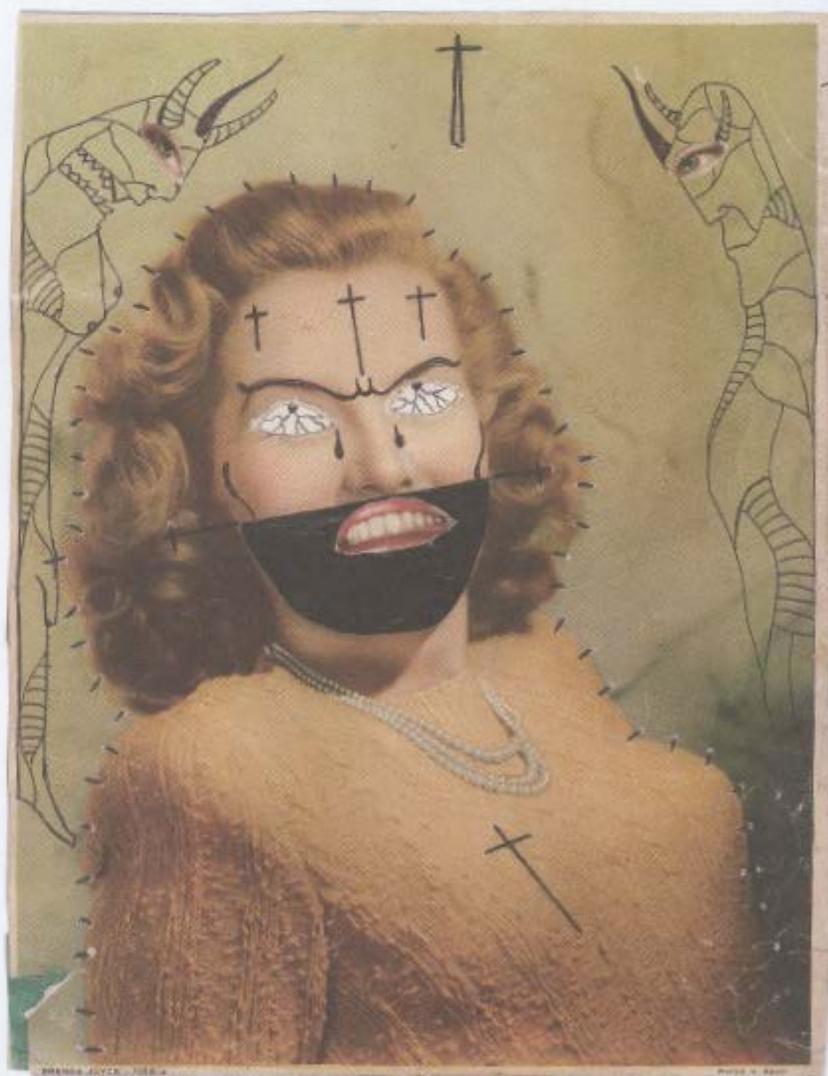
Source: Based on Delmes & Zander Gallery

## Jorge Alberto Cadi

(Cuba, 1963)

Jorge A. Hernández Cadi, "El Plongeur", first started to collect furniture and other items that he retrieved from trash cans to recover and sell them. His lack of money and left him vulnerable to a life of precariousness on the margins. In the midst of deep despair, he even tried to kill himself. Some of the items he recovered from trash cans began to catch his attention: old photos, tin cans, suitcases, cameras, medication trays, toys. He kept them all at home, leaving him little room to move. During this period, I felt that he sensed a certain need to modify them, and combine them together, to create something from all of these found emotions, and the life stories that they harboured. Without knowing why, he was interested in provoking contradictions in these modified objects and photos, creating tensions related to social problems, such as homosexuality or human conflicts generated by mental illnesses. He cut up the photos, and then stitched them together, choosing the precise elements that he glued and articulated together. He thereby created works that only he could appreciate, which he then displayed on the walls of his home. While working, he feels that he is somehow usurping the emotional intentions of the former owners of these objects. He knows that what he touches was rescued from the jaws of death, and still contains vestiges of pain, which inspires strong feelings in him. But he also feels that by saving them, and giving them new life, he has managed to slow down time. The powerful images include crosses, severed heads and eyes, which are hand sewn, with details highlighted in ink. From revelation to nightmare, the objects form a unique poetic style. With his days spent amidst the trash cans in the streets near his house / warehouse, Cadi tries to remain calm, but is constantly amazed each time his works are displayed in important exhibition spaces and collections.

Source: Yaysis Ojeda Becerra



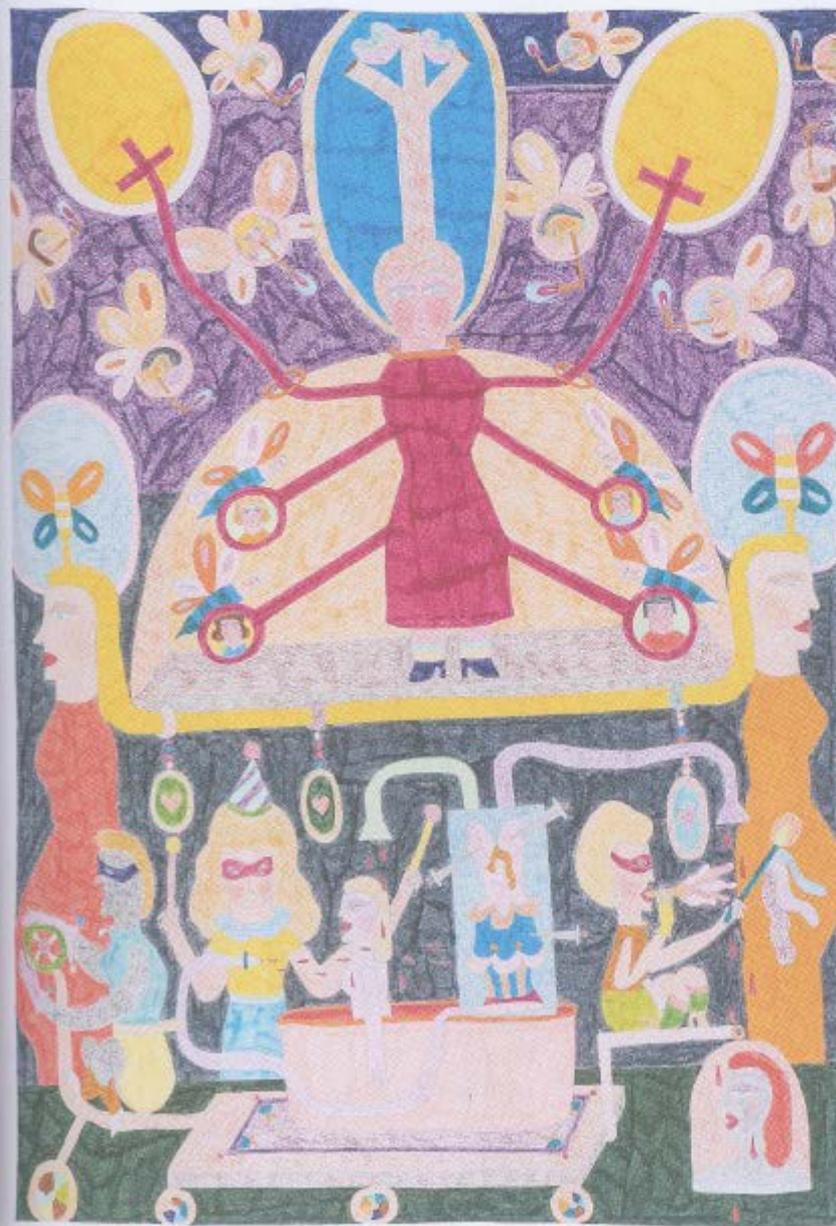
Jorge Alberto Cadi, *Untitled*, c. 2015.  
Paint, collage and stitching on  
photography, 25x19,7 cm. Courtesy  
Christian Berst art brut

## Marilena Pelosi

(Brazil, 1957)

Marilena Pelosi was born in 1957 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. She started drawing at the age of sixteen after succumbing to a grave illness. She was the only child whose parents were Catholic before converting to a voodoo cult. At the age of 20 she left Brazil to travel to Europe and India and eventually settled in France. Laurent Danchin writes that her work is autobiographical and, at the same time, a symbolic synthesis: memories of voodoo trances, diabolic carnivals, Eucharistic processions blend with more intimate remembrances. Cataleptic characters, mutilated and penetrated bodies, endless conveyors belts and armies of bees with human heads are her frequent subjects. In her teens, she was fascinated by surrealism and wanted to study Fine Arts. She thinks herself lucky not to have pursued that path, as it allowed for the development of her unique iconography and system of representation, which brought her closer to Art Brut creators. Pelosi feels that her work resembles the creation of spiritualists, both for its mysticism and unpredictability; she claims that she never plans a composition in advance – it is her hands that guide her. For her, the pleasure of uncovering a scene from her imagination constitutes the sense of life. Marilena Pelosi is represented by Christian Berst Art Brut and by Henry Boxer Galleries. Her works have been exhibited at the Outsider Art Museum in Netherlands and at Salo IV – Salon du dessin érotique in Paris, France.

Source: Centro de Arte Oliva



Marilena Pelosi, *Untitled*, 2005  
Graphite, colored pencils, felt-  
tip pen on paper, 40x28,2 cm.  
Photography: André Rocha

## Tomasz Machciński

(Poland, 1942-2022)

Tomasz Machciński, born 1942 in Poland, was a self-taught photographer and performer. As a war orphan, he received an autograph card from the Hollywood star actress Joan Tompkins with the words "With Love to 'Tommy' From 'Mother' Joan" as a part of a so-called remote adoption programme. For the first twenty years of his life, he was therefore convinced that Tompkins was his mother. The end of his "American Dream" and the loss of this supposed identity influenced Machciński's artistic work. His oeuvre consists of more than 22,000 fictitious or appropriated identities, captured in both photographic and film self-portraits. In his staging, the artist nonchalantly embodies stars of the silver screen, icons of pop culture, figures from history, literature and politics, and other eccentric characters. His work depicts a variety of characters of different ethnic, sexual or social affiliations. At the same time, these characters are also reinventions of his own identity. "Instead of wigs or tricks, I show everything that happens to my body, such as: hair regrowth, tooth loss, diseases, aging processes, etc." By alternately revealing and hiding the weaknesses of his body, he lends it new meaning. In his work, Machciński serves as director and actor, make-up and costume designer, archivist, photographer and performance artist all at the same time. On the one hand his artistic practice is related to European Art History through the play with the traditional methods of portraying and its conventions, while on the other hand it goes along with the strategy of conceptual photography which uses the self-image as a vehicle to negotiate different meanings, present also in the works of Cindy Sherman or Luigi Ontani. His photos as well as videos are performances made directly to the camera. Tomasz Machciński is already established as a leading figure in Brut photography, like Miroslav Tichy, Lee Godie, Eugene Von Bruenchenhein, who have only recently been recognised by the institutional art world. In the year following the establishment, in 2018, of the Tomasz Machciński Foundation, his films were screened at the Whitechapel Gallery (London); that same year he participated in the *Rencontres de la Photographie* (Arles) in the exhibition *PHOTO | BRUT, collection Bruno Decharme & compagnie*. In 2020, he was exhibited at the American Folk Art museum of New York, and finally a large-scale retrospective exhibition was dedicated to him by the Manggha (Kraków) in 2021. The artist passed away in January 2022 at the age of 79.

Source: Christian Berst Art Brut Gallery

Tomasz Machciński, *Untitled*, 2016.  
Digital color photograph, printed  
on glossy Fuji paper, 38x28,3 cm.  
Courtesy Christian Berst art brut

