

MUSÉE



CHINON  
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## Press kit

Exhibition from **february 21 to june 3rd**, 2014

# Pierre Petit

from Modern Times to Outsider Art

 le  
carroi

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The Carroi Museum presents the exhibition of « Pierre Petit, from Modern Times to Outsider Art ».

**For the first time in Chinon an exhibit of outsider art will be presented to the public** during a period of three months, thanks to numerous loans from public and private collections: the Musée d'Art Moderne Lille Métropole (LAM de Villeneuve d'Ascq); **the Musées du Berry de Bourges; the Fabuloserie (one of the leading exhibitors of outsider art in France); and various private collections.** The exhibit "*Pierre Petit, from Modern Times to Outsider Art*" offers by the presentation of some twenty buildings and structures of his "Village de Monplaisir" with several other works and photographic archives, the singular vision of a man who travelled across the world and society within the confines of a little kitchen in the Berry region of France.

Outsider art (also known as grass roots art in North America or by the French term, art brut, literally "raw art"), is a term that was created in 1945 by the artist Jean Dubuffet to describe "works made by people insulated from artistic cultural influence..." These idiosyncratic visionaries of art, these incognitos are usually day labourers and farmers, who have spent their lives in an often rural context. They are sedentary men and women who have never left the confines of their native regions or crossed the threshold of a museum. The materials they use are those of everyday life, found or reused objects, wood, small mechanisms, cloth...with no preoccupation for the artistic or cultural milieu but rather the purely creative act driven by their own instincts - a spontaneous art. Starting in 1945, Jean Dubuffet went out with the intent to meet these marginalized artists in France and Switzerland.

He collected and brought together numerous examples of this art form for an exhibit in Paris in 1945, at the Foyer de l'Art Brut, Place Vendôme. The best known example of outsider art is certainly "le Palais Idéal" by the Facteur (Ferdinand) Cheval, made between 1879 and 1912, in Hauterives located in the Drôme region of France and designated as a Historical Monument by André Malraux in 1969. Outsider art has often been associated with insanity, given that many examples of this art form have been the works of those suffering from psychiatric disorders, from those hospitalized for these illnesses to the inmates of asylums for the mentally ill.

In this context, it is interesting to note the perceptive comment of Ferdinand Cheval, "It is not because I was crazy that I made this work, it's because I made it that one calls me crazy". Three categories were formed: isolated autodidacts (Emile Ratier, Henri Darger, le Facteur Cheval, A.C.M., **Pierre Petit**); the spiritual visionaries/mediums (Augustin Lesage, Fleury Joseph Crépin); and the psychiatric ward patients (Adolf Wölfi, Aloïse Corbaz, André Robillard).



Pierre Petit was born in 1902, in Chapelle d'Anguillon in the Cher area of the Region Centre in France, and he lived in Bourges his entire life.

After the end of the war, in 1947, he started "to carve some small knickknacks for fun."

He made a small church and a few small constructions with the wood scraps that he brought home from the sawmill where he worked (the Galopin Company mechanized woodworks, specialized in wood parquet flooring). He decided to enlarge the first church, afterwards he made the town hall, and then the idea came to him to create an entire village that he named "Village de Monplaisir". In the space of five years, he made a total of around thirty small buildings (a train station, the Palais Jacques Coeur, a hospital, the barber's shop, a chapel and a church, schools...) where everything is furnished and has lighting. Certain complex building constructions are composed of several structures – five for the train station and as many for the electricity factory.

The village was piled up in the two small rooms of Pierre and Raymonde Petit's apartment, first in the rue Mirebeau, and then in the rue Calvin in Bourges. In the apartment were small shelves along the walls with flower pots, animal and human figures, all carved by Pierre Petit.

Vehicles with eccentric names: "Départ pour l'Amérique", "La Californie"; some airplanes, « Michel Debré », « Bleriot »; images from magazines glued onto wood supports and surrounded by hand painted wood strips, filled the apartment.

A collection of key rings with popular images mostly taken from advertising and packaging was suspended, lined up like the concentric rings of an onion over the radio transformed by Petit into "La voix de son maître, discothèque".

Using only a small hand saw, a knife and a lot of patience, he made his village and numerous small "pieces". The village and the works of modest dimensions are usually peopled by little men with long noses wearing caps. With Pierre Petit, children arrive in the world by showing their faces in flower pots; a "Départ pour la Lune" is a Moon bound vehicle driven by the satellite itself with a group of little people in the back...



The little figures are carved from wood in a simple, effective manner. Raymonde, Petit's wife and assistant, then painted the principal surfaces in bright colours. As for the details, eyes, nose and mouth, they were painted by Pierre Petit.

The little works are presented alongside what was for Petit his masterpiece, "Village de Monplaisir". One can find in the village interiors mechanisms, little men, furniture, floral decorations made from pieces of fabric.

For example, "La boutique du coiffeur", is of modest dimensions (40 cm high, long and large) for 2 floors.

On the ground floor is the barber's shop, and on the first, an apartment. The shop has all the things necessary for a barber's: razors, pots of shaving cream, scissors on a shelf. A client is seated in the barber's chair, towel around his neck, the barber next to him. Other clients wait their turn. On the floor above is the barber's home, with a portrait of his grandmother hung on flowered wall paper, and in the middle of the room his wife is sitting at a table.

Another example, "L'usine électrique" is comprised of five elements. Inside is an assembly of mechanisms, gears and cogs, drive belts, notices by the workbenches, "forward/back", "right/left", "up/down", with the factory workers in overalls busy at the machines.

Pierre Petit was born with the 20th century and lived through all the developments of modern society, which became increasingly industrialized with automatic and mechanized systems, assembly lines, important advances in aviation and the automobile, paid time off, progress in public health, the appearance of television and mass publicity, and the first steps of Man on the Moon. The work of Pierre Petit is of an impressive ingenuity - so much is it evocative of the evolution of modern western society in the 20th century and reveals the influence of modern techniques on man.

Last thing, Pierre Petit was persuaded that his village and his people would come to life after his death, which occurred in 1990.

“There is no more an art of the insane than there is of dyspeptics or of those with knee injuries”

*Jean Dubuffet*



« Le camping car », Pierre Petit  
Collection La Fabuloserie  
Photo Jean-François Hamon

## Informations

**On Exhibit** : from February 22nd to April 30th, Friday to Monday, 2 to 6 P.M. And from May 1st to June 3rd, Wednesday to Monday, 2:30 to 6:30 P.M. 2014

**Admission** : 3 euros, free for children under 12. Free for members of "les Amis du Vieux Chinon" and those having purchased the Chinon Cultural Pass 2014

**Pass Le Carroi** : Family pass, 15 euros, free entry for 4 to the museum and its programming for 2014

## Exhibit Events Program

Guided visits of the exhibit Sunday March 23rd, April 27th, and May 25th at 4 P.M.

"Midi-Musée" – "*Pierre Petit, des temps modernes à l'art brut*", Tuesday March 25, from 12:15 to 12:45 P.M. (from the "noontime museum visits" program, in French)

"Midi-Musée – "*Sur les chemins de l'art brut*", Tuesday April 8, 12 :15 to 12 :45 P.M.(from the " noontime museum visits" program, in French)

"*Nuit Européenne des Musées*": Saturday through the evening May 17th, guided visits of the exhibition and short documentaries on outsider art

## For Young Children

Creative workshops for children during school vacation, Wednesday April 23rd and 30th , 3 to 5 P.M.

School groups: educational visits on request at 02 47 93 18 12

## Contact:

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Le Carroi – Musée, labellisé « Musées de France » est un équipement de la communauté de communes Chinon Vienne et Loire. Il présente des collections sur l'histoire de l'art local, rassemblées par la société des Amis du Vieux Chinon, et enrichies de dépôts de l'Etat, du Conseil Général d'Indre-et-Loire et de la Ville de Chinon. .