



## Darger: The Henry Darger Collection at the American Folk Art Museum

*By Brooke Davis Anderson, Michel Thevoz*

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Henry Darger, who died in 1973, was a secretive Chicago janitor who has since been recognised as one of the supreme self-taught artists of the 20th century. His work depicts a turbulent world of good and evil and often proves disturbing. This volume catalogues the American Folk Art Museum's recent acquisition of 37 Darger paintings.

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### **Editorial Review**

#### **Amazon.com Review**

Sweetly colored, pleasingly composed, and delicately rendered, Henry Darger's scroll-like paintings of armies of transsexual children have had a cult status since they were first shown in 1997 at the American Folk Art Museum in New York. The museum's paintings are part of a vast series illustrating the artist's 15,000-page story about the rescue of naked abducted children by seven little girls. Darger, a reclusive janitor and self-taught artist with ambivalent feelings about religion, spent his childhood in a Catholic orphanage, and in the years before his death in 1973 attended Mass several times daily. The real virtues of this slender book are the 114 full-color illustrations of the paintings, which range from fanciful nature scenes to gruesome battle images. The chief essay, by Michel Thévoz, is a pretentious effort that treats Darger's startling and wholly original pastiche of images drawn from magazines and coloring books at a fastidious arm's length. --*Cathy Curtis*

#### **From Library Journal**

Chicago artist Henry Darger was a reclusive janitor who created a massive body of highly imaginative artwork that continues to amaze critics nearly 30 years after his death. In addition to several hundred drawings, Darger produced many double-sided paintings, voluminous diaries, an autobiography of more than 5000 pages, and an illustrated, 15,000-page fictional epic about the "Vivian Girls." This extraordinary output would have been lost to the world were it not for the efforts of his landlord, Nathan Lerner, a photographer and cofounder of the Institute of Design. (After Lerner's death, his widow created the Henry Darger Study Center in collaboration with the American Folk Art Museum in New York.) Anderson, director of the Contemporary Center of the American Folk Art Museum, offers this slim catalog for this spring's exhibit at the American Folk Art Museum. While it is nicely illustrated with more than 100 of Darger's drawings, it pales in comparison with Michael Bonesteel's *Henry Darger: Art and Selected Writings* a richer, much more readable book that paints an insightful portrait of this mysterious and sometimes fascinating character. With most of its only ten pages of text written in a flowery and pretentious tone, this book should not be considered a necessary purchase. Margarete Gross, Chicago P.L.  
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#### **From the Publisher**

Exhibition Schedule: American Folk Art Museum, New York: Dec. 2001-Apr. 2002

### **Users Review**

#### **From reader reviews:**

##### **Robert Crawford:**

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**Lisa Walker:**

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**James Rouse:**

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**Brant Castillo:**

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