



For Immediate Release

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***Parallel Unknown***

Hawkins Bolden, Edward Deeds, Prophet Royal Robertson, Mary T. Smith, Bill Traylor,  
Valton Tyler, Frank Walter, David Zeldis  
April 20 – May 26, 2017

Co-organized with Shrine (New York City), *Parallel Unknown* examines the unintentional points of connection and affinities shared by eight important Outsider artists. These artists, who at first glance appear to be unlikely matches, display an overlap in themes, materials or intention. By exhibiting them together, striking connections can be made despite each artist's lack of awareness of the others' output. Usually regarded in terms of singularity, the very term "Outsider Art" celebrates an artist's unique experience or vision. *Parallel Unknown* shows that, while singular and visionary, the artists included here are nonetheless united by their shared artistic exploration of the human condition.

**Hawkins Bolden** (1914-2005) was a self-taught artist who lived his entire life in Memphis, Tennessee. At the age of seven, Bolden was left completely blind following a baseball accident involving his twin brother. Later in life, he began scavenging the alleyways and fields around his home in search of discarded materials, litter and other debris with which to work. Utilizing only his sense of touch, he created a vast number of scarecrows, tall totems, and mask-like objects from these found materials to protect his backyard vegetable garden from pests and predators.

Sometimes known as "The Electric Pencil," **Edward Deeds** (1908-1987) was a near life-long ward of the state of Missouri and colorful mental patient at Nevada, Missouri's State Hospital, No. 3. His drawings, measuring approximately 9 x 8 inches, were executed in graphite and crayon on the official ledger paper of the institution where he remained for nearly four decades. They are beautiful, poignant works of art suggestive of his early life as a farmer and outdoorsman; and, more profoundly his experiences as a mental patient enduring shock therapy and psychotropic drugs while surrounded by a kaleidoscope of doctors, nurses, patients and preachers, lawyers and politicians.

**Royal Robertson** (1936-1997) covered every inch of his Baldwin, LA home and yard with hand-made signs and apocalyptic paintings. Visitors of this self-proclaimed prophet were greeted with large, weather-beaten signs warning "NO DIVORCE WHORE'S ALLOWED" (sic) and "ALL CRAZY PERSONS KEEP OFF LOT" before entering his home. Once inside, shrines to his both beloved and despised ex-wife, Adell, came into focus amid poster board renderings of future cities, space autos, couples engaged in sex, and detailed calendars chronicling his daily woes. Referencing sources as disparate as the Bible, science fiction magazines, pornography, and cheap tabloid newspapers, his work manages to graphically illustrate the daily concerns that occupied his mind, both real and imagined.

**Mary T. Smith** (1904-1995) was born in southern Mississippi and worked as a domestic servant throughout most of her adult life. Smith was born with significant hearing loss, which became more severe with age and made her speech difficult to understand. As part of the Southern tradition of "yard shows" that black artists used to decorate their property and convey messages that could not be openly voiced,

Smith created an outdoor environment of incredibly graphic oil enamel paintings on found wood and pieces of corrugated roofing metal that she would drag home from a local garbage dump.

A key figure in the tradition of twentieth-century African American folk art, **Bill Traylor** (1854-1949) is considered by many to be the truest embodiment of the "outsider" or "self-taught" artist. A visual story teller whose drawings have been likened to such evocative interpreters of the South as William Faulkner and Robert Johnson, Traylor's iconic images of people and animals reflect his powers of imagination as well as his close observation of the world around him. Critics have long speculated about the social, cultural, and political implications of his art, as well as its parallels with blues music. What is always agreed upon, however, is its universal appeal stemming from the artist's sincerity, humor, and remarkably sophisticated formalism.

**Valton Tyler** (b. 1944), a Dallas-based, visionary self-taught artist, creates sophisticated drawings and oil on canvas paintings whose images depict futuristic, bizarre structures that simultaneously resemble plants, buildings and machines. In the past, he also created an extensive series of prints (etchings and aquatints), out of whose unusual imagery his later drawings and paintings evolved. Painters who work in oil on canvas are rare in the world of self-taught/outsider artists, especially in the Deep South of the United States. Tyler refers to the elements of his compositions as "my shapes" and regards them as possessing or being possessed by a life force. He also refers to his drawn or painted pictures not as "compositions" but rather as "conversations" between the "shapes" he depicts in them.

**Frank Walter** (1926-2009) – reclusive artist, writer, philosopher, and poet— spent years living in a small cabin without running water or electricity high above Antigua's remote Ding-a-Ding Nook. His death brought to light a remarkable trove of paintings, sculpture, photographs, and constructions, along with at least 25,000 pages of his writing, that reveal a talent and intelligence not fully appreciated or understood during his lifetime. Walter's art, like his life, was deceptively simple, full of straightforward truths and complex contradictions. He was both a common sign painter and a visionary abstractionist; a small-time photographer whose miniature passport photos were often deeply penetrating portraits; a collector of torn paper scraps on which he might paint a sunset for the ages.

For the last 30 years, **David Zeldis** (b. 1952) has lived and worked in a one bedroom apartment in New York City, making as little contact as possible with the outside world. A fear of sharp objects forces him to fashion his own drawing implements and sharpen them with the edge of a nickel. It is under these constraints, and others brought on by his Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder, that Zeldis makes his work; exhibiting a control and delicacy that belies the subject matter and the environment of their creation. Rendered in graphite, colored pencil or crayon, the subtle shading and exacting line quality bring a sense of beauty to images of apocalyptic landscapes and mysterious, chambered interiors. Deeply symbolic and self-referential, the drawings convey the otherworldliness that is the interior of one's mind.

*SHRINE is an artist-run gallery located at 191 Henry Street in the Chinatown/LES neighborhood of Manhattan. The space is run by Scott Ogden and specializes in self-taught and emerging contemporary art. Open Wednesday through Sunday, 12-6pm. For more information contact [scott@shrine.nyc](mailto:scott@shrine.nyc) or visit the gallery's website: <http://shrine.nyc>*

**Parallel Unknown** opens at Hirschl & Adler Modern on Thursday, April 20 and runs through Friday, May 26, 2017. Located in the landmark Crown Building at the corner of 57th Street and Fifth Avenue, Hirschl & Adler Modern is open Tuesday through Friday, from 9:30 am to 5:15 pm, and Saturday, from 9:30 am to 4:45 pm. *Please note the entrance to the Crown Building has been moved around the corner to 3 West 56<sup>th</sup> Street. We apologize for any inconvenience.*

For additional information or images, contact Shelley Farmer, Director, or Ted Holland, Exhibition Coordinator, at 212-535-8810 (phone) / 212-772-7237 (fax), or by email at [shelleyf@HirschlAndAdler.com](mailto:shelleyf@HirschlAndAdler.com) or [tedh@HirschlAndAdler.com](mailto:tedh@HirschlAndAdler.com). Please visit our website at [www.HirschlAndAdler.com](http://www.HirschlAndAdler.com) for an online preview of the exhibition.