

Chat with Agnes Cardinal Tuesday 27 October 2020

Jennifer: Hello, I'm Jennifer from the Jennifer Lauren gallery. And thank you for joining me this evening for my conversation with Agnes about the life of the late Roger Cardinal. For anyone new to this online setup. This is a webinar today, meaning me and Agnes can be heard, and none of you can be seen, or can speak. So if you'd like to ask, Agnes any questions, please pop them in the chat box or the q&a box.

There is live captioning for anyone that needs it. I've popped it in the chat box, and also if you look to the top left, you'll be able to click on the live streaming chat there.

Otherwise, we shall be good to go. Just to let everyone know that this is being recorded today. So

Just... oh John Mazels has just messaged me and he was trying to get online so if you give me two seconds. He just wants me to send him the link to go hang on two seconds, and I'll just send him the link. Because John was very good friends with Rogers, I don't want him to miss it. Yes. And that's just forward that to him.

Roger Cardinal led a fascinating life living for 79 years until he passed away in November last year. Many of you listening will know Roger for coining the term outsider art from his book in 1972, but he also did many other things in his life as well. We are joined this evening by his wife, Agnes who spent many a year traveling with Roger, or listening to his many stories, a little about Roger. His first and great love was for German Romanticism. He studied at Cambridge, writing his PhD on the surrealist conception of love in 1965, he was given an assistant professorship in Canada, and in 1967 he returned to the UK to briefly lecture at Warwick, and then for 50 years he taught at the University of Kent, in Canterbury.

He has written books on expressionism, the landscape of Paul Nash, the cultures of collecting and figures of reality. But he is most strongly linked with his 1972 book on outsider art, which was sadly largely ignored in the UK when it first came out.

So here's an old photo of you, Roger, and the artist Michel Nedjar, do you want to tell us a little bit about your meetings with Michel and his work and were you around when he first set up the Aracine collection that he set up in France, and more importantly, can you speak French so that you can understand him.

Agnes: Yes when I first met Roger in Lausanne in Switzerland we spoke French, all the time, so that was the way he communicated. And then when he got this job in Winnipeg, there was somebody the other side of the river and we had a lot of friends that spoke French, even in Canada, but you'll know the story of the Quebec leap. But, Michel Nedjar was working on his operas in Paris and Roger, well when we were in Paris, which were quite often he will go to the Marche du Puits(?). We would go quite frequently, and he sort of lingered there and struck up a friendship with this person named Michel who was selling pots and pans and bits and bobs at the store in

the marche du puis. And then I came along as well and we went for drinks and then it turned out that Michel was doing these poupees in his rooms.

Jennifer: which are quite scary

Agnes: Very scary and Roger was intensely interested and also in Michel's life story and why he would want to do these dolls and so on. And this was very early on, I suppose it might be early 70s, and we stayed good friends ever since and Michel still writes to me, to this day, and says every anytime I go to Paris I can stay with him and so we've been age old friends really and we watched his career take off -the French government was very good at supporting him once he became better known. And he's doing quite well now in the French artistic circles, do very well. So he's donated some of his paintings and I've got a lovely little sculpture actually is not a sculpture. He put it together on the beach of Easter Island. From driftwood, and with wire that he found on the beach and stuff it's on our wall I should have taken a photo of it, it's really quite impressive and very powerful. So he Michel has this knack of making those sort of things out of things he finds so that that's Michel.

Jennifer: Amazing. Yeah.

So let's talk a little bit about Rogers early life. Here he is with some of the English surrealists, including conroy maddox on the left, and George Melly in the middle, and of course Roger on the right.

This is from around 1980, can you tell us about his interest in surrealism, and the books and essays, he wrote about this.

Agnes: Well, I think that was at the root of Rogers, intellectual and emotional artistic development and aesthetic development as well. I think right from the start when he was still an undergraduate in Cambridge, he got interested in this, in the surrealist, I mean he was a scholar of French and German. And there was the German romantics and the French surrealist and that these twin movements inspired him right from the start, much to the consternation of the British academic establishment who really weren't particularly keen on him, pursuing these interests, and had it not been for his supervisor, Douglas parmi (?). I think he would have had to change the title of his PhD. But as it happened parmi supported him and Roger, but he did get a lot of flack from people who just shook their heads about Roger being interested in surrealism which they felt was not really a particularly interesting or slightly bad taste I think was the sort of well was felt that one didn't want to write a PhD on surrealism. But he did it anyway and it worked out for him.

Jennifer: Good. And where did this interest come from that he had in this and what books did he write about it.

Agnes: You mean that later on or before. Well, I mean, I think he grew up with this sort of sense of being wanting to be, wanting to undermine the sort of bourgeois and traditional culture that that came from him personally. He would wander around East London, southeast London that's where he grew up and look for the unusual and the extraordinary inside the ordinary, that sort of thing he wasn't going for the big monuments he was going for the little. What

he liked most of all was this policy called snickets, he would always dive down little tiny alleyways and find a graffiti on a wall or something that would interest him, and that was already in his teenage years, he would do that then that and then obviously then made it into sort of a lifelong intellectual pursuit. And the surrealism fitted that perfectly. Also, together with the dream world of the romantics and so the irrational, perhaps, yeah.

Jennifer: And do you want to tell us a little about his other interests so these other books that he used to write about that not many people may not know about him.

Agnes: Well I think one of the, the books that he really enjoyed writing was the one on Paul Nash, because in the landscapes of Paul Nash he sort of saw underneath the surface of ordinary landscapes.

Well, he probably would hesitate to call it mystical, but a kind of alternative reality, a visionary quality to these together with with the Paul Nash sort of shows, sort of trees that seemed to imbibe this some sort of spiritual quality, there are moons in the sky.

And you might remember that he also did skies full of aeroplanes in the war or before paintings that had the kind of eery aesthetic, which he often mentioned that (?) would be a sort of ancestor of that kind of vision of landscape, which was imbued with spiritual qualities, that's sort of under the surface of the ordinary. That's what attracted him. Yeah. Another book. Well, that was the collecting the kind of collection. And I think that was another aspect that he always liked people who collected things and had, you know, hundred and 50 types of clay pipes or beer mats or he thought, and the kind of excess of wanting to accumulate things of similar things that that he thought this was... I think it had it linked up also with many of the outsider artists like Madge Gill for instance where there is a kind of obsessive similarity, that the feeling the doodle the feeling in of space with variations on a theme that repeats and repeats and repeats itself until the repetition itself becomes a subject that he thought that was, he would always stop anywhere he saw this kind of thing. He was very fond of doodles as well. Peoples doodles.

He has got a got huge file of doodles which he has accumulated collected indeed. Since the year ? of, all manner of people, whenever he saw somebody doodling at the end of a meeting, he will collect everybody's doodles and put them in his files. So he really enjoyed that he also got his children, his boys to do to doodles and he would collect these in the files too.

Jennifer: someone's asked you know where this photo was taken.

Agnes: Oh, with these palm trees. Yeah. Um, I would have to look it up. I thought you would know. Oh west dean.

Jennifer: So going on to Roger teaching at the University of Kent What did he teach when he was there for all those years? And what did it change over time.

Agnes: Well, he got the job as a humble lecturer in French. To start with, and he did quite for, well maybe five six years and then gradually. Well, obviously

taught literature French literature and language. Then, the great thing about University of Kent was they have what they call topics, and these were sort of 10 week courses where somebody like Roger could invent his own topic and then just devise a course and one of the courses, he devised was madness. Another one was the observed. another one the sublime. There are many he loved teaching those and the students loved them and I think there was one on surrealism and French. But it didn't have to be just French students or French, they could be any student even had sociologists as well, took some of these took what they call topics, and that sort of launched him into branching out into the art department, and he taught an awful lot for the English department, and did a course with the philosophers.

And so, that was the great thing about Kent, that's one of the reasons why he never wanted to move really because it was all interdisciplinary and students could take what they call wild courses in all manner of different. They weren't stuck with their chosen subject. And that sort of created a great freedom for Roger, which he enjoyed.

Jennifer: Definitely. this is Roger with an Aloise artwork so do you remember how he became interested in the art brut field initially?

Agnes: Well, I think it was, via Dubuffet in Paris, really. And generally, I think he was reading wildly and everywhere and then there was the Dubuffet movement and Dubuffet giving his collection to Lausanne. And they started the museum there and Roger got sort of involved with people were working there. And then, that he just more he started to collect artists really then, he, for a while he was totally focused on both Wolfli and Louise Bourgeois. And, and then we did many more it snowballed from perhaps with Nedjar, Wolfli and son on. And suddenly, he began, well he saw himself collecting all these different artists, I think, a turning point might have been when he went to the Facteru Cheval on our travels to Switzerland, he would always stop and look, and (?) with the cup sculptures on the cliffs, in the Bodan (?), and he suddenly. I remember him sitting there, collecting making taking photographs and collecting these very very disparate works of artists and sort of trying to find the common denominator and suddenly this all sort of chat was channeled into his understanding of the artistic impulse, and away from academia, you know academic painting, he, He was more interested in what makes these people create, and then of course we spent a long time in Heidelberg in the Prinzhorn collection. Once he started, it was like, he began. He started with a small interest and it snowballed into every bit got bigger and bigger and he found more and more artists that interested in. Right from the late 60s onwards, really.

Jennifer: Yeah. Super. So, I guess we should talk about his book now from 1970. This outside a wrap up and come talk about the title, I believe he wanted to call it art Brut initially, and that the publishers did not like the direct translation of this being brutal art that right, that's, that's right.

Agnes: Yes. Obviously the studio Vista, they didn't think they didn't like the word, it meant nothing to them, the French angle meant nothing to them. So that brut art, wasn't. They didn't think it was going to sell or be of interest to

anybody. Then he wrote went for art of the artless, that they didn't like that either. And it was an endless misery, trying to find a title for this book. In the end of it or it turned into, I think that was like a publisher who said it's got to be outsider art

Jennifer: and that was on his long list of titles?

Agnes: Yeah, I think so. I think so, yes. And he having wanting desperately to publish the book here. He caved in and said okay then it has got to be outsider art.

Jennifer: Because here's the letter from July 1970, and the paper work does suggest here it was going to be called the art of the artless, and he said it was going to be a study of the artistic expression in the mad, the mediums, and the innocent. It also says in this letter that the price of the book in the country would be 84 shillings, which is quite hard to believe it was, what seems now such a small amount of money.

Agnes: Yeah.

Jennifer: And this is just another piece from Roger's archives that shows a synopsis which again shows the art of the artless. And here's the list of alternative names that he'd scribbled on a piece of paper, of which outsider art is the third one down.

So I guess whilst we're on the topic in 2009, Roger wrote that the name had been used and abused in a variety of ways, which I have often compromised it. And I understand that he was more interested in the artist's creativity than the sensationalism of their lives. And I know that as time went on, he grew to dislike the term Didn't he So can you tell us about that. And did he ever suggest, like a different title to you or something else.

Agnes: Well, I think what became a bit wearisome was. Every time he went to a conference or gave a talk, almost inevitably at the end of the talk, came the somebody in the audience would say, what about the definition. What about that? Why did you call it outsider art? And I think that some people in Zurich some somebody even said, what kind of movement is outsider art, an artist as an art which is obviously way off the target because you can't call outsider art, an art movement because it's so individual to each. And I think Rogers shied away more and more from giving any art, a particular title, he went quiet when when yet again somebody said Why did you call it, outsider art. Then there was the suggestion that outsider was a politically incorrect title and had the wrong connotations. And he would agree and say yes.

In the end, I think, too, it's sort of when he got really tired of the debate he would say, it's just art that I like. And he sort of didn't really want to give it a particularly intellectual common denominator, because he just wanted to make visible art that is not normally seen. Now obviously there is much more in the main limelight. But at the time when he first got interested. Very few people showed the least bit interest in that, in these types of art. They were just they were almost invisible these artists to work without wanting

recognition and work just for themselves. So he got pretty well quietly tired of the endless discussion about definitions. Because people were never going to get it.

Jennifer: No, like, he never suggested anything else because he just wanted it to be art right.

Agnes: Yes he just said that kind of art, which isn't particularly helpful either.

Jennifer: Just to remind us everyone if they want to ask Agnes anything do pop it in the chat. So here he is in front of one of his all time favourites madge gill. As many of you I'm sure aware of, Agnes you've managed to find a couple of entries in his little notebooks that he writes in, about madge gill. And so here is a small entry, about that. He writes: "The people who live opposite Mad he's old house in Thorngrove Road spoke of her hard life and what a terrible woman she was when drunk. The son remembered her kindness and the big black picture that she'd done in a dream or in a trance." He goes on to talk about newham town hall and that someone there called mr green invited him "to view the pictures stacked all over his office and even unrolled the 35 foot long fabric for me upstairs in the children's library: splendid colour and control and sublime from a distance." And this is followed by, "a week before we escape England for the summer, I xxx on images by madge gill, wolfli, Ferdinand cheval, Scottie Wilson - a diet that is at least nutritious!"

Agnes, what was roger's fascination with madge gill, how did he hear about her and tell us about his research trips and those he spoke to about her? Before he died, he had been working on a book about her life that he has been working on for a good few years – do you think we will ever see this?

Agnes: Yeah, I think he discovered postcards, I think in newham he would whenever I mean first of all his favourite part of london was sort of southeast London, he would go there quite often for his research and walk about, which he did, because he grew up in it in Catford Forest Hill, and he would go on long walks so he kept these walks up and then he will go into the library I think if I'm not totally sure but I think he opened one of these drawers in the library and there were stacks and stacks of madge gill postcards. And then, and so he got interested. There was another aspect to this because first of all, it came more or less from the sort of unpromising ordinary suburban slightly down at the heel. part of London, nothing very grand. And then there was this similarly, not particularly interesting woman, who secretly in her attic with watch he had one bad day eye one good I was feverishly doing these drawings and when you get a bit more research you realize that she had a difficult time, he researched that she was sent as a Barnardos child to Canada I gather and then came back and they were all sort of skeletons in the cupboard of that family. And he, he sort of admired that a bit like with wolfli the alternative lives they created for themselves that grew out of a very unpromising reality. That she went into her attic and lived her life through those pictures. She had this. She called the dis the guiding spirit that made her do these drawings, myrninerest. Yeah, kind of a kind of, well, it used to speculate what it might mean my inner most or my inner ghost or whatever.

And so she, it was kind of artistic escape into an alternative reality, and that he found that fascinating especially since. It seemed to blossom out of a rather drab reality that he knew personally himself.

So, and that state of being, and when he got towards the end of his life when he got ill, and so on. he would often conjure up madge gill and talk about madge gill a great deal as if she became some sort of guiding spirit for him, you know.

Jennifer: oh that's nice.

Agnes: Yeah. Of all the artists she was the one that accompanied him, throughout his life, sort of like a personality or presence. Mm hmm.

Jennifer: Yeah, I guess he was, you know, up until he passed away still he was working on his madge gill book. So, do you think that we'll ever see that come to light?

Agnes: I don't know, Sara I don't know if sara ayed is here. I think she might be. yeah, she's struggling trying to find a publisher she had to finish it for Roger because he could no longer finish it. And I think she found it difficult to piece the last bits together, and also to bring it to, I think, a publisher said that they were not sure especially now with the virus that everything is ground to a halt hasn't it. So, it might very well, given time in the fullness of time, it might eventually come to fruition.

Jennifer: Well, fingers crossed for that. Yeah. There was also a lovely little snippet that you'd found as well where he'd written that before you'd gone away on one of your summer holidays, he was looking at images from madge gill, wolfli and scottie wilson and he called it a diet that is at least nutritious. I thought that was quite a strange way to talk about artwork, but I just thought that was a really lovely sentence that he'd written in his notebooks.

Agnes: I think that that's how he saw it, these, these gave him, well he did a lot of drawings himself and whenever there were some time, he would spend quiet times during every day. He drew a drawing. Little sketches, maybe have someone been visiting or, or a tree in the garden, or if we were on a journey of a ruin of a building or a man on a bicycle, you know, that kind of thing.

Jennifer: So someone's asked about that saying was he never tempted to paint it all himself?

Agnes: Not paint, but lots of drawings. He's done his journals and they are full of drawings.

Jennifer: Yeah, which you'll see some images in a minute of some other pages of his other journals. So I guess, you know, as I just mentioned you used to go away every summer around Europe and you drove and can you tell us sort of the kind of places that you used to go and spend time?

Agnes: Well, we always set out. Obviously, crossed the channel, and then he avoided, he didn't like the big motorways so we've always drove on minor roads, through villages. And as to since we had quite a long time to get to, usually we ended up in Switzerland because my dad's mom's house. And so we took ages, and went up alleyways and occasionally. I used to drive mostly and Roger suddenly shouted stopp the car and because he saw in somebody's garden, a sculpture or a whirly gig or he would even stop for gnomes, sometimes, and I would sort of draw the line so they this just gnomes roger that they're not wonderful. And then, if, if so occasionally quite often actually he would eventually, talk to the person who would come out to the house, feeling quite happy to talk about what they did in their back garden and Roger would talk to them so that's what we, that was one of the aspects of our journey through Europe. Another one is of course we went from museum to museum spent an awful long time in. In, obviously in lausanne but also in Heidelberg, and other many places where they had all manners of outsider art and he. I mean he had stamina he could arrive at half past nine in the morning and stand up and look at things until half past four in the afternoon.

Jennifer: I remember from the art fairs when he'd be there from when it opens and then you'd still see him pottering I mean you might stop for a coffee and a little doodle and write nd then it come back round again and then you come back round again.

Exactly. Yeah, so we never got very far every day we knew this I mean we would take forever to get anywhere so that we could never book a hotel it's absolutely possible. Because we would never, we would never arrive at the right time. So, we would just take potluck, which was fine. And we got used to that sort of way of traveling we went to rugen (?) and you know the island where Casper Dobby (?) did his chalk. Yeah. And, but we arrived when it was pitch dark because he was so late. and it was just, he never could keep it to a track, because he got sidetracked by a graffito on a wall in a town and he would no take photographs, it would always draw it and then do a drawing of it. Yeah, that's right he hated well he, he kept saying he couldn't, well is was true he could do terrible photos.

Jennifer: Yeah, so the last photo was a room in your house full of books and then this is his diaries which he used to label with Roman numerals Didn't he.

Agnes: Yes, that's right.

Jennifer: And how many is there?

Agnes: 95, which he started. They finish at the bottom there on the right. And they're not all, I mean that I couldn't get it all in the photograph they're more on the left there. Yeah, he started it before I knew him that was in 1963, until 2018 or so, that's when he finished Yeah.

Jennifer: Wow. And so here's some images from inside the little notebooks. I've got a little selection of them here where he often did a little drawing like

you said that somewhere that you visited. And then writes down if you spoken to people or how he was feeling that day and that sort of thing. But he seems to flit through the text into lots of different subjects doesn't he so like he had a line about one thing. And then the next slide is about something totally different. Yeah.

Agnes: Yeah, he does Yes, people he met. there's one waiting in the airplane to go to America.

Jennifer: So here's just a few little snapshots of his diaries this one I particularly like this one you said was from the prinzhorn.

Agnes: Yeah, and I think the girl at the top is a darger girl.

Jennifer: It does look like it.

Agnes: And I think these might have been sculptures made out of kneaded bread by prisoners. I don't know, I'm not totally sure this is true. I remember they were in prinzhorn in Heidelberg in an exhibition.

Jennifer: And then what do you think's going to happen, I know we were discussing it the other day, what's going to happen to these little notebooks.

Agnes: Well, we were on poised bill Sherman the head of the Warburg (?) institute was interested in them. And he was just about to come down to have a look at them and also some of Rogers sort of more interesting books that he has and first editions. and there is an unpublished manuscript totally unpublished on cave art.

Jennifer: Wow

Agnes: He has never published it. It's finished it, he sent it off to the publisher and they said it was too not archaeologically appropriate so they didn't want to publish it, but it's here. Yeah. It's 300 pages it's fat it's a huge manuscript. Yeah. And there is the correspondence with various people and that sort of thing. Yeah. And right from, he's kept pretty well everything that that was worth keeping you know that's amazing. Yeah, that'd be great if that came out.

Jennifer: Yeah, this is Roger at Phyllis Kind's gallery in New York. The late Phyllis kind. So did you often go over to New York with Roger?

Agnes: yes, for a while, well every year there was the outsider art fair in January, wasn't it, and we always stayed at phylliss. She had she built this house inside a house it because it was one of these huge warehouses, and the warehouse was big enough to house her gallery, but the inside there was so much empty space that she built a house, a kitchen downstairs in the living room and the two bedrooms upstairs and this is the gallery. We were in the bedroom on the right and Roger is writing his diary there. So those were

fabulous times. I found some more photographs so for the gallery. The trouble is I've lost them again but there he is.

Jennifer: And so, what was Phyllis like because I've never met her.

Agnes: She was the most... well we met to first when she was in Chicago, because she started off in a gallery in Chicago. She was the most amazing forceful woman. She grew up in the Bronx actually and that and had an eye for this kind of art, and could persuade people to help her, establish it as a movement and I think she was very supportive for artists, American artists, and somehow magically she had four children or three children. Fortunately, she managed to sort of put them through college as she called them by building up this reputation as an art dealer and connoisseur of outsider art extra-ordinary. Yes, he was a force of nature really she was full of life and full of quite raucous in a new yorkish sort of way. She and Roger got on famously. They laughed a lot they drank a lot together.

Jennifer: I can imagine

Agnes: There was a lot of whiskey involved, And she gave her a reception which had an a mountain mountain of caviar on the table in the room. And of course, everybody, made a beeline for the caviar she got so annoyed because they ate it too quickly and so she got very cross with everyone and shouted at everybody and said, like pigs to a trough we all felt very bad as being very British but she didn't mind telling everybody what she thought of them really she was great, she was really great. Really good.

Jennifer: So here's an artist that I work with, so I asked you to try and dig out. If you could find anything in the notebooks about this British artist called Valerie Potter. Because Roger was the first one to give Valerie, a show back in 1985 I think at the university. So here's one of Valerie's little drawings. He wrote: "The drawings and paintings (coloured drawings would be more accurate) have the mediumistic touch: that sense of an endless ribbon of frenzied patterning emerging like compulsive knitting. I enjoy the rhythm of symmetry chasing after asymmetry and the Wolfli like edging of the image." Do you ever remember him talking about Valerie?

Agnes: Yes, he did. I can't remember exactly what he said about her other than she I think she sent him postcards. I'm not totally sure did he visit her a couple of times, or did she come here? Yeah that's possible. I don't know, I don't remember her being here. I just haven't got the memory of that meeting, but I remember her being an important person that he mentioned quite often.

Jennifer: That's good.

This is a really wonderful image of Roger at the shell grotto in Margate that Colin rhodes sent to me, which I really wanted to share. And I believe it was one of his favourite places to visit and. Do you know why he was so fond of it?

Agnes: I think it has again that sort of compulsive rhythmic patterning that always caught his eye everywhere. In, say if I had a dress that had that kind

of Pattern I knew he would like it, but it's the sort of texture. And of course the mystery of who created this, because nobody knows who actually made. And he loved the, the mystery he would every time we have guests we will end up in the shell grotto in Margate because he. It took a scientist pretext, he would go, that's where we will go we went with danchin, laurent danchin and his wife, and anyone else who was halfway declined to come with us, we will go to the shell Grotto, and he again, it was difficult to get him out of there because everybody else, by that time we had seen it and wanted to go home and have a cup of coffee and Rogers still lingering. I don't know you've got solace or sustenance from these kinds of walls. He loved it.

Jennifer: Yeah, I went for the first time recently and it is quite a magical place.

Agnes: It is, yeah. Yes. It is, isn't it.

Jennifer: So speaking of Laurent danchin. Here he is with Roger. So for anyone that's not aware, Laurent was a researcher a writer and a curator, in the outsider and self taught fields, and I know they were very close because Roger wrote Laurent's obituary when Laurent passed away in 2017. And there was a lovely little snippet in his notebook again. That said, Laurent danchin is gone, but remains a present shadow that won't start to disperse until my obituary appears in raw vision.

Agnes: Yeah, they got on famously they were really good friends and again they share the same aesthetic appreciation, they were part of the sort of the committee in the Lausanne so they would sporadically maybe twice a year meet in lausanne. Go and have another look at the exhibitions in the muse d'art brut, and then have a chat and go, maybe Roger would accompany laurent back to Paris on the train. They have enormous fun. And this endlessly talk about art brut. you know, they, they thought the same way about art brut.

Jennifer: That's really good. Yeah. So one thing we haven't really touched on yet is Rogers 1979 exhibition that he did with Victor Musgrave at the Hayward Gallery in London. And he said that he doesn't really mention it very much in his notebooks, and that it didn't really receive the greatest press at the time from what I've read. Can you briefly tell us about Rogers thoughts on this exhibition because I know for a lot of people we felt that this was quite a seminal exhibition in England of this kind of work.

Agnes: Yes, I think, Roger was ambivalent about it because it. Obviously, the Hayward has a great sort of kudos, and it was almost as if art brut had arrived at the centre of the artistic awareness of London. And so in one way, I think he was ambivalent about it. On one hand, he was really pleased that it was happening, first of all, he was convinced it wasn't going to happen. And then it did happen. He was sort of surprised and then there was Victor Musgrave. in many ways, he was more successful making the bridge between the marginal art that is outsider art and the centre of the cultural awareness of art in Britain and Roger went along, he did, he helped, choose the, the artworks, he was

quite surprised. I think he enjoyed the aesthetic aspect of the art, the spaces that the way he was exhibited. He was less. The Politics of that art exhibition upset him a bit I think that's why he hadn't said too much in his diaries about it.

He did what he always does did when, when he was ambivalent about something that and then he bypassed it he started talking about something entirely different, you know, so, as if he tried to get interested in the margins of things rather than the central problem. So that's, that's one way that's what his diaries are relatively silent about the Hayward exhibition. He felt that a lot of people had made the exhibition happen for the wrong reasons. But, yeah, he wasn't, you would expect him to be really pleased, but I don't think he was particularly pleased about the Hayward exhibition.

Jennifer: Yeah, talking about how he how he thinks about the work as well there was a page in his diary that we were looking at where he met Navratil and he was talking to him about madge gill and navratil just kept going on and on about going madge, saying you know Is she a schizophrenic, Let's just discuss if she is a schizophrenic, whereas all Roger wants to talk about was the aesthetics of the work and whether he liked the look of it or not. So do you remember the conversations that were happening.

Agnes: Yes, we were also that was in gugging in Vienna and that was always a problem with it barder in Lausanne as well Alfred Barer was another physchaitrist, and they like. They came from the sort of prinzhron tradition of being ... you know only The Art of the mad and Rogers thought the madness was not all that interesting really he was more interested in. As you say the aesthetic aspect of things. But navratil was a doctor and he was particularly interested in schizophrenia and wrote books about. And he felt that anybody who paint or drew like madge gill. That was clearly a symptom of schizophrenia. And again, I think there was some polite puzzlement that Roger wouldn't go along with, he would just just shrug his shoulders and not be interested in in a diagnosis.

It had the same problem with wolfli. I mean was wolfli mad or bad or both and Roger was always worried about the biography of an artist, taking over from, **from the art.** and that that's been a problem with outsider art all along that the biography becomes a sort of an issue. And in fact, why don't you just look at the pictures.

Jennifer: Yeah, I think he talks about that quite a lot in his notebooks doesn't he, I mean that seems to be a recurring theme that time and again that he doesn't want to be first and foremost looking at the biography. Yeah, that's why he enjoyed going to like the fairs so here he is at the outsider art fair and I think you said this visit was in 1999 in New York. And so he just spent hours just walking around looking at the art and then he might learn more about the artist afterwards.

Agnes: Exactly. I mean, the problem about outsider art being of a symptom of a sickness so any others. He really tried to resist that. But of course, inevitably, the biography of the artist is usually next to the picture. And so

people get more interested in seeing what this person did in his life, or her life than that what they actually painted or what their drawings are like

Jennifer: that's very true. So do you remember any other artists that that Roger was particularly fond of. I think he talked about Christine sefolosha?

Agnes: Yes Christine sefolosha has become a good friend. Again, she's started on her own doing pictures on virtually on all fours on, she had her. Her canvases or a paper on all fours and painted with her hands, and it was really raw, very powerful stuff. And she's certainly not mad or anything she's just somebody who has a very strong vision of what she wants to paint or draw, and she has. I think she probably wanted to resist for similar reasons the label of outsider artist. And Roger honoured this, he wanted to help her to gain recognition and, and just admire her art, and she became a friend, but he was cautious about, again, giving her a label. And I think this just been a sort of ...he took yeah he had to be sensitive to her, not wanting to belong to one category of and roger of course but he couldn't help it. He was associated with outsider art and he admired her art, so did that mean that it was outsider art then.

Jennifer: I was going to say Do you have any particular favorite memory of a place that you've visited thats related to the art brut field or an artist that you've met or something that really sticks in your mind?

Agnes: Are you into the picasiette in France the fabuloserie In France and we'd sort of wander around there. These were magical places. yeah, and the watts towers, we spent hours and hours in the around the watts towers, I think they in LA. Yes, that's right. Yes. And of course they did the muse de l'art brut in lausanne and I think the most fantastical place is Michel nedjar's house. Yes, because the whole well all the walls and from the ceilings hang his artifacts, there like that. It's like a cave with stalactites and stalagmites full of darkish quite scary poupee and other artifacts

Jennifer: Yes I've been there been in Paris, it's quite a sight to see. where like every single surface is covered.

Agnes: Yeah I mean we spent hours in them. in the waldau looking at the wolfli paintings. And then, of course, the aloise. I think one of the things that Roger lamented was that well even the facteur cheval, that things tend to deteriorate over time I mean interest has been spanning 40 years. And those Cliff sculptures. I think it's a (?), they have been washed virtually washed away now. And the watts towers that have, I think they've fallen down haven't they, or I think there was a danger they might be. So very often, Roger would say, Let's go and see this and we are going back 20 years so let's go there because they won't be there next time because there was this sense of the fragility of it all, and he was always hoping, sooner or later he could discover a new one.

So, turn a corner somewhere and there'd be an extraordinary statue somewhere. Yeah, I think that's what the sort of overarching theme of our trip through Europe was always. Any moment now, you're going to find a treasure trove of outsider art in somebody's backyard and they're suddenly like that

...never quite happened actually so but mostly we found what everybody else had found. Yeah, that's true.

Jennifer: So here's a photo of Roger in his infamous bucket hat, which you always saw him.

Whenever you met him. We're coming towards the end of the talk so I just wondered if anyone had any questions for Agnes if you wanted to pop them in the chat, we're happy to answer them. But Agnes I wondered what's your fondest memory of Roger.

Agnes: Oh, my goodness. Um, I think what was well we were very well suited because I never had to hurry with Roger. And we got up, had coffee, and then he would settle down to the writer his journal or do a drawing, which meant that we never got going anywhere I mean he was always by time he got to Museum, it will be close at five and we got there by four o'clock.

but that it suited me very well because I came from a culture where everybody hurried all the time and was very efficient, and it was very relaxing to be with Roger not to have this pressure of achieving and doing things. And he was always terribly encouraging, I am the most god awful pianist I played the piano very badly. And he thought it was great. He didn't mind you know them, and if I had painted a picture, he always said how wonderful, my pictures were I knew jolly well they weren't.

But he was so is very encouraging and when children did drawings he always made a big fuss about how great the drawings were. He was very positive about people, letting people be and do their own thing. It wasn't, sort of, he was only critical of high culture really and pompous people. And he got on well with those that didn't have aspirations of greatness or anything, but it used to make me smile because there will be a waiter who, who do doodle, next to a bill and and Roger got engaged and talk to the waiter about the Doodle, not about the bill, you know that surprised, somewhere in Paris, So thing, and he sort of engaged in, he would make friends with, with waiters like that all the time. That's why I really quite like that about it.

Jennifer: What a nice little memory. Your friend Gwendolyn has written that Roger was the most brilliant writer, I've often tried to work it out and imitate his style but it's impossible. How did he do it.

Agnes: Yeah, he, he had the elegance of style.

I think what he could do not many people can he could say very complicated things very lucidly and clearly. That was one of the things when he writes about a German romantic or indeed, Paul Nash, he can sort of. Yeah, bring to the fore bring in elegantly, the complexity of an issue.

Jennifer: Yes, he was good at that. I think someone said that earlier they said that he was such a precise editor and developed a writing style that was so deceptively simple, yet evocative, and possessed the beauty in itself.

Agnes: Yeah, he had a good style he could write well. And with a kind of, you could tell that he enjoyed writing, he was totally focused on what he said, and he seemed to have in in his diary, in his journals. He hardly ever crosses

anything out. He writes fluently and the sentences all hang together, and are easy reading. I mean it's not obscure anything it's very crystal clear what he wants to convey yeah I quite enjoyed reading the snippets that you sent me .. some made me laugh because I could just imagine him saying yes exactly that.

Jennifer: Yeah, someone else has asked, Did he ever write poetry?

Agnes: all the time. I can you see this I've just been making this. Look, He even in his notebooks there's little poems intermittently throughout there. Yeah, I mean he, this is a book of poetry which he dedicated to me. And it's beautifully written, and it's quite a fat book of about 30 pages all handwritten form.

Jennifer: and he wrote that just for you.

Agnes: Yeah, it's, yeah. Yeah, just pull him upon point upon point. Oh, and he had a one year when he wrote the poem a day. But that he admitted that was a terrible idea because he can't write a poem in a day, you sort of laughed about it, but he's still got the book of 365 poems.

Jennifer: Wow. And the poems quite short, Do you feel like you could read one out. you don't have to.

Agnes: But there's this one about notre Dame and one about green eyes, that's about me, and I can't read it because it's so small. I need bigger glasses and better lighting otherwise I'll stutter my way through it.

Jennifer: not a problem at all. Yeah, it seems that everyone's writing some nice comments in the chat box saying that it's been really insightful to listen to you today Agnes which has been really lovely. Thank you. So I think I'll finish it now because I said it would be an hour long, I just, I wanted to do today because I really loved Roger and I loved spending time with him, and I just wanted to do something so that we had a little record of his life and kind of you know showed people his notebooks and talked about the other side of him and surrealist side because I feel like a lot of people didn't know all the aspects of Roger and didn't know all the different sides of him and I thought it was really important that we shared that with everyone else. So thank you so much for willingly sharing all this information today Agnes I really loved this okay.

Agnes: Thank you for asking me about it.

Jennifer: And I loved that you've gone through his diaries with me going. Can you look in 1982.

If you wrote anything about ... Yeah, yeah so that that's been really lovely so yeah all this left to say is thank you very much. I'm so sorry if my sound broke I have no idea what's going on so I just upgraded my internet. So I apologize, but this recording will go online, afterwards if anyone missed it or if anyone wants to send it to their friends, it will go on to my website as will the transcript

of the talk. And I hope everyone has a wonderful evening and thank you Agnes.

Agnes: Thank you all. Thank you for listening. Thank you.

Jennifer: I'll say goodbye now. Thank you. Bye.