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## Cover picture

Norris Embry 1921–1981

In 1958 the American Expressionist artist Norris Embry celebrated his first significant US exhibition, and experienced his first psychiatric admission. In a manic state and expressing delusional ideas he was diagnosed with schizophrenia, yet his previous history of overdoses in his twenties and thirties, deepening depression, anxiety and alcohol misuse suggest that bipolar disorder might have been more likely.

Embry's artistic training mixed American and European influences, having studied for a summer at the Art Institute of Chicago and for a few weeks with the Austrian painter Oskar Kokoschka. His extensive travels throughout the US and Europe brought him in contact with abstract and figurative expressionist artists, the Folk Art tradition of Greece, and the Prinzhorn collection of art by people with mental illness. This mingling of styles is seen in his paintings, and as he wrote to his sister in 1967, 'What I am doing is looking back – for subject matter and its form – to the giddy, horrible/wonderful years'.

In this untitled 1979 work we read the text 'wrote Gertie for the Prinzhorn', recording Embry's friendship with the psychologist Gertie Siemsen, who had introduced him to Hans Prinzhorn's collection. The painting was shown in Los Angeles in 1992 for a show entitled *Parallel Visions: Modern Artists and Outsider Art*. Despite its inclusion in this exhibition most art historians and critics consider Embry to have been an 'insider' artist. With exhibitions like *Inner Worlds Outside*, at the Whitechapel Art Gallery in 2006, suggesting how little-known Outsiders may have influenced celebrated mainstream artists we need to consider whether the boundaries between 'insider' and 'outsider' art are now too blurred to be meaningful, or whether the terms are simply outmoded.

Norris Embry Estate. Image published by courtesy of the Norris Embry Estate. [www.norrisembry.com](http://www.norrisembry.com)

Picture selection and text by Allan Beveridge

We are always looking for interesting and visually appealing images for the cover of the *Journal* and would welcome suggestions or pictures which should be sent to Professor Robert Howard, British Journal of Psychiatry, 17 Belgrave Square, London SW1X 8PG, UK or [robert.howard@iop.kcl.ac.uk](mailto:robert.howard@iop.kcl.ac.uk)

