

# RAWVISION

O U T S I D E R A R T B R U T



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## LE LIVRE DE PIERRE

Lucienne Peiry

Paris: Éditions Allia, French text, 4 x 6.5 ins / 10 x 17 cm

ISBN: 979-10-304-1214-7

This concise summary of the life and remarkable oeuvre of **Fernando Nannetti** (1927–1994) examines the unusual character of his artistic production – which, regrettably, no longer exists, except in photographs – and of the circumstances in which it was produced. His now-vanished works have earned this self-taught Italian draughtsman a secure place in the canon of the most definitive, emblematic *art brut* creators.

Written, in French, by the well-known *art brut* historian and curator Lucienne Peiry in a manner that is lucid and engaging, *Le Livre de Pierre* (*The Book of Stone*) pulls a reader not only into the isolated world in which Nannetti produced his mysterious graffiti but also deep into the process by which he created his writing-drawings on the exterior walls of the psychiatric hospital in Tuscany in which he spent most of his life.

Peiry, a former director of the Collection de l'Art Brut, organised an exhibition focusing on Nannetti at that well-known museum in Lausanne, Switzerland, in 2011. Her text in this small-format book is based in part on the research she conducted for that earlier presentation but it also offers a new invitation to discover the work of a creator that is unique in the annals of *art brut*.

Fernando Oreste Nannetti was born in Rome in 1927; his father was unknown. As a young boy, he lived in an orphanage and was sent to a psychiatric institution for children. Later, he suffered from a spinal illness, for which he received treatment, and for a while, as a young man, he lived alone. However, in 1956, at the age of 29, after already having been diagnosed as schizophrenic and having experienced hallucinations and feelings of persecution, Nannetti was arrested for offensive behaviour toward a public official and sent to the Santa Maria della Pietà psychiatric hospital in Rome. In 1958, Nannetti was moved from Rome to the Volterra psychiatric hospital in the Tuscany region of central Italy.

It was there, Peiry explains, that the “taciturn, solitary” Nannetti, withdrawing from the surrounding chaos of his fellow patients’ “brawls, brouhahas, frenzies, and howls”, used nothing more than the metal prongs of the buckle on his hospital-issued vest to incise mysterious lines of text, in stylised, angular letters, on the external stone walls in the courtyard of the psychiatric hospital in which its residents took their daily breaks. His writings flowed back and forth



photo: Pier Nello Manoni



photo: Pier Nello Manoni



horizontally and around the architectural details that decorated the stone walls.

Peiry notes that Nannetti covered these surfaces “with ingenuity” with his “biographical, auto-fictional, telepathic, and even pseudoscientific or cosmogonic declarations.” The hospital’s stone walls, she explains, “became the sensitive screen for his poetic projections,” and, in Nannetti’s hands, a simple belt buckle became “an instrument of freedom” and the confined man’s “escape key”.

Peiry’s book includes photographs that Pier Nello Manoni shot of Nannetti’s wall drawings in 1979, before they deteriorated with the passage of time. The Volterra hospital closed long ago. *Le Livre de Pierre* also reproduces, for the first time ever, several of Nannetti’s abstract drawings in ballpoint pen ink on paper, whose dense compositions suggest affinities with the works of other *art brut* artists and with those of certain modern artists whose works have been characterised by limited formal vocabularies of line and pattern.

*Le Livre de Pierre* offers more than just an introduction to the life and work of a distinctive *art brut* creator. It also vividly captures his creative spirit.

**EDWARD M. GÓMEZ**