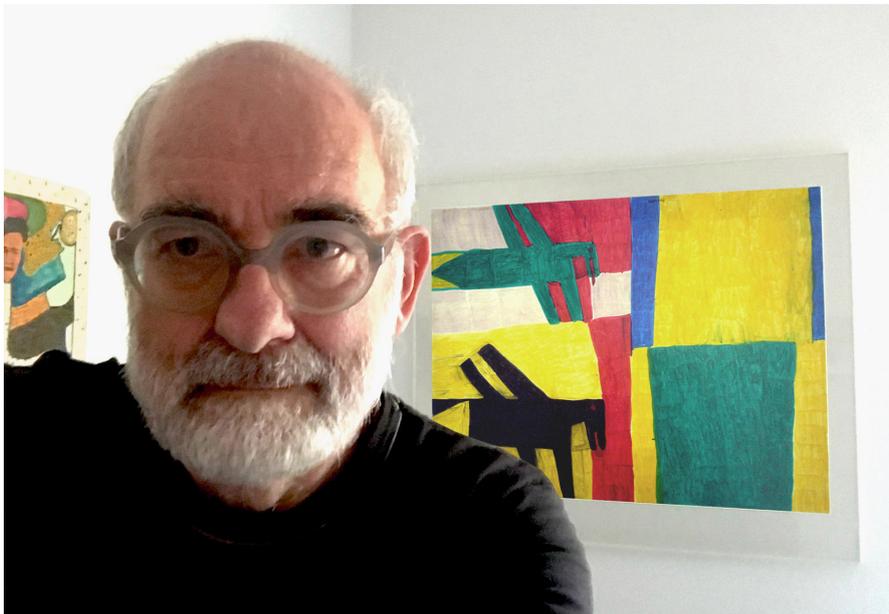


JENNIVER LAUREN  
GALLERY

## PETER BOLLIGER, SWITZERLAND – MEET THE COLLECTOR SERIES PART TWELVE

For part twelve of my Meet the Collector series I asked **Peter Bolliger** to answer a few questions. I often see Peter at the **Outsider Art Fair** in Paris, and he is a regular promoter of his collection on Instagram, so it felt apt to include him in this series. He is very passionate about the work of **Ernst Kolb** and has helped with Kolb's reputation and representation within this field of art.



A selfie in front of a marker drawing by Willie White, 1908-2000, he is one of my favorites.

### 1. When did your interest in the field of outsider/folk art begin?

At the age of 16, sixty years ago, I was at the artschool and admired Aloïse, read the Prinzhorn book from 1968 and bought Art Brut No.7 dedicated to Aloïse from 1966.

## 2. When did you become a collector of this art and how many pieces would you say are in your collection?

Very much later, when the internet made it possible. I loved modern art and Franz Marc in particular but an original of him was out of reach. The artists of „Blauer Reiter“ collected reverse paintings. The folk art strong colors and no perspective hundred years before the artists of the 20th century. Such a painting was the first artwork I bought at the age of 16 and collected reverse paintings for many years. When I came across a namchi doll at a flea market, a second passion was born.

Before the internet existed, search, find and collect was limited to the place you were physically. The internet has changed this completely. I discovered eBay 10 years ago. It was now possible to search not only in your own town or traveling abroad but worldwide. I found much more and the size of my collection exploded. When two walls of our flat were completely covered with paintings, I stopped looking for reverse paintings and african dolls and began to look for art brut and outsider art.

Jaber was the first artist that I collected. In my eyes, his works were better than those by high priced Swiss Hans Krüsi, and available for astonishing low fixed prices. To economise postage, I selected and always bought a number of paintings. It was the golden age for collecting and I spent hours and hours looking for works. I found many other artworks and artists as well after scrolling through thousands of unattractive stuff online but only found nice pieces from time to time. This has sharpened my eyes and made me sensible to look for quality and authenticity. Ten years later, my collection of outsiders includes around 1,600 artworks.



Reverse glass painting that I collected initially ...

### **3. Can you tell us a bit about your background?**

My father, born in 1915, was a collector of Dada, Arp, Max Ernst, Kirchner, Picasso etc. He wrote biographies introducing for artists of the 20th century. My mother was a photographer before becoming housewife and mother. My parents divorced, my father moved to Bern and my younger brother and me remained in Zurich. We were educated by our mother, who later in life, spent her time drawing small colour compositions that are also presented on my website.

I grew up with modern art and pictures. They were for me as air for respiration. At the age of 14, I had to be hospitalised and took with me my lexicon of modern art for its pictures to deal with the situation. The head Dr. saw the book, look inside and as she saw some nudes, she confiscated it without further ado – I was sad, hurt and angry. My parents had to intervene and I got the book back and immediately felt much better. I loved to draw and paint myself and thought I would become an artist. But I went to the art school to become a graphic designer – a profession that has allowed me to make my living. I had a job, drew and painted in my spare time, presenting my works in three solo exhibitions. But after this, I concentrated on my profession and did not feel I was an artist (I decided one day to present the works that I did when I was young on my website as well).

### **4. What is it that draws your eye away from contemporary art to outsider/folk art? Or do you collect both?**

I adore it and I would collect it but I can not afford it, whereas it was and is still possible to alternatively find nice artworks by outsider artists on eBay with a modest budget.



Namchi fertility dolls from Cameroon that followed

**5. What style of work, if any, is of particular interest to you within this field? (for example is it embroidery, drawing, sculpture, and so on)**

As my space is very limited, I prefer small to large pieces, in particular drawings and paintings that I can keep in normal files

**6. Would you say you had a favourite artist or piece of work within your collection? And why?**

**I have two favorit pieces.**

When my father died in 2002, Kornfeld in Bern prepared an auction to sell his estate and we could all have a look at all the works to be sold to decide what we liked to choose for ourselves. My father had a **Wölfli** and I remembered when he explained why he liked and bought it at the time: the drawing united almost all the characteristics of Wölfli like handwritten text, musical notes, faces and different fish- or bird-like shapes all together. I took the opportunity to keep the Wölfli and prevent it from being sold. It was hanging in our flat before I started to collect outsider art on eBay.

My second favorite is a unique artwork, a bottle that artist and art collector **Steve Moseley** has created for me and offered me as a gift. Without my internet collecting passion and my outsider website, the bottle would not exist, as the American Steve had found and liked my website. He contacted me because he was interested in buying a Kolb drawing and asked me to send him a photograph. He said he had an idea for a bottle and it arrived some weeks later. It is a three-dimensional cartoon, presenting me as prisoner of my collecting-passion, looking desperately for additional space. What a beautiful and personal gift ! Steve selected two drawings by Ernst Kolb to be included in the bottle and I gave him these drawings for his collection.



My fathers Wölfli

**7. Is there an exhibition in this field of art that you have felt has been particularly important? And why?**

Over the years, I have admired several Wölfli exhibitions and a phantastic large exhibition of Aloïse Corbaz, but for personal reasons, the Kolb Exhibition in Lausanne in 2018 was my highlight in particular as I had waited several years for it. For the first time in my life I was myself involved in an exhibition. The Kolb-documentation sent to the Collection de l'Art Brut took their interest and now I had the pleasure to participate with loaning 40 drawings from my collection.

**8. Where would you say you buy most of your work from: a studio, art fairs, exhibitions, or direct from artists?**

I mentioned that I am an internet collector. I have bought from artists I found on Facebook, for instance from Indonesian Noviadi Angkasapura, before he was represented by the Cavin Morris Gallery, a few pieces in galleries and in art auctions, some on Etsy and some on the Swiss website Riccardo, but at least 90 percent where found and bought on eBay, particularly in France, Great Britain, USA.



The bottle whimsy that Steve Moseley has made for me  
(A portrait of appeared in Rawvision No 85).

### **9. What sort of pieces are you looking to continue to add to your collection?**

My way to collect via eBay has led to what I consider as a charmingly chaotic collection. I do appreciate the variety of this mixture of artworks from various countries and artists found on the web by chance and I keep my eyes and mind open for new discoveries and works that I may like and afford in the future.

### **10. Is there any of your collection hung in your home?**

There are some artworks at home and much more in my small atelier, but there is too little space. As a graphic designer it is my pleasure to document my collection in several art books. I had one created by a book factory but a few days later it was incomplete. It is a pleasant but never ending work-in-progress now. I have always updated PDF files of my collection on my mobile phone that I can consult and enjoy whenever and wherever I like.!



The first outsider art I bought on eBay:  
a painting by Jaber al-Mahjoub.

### **11. Can you tell us about Ernst Kolb, how you came across his work and how you helped to get his work out there?**

When I came across Kolb on eBay in 2012, this was the absolute highlight of my eBay-searching until now and I was astonished and absolutely fascinated by these drawings. Kolb had died in 1993 and was almost forgotten, when Rolf Bergmann who had known him personally, published a book in his memory called „der Mann mit der Plastiktasche“. He was in charge the estate of Kolb and started to sell drawings on eBay. The drawings were untitled, but to sell them better, Bergmann invented titles for them, when he offered them on eBay and for more information about Kolb, he mentioned his book for sale. I did order and read it and closely followed all activities of Bergmann.

I participated in almost every auction and was often successful, as there were not many bidders yet. It was an extremely exciting time. I was always longing to see the next drawing appear: every drawing was unexpected, astonishing and a discovery. And maybe I was the most frequent buyer. As Bergmann and I were both absolute admirers of Kolb, we corresponded frequently and I was kept informed about all his activities promoting Kolb.

As soon as I had acquired a certain number of drawings, I sent a documentation to **Raw Vision**, with the consent of Bergmann and got an answer just a few minutes later: John Maizels wanted to publish an article on Kolb, which appeared in issue no. 79. The positive reaction of John Maizels encouraged me to send my documentation to the **Collection de l'Art Brut** in Lausanne as well. Anik Zanzi replied in the same way as John Maizels had done before – the collection got in touch with Bergmann and acquired a number of drawings.



Nine Kolb drawings, part of the documentation sent to Raw Vision and the Collection de l'Art Brut.

At that time, Ernst Kolb was unknown to Google. As an admirer of Kolb, I felt it was my mission to make him known. I wrote a Kolb introduction on Wikipedia but faced an unexpected problem. For copyright reasons it was impossible to upload drawings until 2063 – 70 years after the death of Kolb! This was the moment that I decided to start a website and present my own personal Kolb collection. I took lessons in how to create a website and first started the site in 2012 – it was in **German** at first and then the **English** followed. The site continues to grow, with more and more artworks. As I am retired now, I have time to regularly promote it on Facebook, Instagram and Pinerest and this has become my occupation and my pleasure.

Sadly, Rolf Bergmann has died in Mai 2015 and I had lost a friend with whom I shared my passion and the admiration for Kolb over a long time. Kolb had lost his most important promotor and defender and his work has disappeared from eBay. I still promote Kolb as much as I can. The Collection de L'Art Brut exhibition of Kolb in 2018 was an absolute highlight in my life !

**12. Do you ever loan any of your works out to other exhibitions?**

The Kolb exhibition was the first time I was ever asked, but I would loan artworks to other exhibitions as well. My website has made my collection open. I unfortunately am not in a position to make an exhibition, but I shall continue to share all my acquisitions on the website, as well as in various posts across social media.

**13. Is there anything else that you would like to add?**

I happen to find and buy works by unknown artists It is a pleasure when I realise that my purchases improve the self confidence and offerst them the opportunity to become part of the community of artists on my website. I was told that my posts sometimes make other people buy pieces too. I found Benjamin Jahn on Facebook and I am happy to present some fo his paintings on my website. I am very lucky that now, after my retirement, I have an occupation that I love. I enjoy spending time with the works and the artists I have collected, combining them in different manners for my posts and I enjoy observing people's reactions. In my own entourage there is nobody sharing my passion as much as Rolf Bergmann did, but it is a great experience to be part of a large and worldwide web community fo lovers of outsider art, and to get likes and comments from all over the world. I have met a number of Facebook-Friends, artist and collectors in real life and I do consider some fo them as freinds in real lief as well.



Paintings by Benjamin Jahn, a german outsider from Facebook that I personnally like