

Nexus Singularity Takeover

July 12 – August 13, 2021

For more than thirty years Aarne Anton ran his renowned Manhattan gallery, American Primitive, where he exhibited prime pieces of outsider, folk and vernacular art. At the start of the pandemic, in the spring of 2020, he closed the space and created a different portal through which he could pursue his passion in a new way. On the front porch of his house near the edge of Harriman State Park in Rockland County, New York, the venerable art dealer created a space to show artworks behind an old weathered door that had been a backdrop for his photo shoots. He called it Nexus Singularity.

“I was sort of done with American Primitive, even though I’m known by that,” he recently told the editor of *Antiques and The Arts Weekly*. “Primitive implies things are not sophisticated, I wanted something that was more open and mysterious. I remembered a story by Jorge Luis Borges, where a person would go underneath a set of stairs through a nexus, where the past, present and future were all accessible at the same time.”

Next, Anton posted images of the works he was handling to *Misfits*, a Facebook group that he had started a few years earlier, and on Instagram, where they quickly sold. And like many entrepreneurs, he discovered that there was a whole new world out there and that his next journey was going to be a virtual and more fun one than he anticipated.

This summer, from July 12 to August 13, Anton will bring that fun to Andrew Edlin Gallery with his “Nexus Singularity Takeover,” which features artworks by the self-taught artists Eugene Andolsek, Charles Benefiel, Larry Calkins, JJ Cromer, Curtis Cuffie, Daniel Martin Diaz, Sam Gant, Edward Nagrodzki, Robert Sholties, Ionel Talpazan, Terry Turrell and Purvis Young, as well as a number of anonymous pieces of folk art and intriguing vernacular objects.

Anton began his career designing display bases for tribal art objects and antiquities and was soon learning about the art that he was handling. Unable to afford pieces such as those owned by the museums, galleries and collectors he was working for, he scoured antiques shops, flea markets and fairs for American folk art. When he displayed it on the walls of his base shop his clients began buying. In the early 1990s he moved his shop from its small space in the Garment District to a larger one in SoHo, and opened American Primitive, while relegating his base business to the back room.

Quickly establishing himself as one of the leaders in the realm of Outsider Art, Anton discovered Charles Benefiel, Sam Gant, Robert Sholties and Edward Nagrodzki; brought Ionel Talpazan to international attention with his “Visions of Space and UFOs in Art” exhibition; showed and collected the work of Curtis Cuffie when Cuffie was still making his art on the

street; was the first gallery to present Eugene Andolsek's work after the American Folk Art Museum included him in its "Obsessive Drawing" exhibition (2005-06); and was part of a small group of dealers who discussed the viability of the Outsider Art Fair, where he has been an annual exhibitor since it premiered at the Puck Building in New York in 1993.

"Aarne Anton is canny and uncanny at the same time," Randall Morris of Cavin-Morris Gallery explained when asked to describe his friend and colleague. "His immersion in off-center folk art has introduced some of the field's most iconic sculptures, many now in important collections and museums. He has an empathy for art made on society's unpredictable fringes."

Some of those off-center artworks that Anton will be exhibiting during "Nexus Singularity Takeover" include an arresting pair of life size wooden Kachina figures; a tall Curtis Cuffie sculpture made from a muffler and tailpipe with a frying pan and horn attached to create a totem; a metal dragon head made for use in a Texas circus; Eugene Andolsek's kaleidoscopic ink drawings; a metal amusement park sign with a grinning Tillie figure; a group of JJ Cromer's intricate and imaginative works on paper; a 1930 washing machine part with magic washing hands; a mixed-media assemblage by Terry Turrell; a large model of the starship *Enterprise* made entirely out of wooden matchsticks; and a montage of walking figures and faces expressively painted on a panel by Purvis Young.

Some of the smaller objects, including a selection of found face pieces, will be displayed on a farm table covered with multicolored buttons, with a life-size tiger sculpture by Alcide Saint-Germaine from Quebec standing guard below. And the show would not be complete without the Nexus Singularity door, which has been transported to the gallery to provide a portal into the amazing world of Aarne Anton.