

Overview

With more than 90 works, this exhibition features many of the most beautiful and accomplished drawings created by the extraordinarily gifted, self-taught artist James Castle. The Santa Barbara Museum of Art is the presentation's sole venue and represents the first exhibition of Castle's works in Southern California. The show highlights the artist's remarkable technical skills and attempts to foster a better understanding of his evocative and unconventional images, particularly his landscapes and architectural interior scenes. Unfortunately, the common perception of Castle and his art has tended to be very limited due to emphasis on his physical impairments—he was profoundly deaf and largely mute—and his geographic isolation, working in rural Idaho. The exhibition and accompanying scholarly catalogue places Castle in a larger artistic and cultural context and explores the imaginative innovations of his works, mainly drawings produced with soot from a woodstove and his saliva, rendered on scraps of found paper.

The majority of objects in the exhibition are on loan from the two preeminent depositories of James Castle's art, the collections of the William Louis-Dreyfus Foundation in Mount Kisco, NY and the James Castle Collection and Archive in Boise, ID, with a number of other drawings borrowed from private collections, including a group of heretofore never publicly displayed or published works owned by members of the Castle family. Castle's artworks have previously been featured in shows at the Philadelphia Museum of Art and the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid, and are found in many museum collections, including those of the Museum of Modern Art and Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.