

DARGER henry

1892 . chicago . illinois . états-unis

1973 . chicago . illinois . états-unis

Henry Darger n'a que quatre ans lorsque sa mère meurt en couches. Son père le confie alors à une famille d'accueil. Il est ensuite placé dans un foyer puis interné dans une institution pour enfants attardés, d'où il s'échappe à dix-sept ans. Au début des années 1920, on le retrouve homme de ménage dans un hôpital de Chicago où il restera jusqu'à sa retraite, en 1963. Rien de cette vie secrète ne laisse soupçonner ce qu'on découvre dans sa chambre, après son départ en maison de retraite : une saga de quinze mille pages en quinze volumes, largement illustrée et intitulée *In the Realms of the Unreal* (« Dans les royaumes de l'irréel »), œuvre monumentale débutée en 1911 et produite dans l'anonymat le plus complet. Le récit décrit le combat des sœurs Vivian, aidées du capitaine Henry Darger, chef d'une organisation de protection de l'enfance, contre le peuple – adulte – des Glandeliens qui réduit les enfants en esclavage, les torture et les assassine ; il est illustré en de grandes planches aquarellées recto verso, agrémentées de collages divers. À partir de 1946, Henry Darger utilise des agrandissements photographiques et des calques, qui lui permettent de reproduire une image plusieurs fois et de créer ainsi des sortes d'armées d'enfants, clonées. À Kiyoko Lerner qui lui demandait chaque dimanche, au sortir de la messe, comment il allait, il répondait : « Demain, peut-être, le vent cessera de souffler. »

Henry Darger was only four years old when his mother died giving birth to his sister, who was soon given up for adoption. When his father became too sick to care for his eight-year-old son, he placed young Henry in an orphanage. In 1904, he was transferred to an institution for children with learning disabilities, from which he escaped in late adolescence. Returning to Chicago, Darger worked in various Catholic hospitals—usually as a janitor—during the day and, at night, he secretly devoted himself to writing a fifteen-thousand-page fictional saga (it filled fourteen volumes): *The Story of A the Vivian Girls, in What Is Known as the Realms of the Unreal, of the R Glandeco-Angelinian War Storm, Caused by the Child Slave Rebellion*. Written between 1910 and 1939, the story paralleled the events of the American Civil War. The action takes place on a planet where the Christian kingdom of Abbieannia—led by seven princesses, the Vivian Girls—is allied with other countries in a war against the atheist state of Glandelinia, which has occupied the nation of Calverinia and enslaved its children. In 1939, Darger began a new work, *Further Adventures in Chicago: Crazy House*, which included more than eight thousand pages devoted to the Vivian Girls and their brother Penrod in a plot involving murders in a haunted house. Other long texts followed, including an autobiography and a weather journal, bringing Darger's writings to more than thirty thousand pages. Darger's graphic work must be seen as an extension—not an illustration—of his literary work, which was initiated earlier. There are two groupings: the first involves a hundred studies and sketches (portraits of generals), maps, and collages (famous children, fictional characters); the second is composed of approximately two hundred drawings, originally bound in three albums, which were dismantled and dispersed after his death. These double-page watercolor panoramas portray scenes linked mainly to the adventures of the Vivian Girls. Books of fiction, illustrated publications on the American Civil War, magazines, newspapers, as well as religious, comic, and children coloring books served as visual and documentary references in the production of Darger's body of work. Characters inspired from these sources populated his compositions—often series of identical figures reproduced and multiplied by the use of carbon paper. He traced the silhouettes and had them resized photographically in a lab to fit the dimensions of the particular work.



**TECHNIQUE:** gouache et mine de plomb sur papier

**TITRE:** At Jennie Richee – They attempt to hide in fiddle cases of huge size... (recto) / At MC Hollester run second battle, they are pursued still... (verso)

**DIMENSIONS:** 48 x 178 cm

**DATE:** entre 1950 et 1960

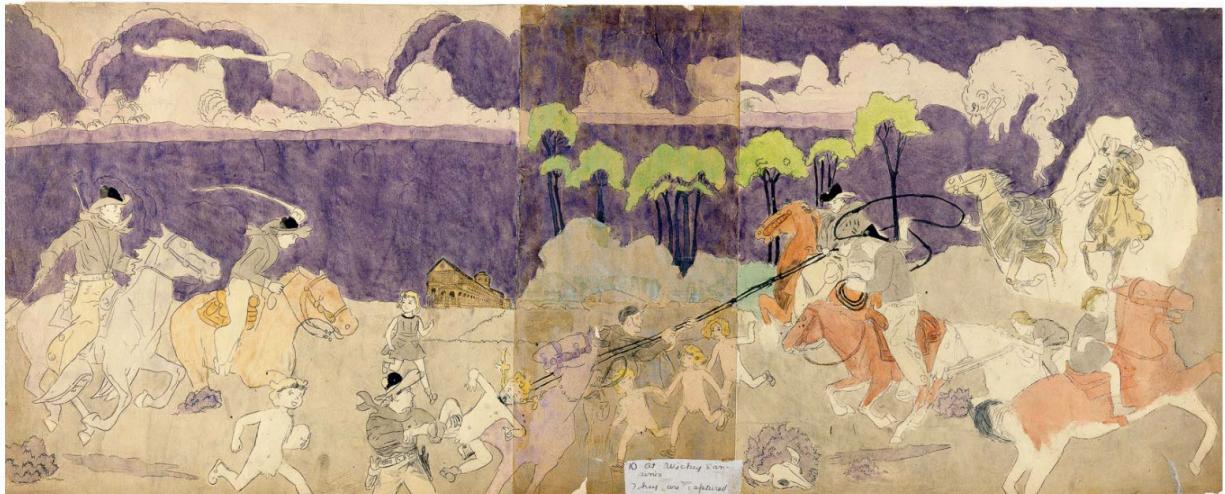
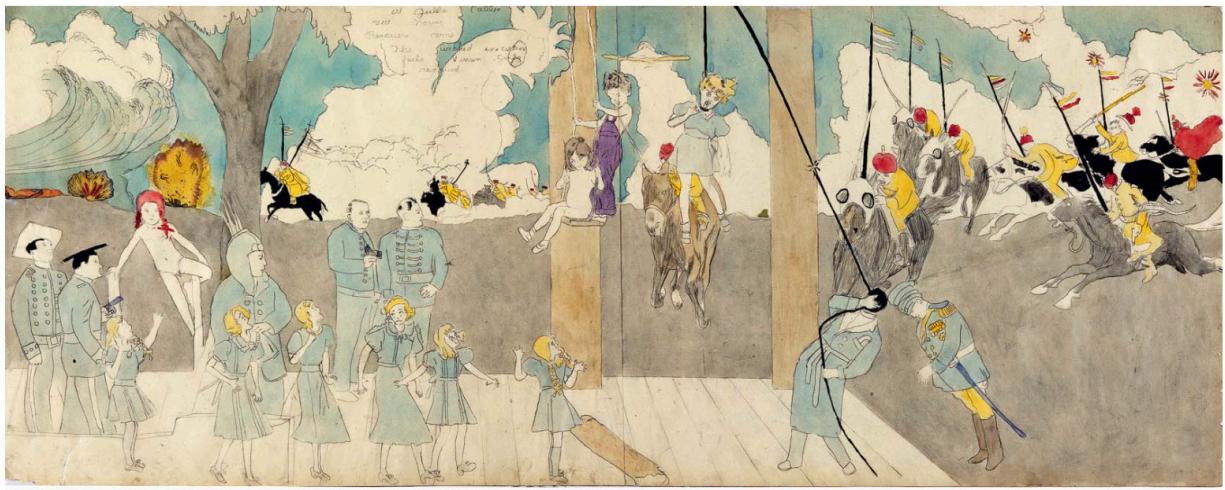


**TECHNIQUE:** collage, gouache, mine de plomb et encre sur papier

**TITRE:** At Jennie Richee – Break out of prison camp killing or wounding guards (recto) / At Jennie Richee – Also free other child prisoner at same time (verso)

**DIMENSIONS:** 60 x 271 cm

**DATE:** entre 1950 et 1960



**TECHNIQUE:** gouache, mine de plomb et encre sur papier

**TITRE:** At Wickey San Rinia – They are captured... (recto) / At Julio Callio vice norma res-cuers come the wicked execution... (verso)

**DIMENSIONS:** 48 x 128 cm

**DATE:** entre 1950 et 1960