



SAM DOYLE – WHAT I PAINT IS HISTORY

The Gallery of Everything, London

October 4TH - November 22ND, 2026

The Gallery of Everything presents the first solo exhibition in the UK dedicated to Sam Doyle (1906–1985), one of the most distinctive figures in twentieth-century African-American art. Bringing together over 20 paintings and sculptures, many on public display for the first time, the exhibition reflects Doyle's singular practice and his role as a visual chronicler of St Helena Island, South Carolina. His work records a community shaped by the island's histories of slavery and emancipation and the emergence of a self-determined Black community, preserving its people, beliefs and stories through an intensely personal visual language.

Working with house paint on corrugated roofing tin, sheet metal and found lumber, Doyle created a largely figurative body of work centred on the people and histories of his immediate surroundings. Friends, neighbours and local heroes appeared alongside historical events and celebrated figures of Black American culture, politics and sport. Displayed across the frontage of his home, the works formed what Doyle christened the St Helena Outdoor Art Gallery. Together, they occupied a space between private history, public memorial and personal testimony, creating a living archive of the island's distinctive Gullah culture, whose stories, traditions and language were deeply embedded in Doyle's life and work.

The exhibition brings together rarely seen portraits of local figures alongside religious and historical subjects drawn from across Doyle's practice. Among the highlights is a rare depiction of Dr Buz (also known as Dr Buzzard), the legendary healer and root doctor of St Helena Island, who was said to communicate with spirits through a conch shell. A recurring figure in Doyle's work, Dr Buz also provides a fascinating connection to Jean-Michel Basquiat: another depiction was acquired by Basquiat and later gifted to Andy Warhol.

Doyle's work reached a wider audience following his inclusion in the landmark exhibition *Black Folk Art in America: 1930–1980* at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., in 1982. It was subsequently at Fay Gold Gallery in Atlanta that Jean-Michel Basquiat encountered Doyle's work, acquiring several pieces which he displayed prominently in his New York studio. Basquiat's engagement with Doyle extended beyond his own collection, introducing his work to figures within his circle, including Andy Warhol and Fab 5 Freddy.

Today, Doyle is widely regarded as a central figure in twentieth-century African-American art. Recent exhibitions include *Edges of Ailey* at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2024), and *Souls Grown Deep Like the Rivers* at the Royal Academy of Arts, London (2023). His work is

THE GALLERY OF EVERYTHING



represented in major institutional collections including the Whitney Museum of American Art; Smithsonian American Art Museum; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Philadelphia Museum of Art; High Museum of Art; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; Pérez Art Museum Miami; and American Folk Art Museum.

Selected Exhibitions:

Edges of Ailey, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 2024
Souls Grown Deep Like the Rivers, Royal Academy of Arts, London, 2023
We Are Made of Stories, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington DC, 2022
Outliers and American Vanguard Art, National Gallery of Art, Washington DC, 2018
#7, The Museum of Everything, MONA, Hobart, 2017/18
Sam Doyle: The Mind's Eye, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, 2014
Great and Mighty Things, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, 2013
Coming Home: Self-Taught Artists, the Bible and the American South, Art Museum of the University of Memphis, Memphis, 2004
Sam Doyle, Intuit Art Museum, Chicago, 2001
Local Heroes: Paintings and Sculpture by Sam Doyle, High Museum of Art, Atlanta, 2000
Sam Doyle: Heart and Soul, New Orleans Museum of Art, New Orleans, 2000
Souls Grown Deep, Michael C Carlos Museum, Atlanta, 1996
Passionate Visions of the American South, New Orleans Museum of Art, New Orleans, 1993
Baking in the Sun: Visionary Images from the South, University of Southeastern Louisiana Art Museum, Hammond, 1987
Sam Doyle, Pat Hearn Gallery, Atlanta, 1986
Rome Exhibit USA: Portrait of the South, Palazzo Venezia, Rome, 1982
Black Folk Art in America Corcoran Gallery, Washington DC, J. B. Speed Art Museum, Louisville, Kentucky, Brooklyn Museum, New York, Institute for the Arts, Rice University, Houston, Detroit Institute of Arts, Birmingham Museum of Art, Alabama, 1982

Collections:

American Folk Art Museum, New York
Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas
Gibbes Museum of Art, Charleston
High Museum of Art, Atlanta
Intuit Art Museum, Chicago
Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles
Milwaukee Museum of Art, Milwaukee
The Museum of Everything, London
Museum of Fine Arts, Houston
New Orleans Museum of Art, New Orleans

THE GALLERY OF EVERYTHING



Penn Center, St Helena Island
Pérez Art Museum Miami, Miami
Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia
South Carolina State Museum, Columbia
Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York

Sam Doyle Articles and Reviews:

1. [Will Heinrich, “At the 34th Outsider Art Fair, Still Genuine Surprises”, The New York Times, \(2026\)](#)
2. [Carlie Porterfield, “Gullah Artist Sam Doyle’s Narrative Portraits Stand Out at Outsider Art Fair in New York”, The Art Newspaper \(2026\)](#)
3. [Eileen Kinsella, “Why Sam Doyle’s Market is on the Rise”, Artnet News \(2026\)](#)
4. [Elisa Corollo, “Artists at the Margins become Stars”, Observer \(2026\)](#)
5. [Rachel Dantes-Palmer, “A World Within Worlds: Sam Doyle’s Art as History”, Georgia Museum of Art \(2024\)](#)
6. [Jasmine Weber, “A Lyrical Ode to the Vernacular Art of the American South”, Hyperallergic \(2020\)](#)
7. [Sanford Schwartz, “Band of Outsiders”, New York Review \(2019\)](#)
8. [Pam Wall, “Artist Spotlight: Sam Doyle, American, 1906–1985”, Gibbes Museum of Art, \(2011\)](#)
9. [Robert Hughes, “Art: Finale for the Fantastical”, Time Magazine \(1982\)](#)

The Gallery of **Everything** is London’s first commercial space dedicated to artists and makers beyond the cultural mainstream.

The Gallery of **Everything** displays self-taught, art-brut, spiritualist, vernacular and other non-academic material from the 19TH century to the present day, alongside contemporary artworks by diverse creators of every colour, class, gender, race and neurology.

The gallery’s programme includes group and solo exhibitions, art fairs, talks, readings and happenings.

For further information and available works, please contact the gallery at [**ge@gallevery.com**](mailto:ge@gallevery.com).



Installation view, Sam Doyle, Outsider Art Fair, 2026



Sam Doyle, Regenia Perry, 1983