

JONATHAN LERMAN

New York, Born 1987

Jonathan Lerman is an artist with autism and savant skills. He was diagnosed with autism at approximately the age of two, and with an I.Q. of 53. His mother described him as a normal, happy child who began to 'slip away' into autism at about age 2.

Jonathan's verbal communication skills were very limited. His early drawings "were a means of giving order to and assembling his fragmented visual world", as he suddenly began drawing at the age of ten. Jonathan had his first solo exhibition at the KS Art Gallery in New York in 1999. Jonathan's artwork choice of medium is charcoal drawing. One of the rare characteristics of this prodigious savant is his focus on drawing faces. His portraits convey deep emotional content and imagination transformed onto the canvas.



Excerpt from "How to Look at Outsider Art" by Lyle Rexer published by Harry N. Abrams, Inc. New York. 2005 – *"Done in single rapid takes, his drawings have the freedom that artists of an earlier century achieved only by discarding their own academic training. Auguste Rodin (1840-1917), for example, sought to master a kind of automatic drawing, never lifting his pencil from the sheet as it followed the contours of the subject. Lerman's ability to intuit the visual essence of a subject in bold lines and deliberate smudging requires no such literal caressing. He doesn't need the subjects present to call them up. Lerman is unusual for an artist with autism in that he focuses so intently on people's faces and seems to possess an uncanny grasp of his subjects' emotional states, despite the fact that he is often not reacting to an actual human being but to a photograph or an image on a TV screen." In Lerman's work, the drawing process takes on a life of its own, mediated by the artist's fixations. Lerman has an instinctive, not logical or learned, sense of depth and proportion, which he alters as he moves. Indeed, the closer we look, the more the drawings seem ready to fly apart into its powerful elements: hair, eye and mouth. What gives the portrait its unity, then? The strong outline strokes of shoulders, neck, chin and profile shoot up toward the dark interruptions of mouth and eye. Such certainty is Lerman's trademark. When our gaze is arrested by that eye, we have to ask, what can he know about such a person? Nothing but what he sees. And that is all we can know."*

Lerman's work received national visibility after a January 16, 2002 New York Times article was published. His story and work have been featured at the Outsider Art Fair, the Today Show, 48 Hours, and other international media. In the book [Jonathan Lerman: Drawings by an Artist with Autism](#) Jonathan's parents described their challenges raising a child with autism.

