

HELEN BUTLER WELLS

(1854-1940)

Driven by the spiritualist wave that swept Europe and the United States in the early twentieth century, Helen Butler Wells founded the spiritualist group called "Jansen". She communicated with the spirits of famous personalities – introduced by her son who died at an early age – among them Bishop Jansen, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Pythagoras, Tecumseh, and a large group of Native Americans as well as visitors from the planets Jupiter and Mars. Under their influence she created a series of automatic drawings – some signed as "Instrument Number 1". In 1919, a new spirit took over her body, an artist named Eswald, who guided her hand to produce drawings with pencil, inspired by Art Nouveau, marked not only by the atmosphere of Symbolism, but also by impressions or references to fairy tales and illustrations of fantastic literature. Executed in a single stroke, these drawings, metamorphosing into volutes then writings, produce an hypnotic effect on the spectator and plunge them into a world of strangeness.

- ABCD Art Brut

Selected Exhibitions:

- 2019: Flying High: Women Artist of Art Brut, Bank Austria Kunstforum, Vienna, Austria
- 2018: Duende: Artists Translating Spirits, Cavin-Morris Gallery, New York, NY
- 2016: Outsider Art Fair Paris, represented by Collection abcd Art Brut, Paris, France
- 2014: Enigmas Rapt in Mysteries: American Art Without Epoch, Cavin-Morris Gallery, New York, NY
- 2011: Art Brut and Then Some, Cavin-Morris Gallery, New York, NY
- 2009: Artists' Books through Time: Volume, Cavin-Morris Gallery, New York, NY
- 2000: Outsider Art Fair NY, represented by Helen Butler Wells, New York, NY

Collections:

American Folk Art Museum, New York, NY
Collection abcd Art Brut, Montreuil, France

Publications:

Breton, Andre, Safarova, Barbara, and Gorsen, Peter. *The Message: Art & Occultism*, Walther König, Cologne, Germany, 2007