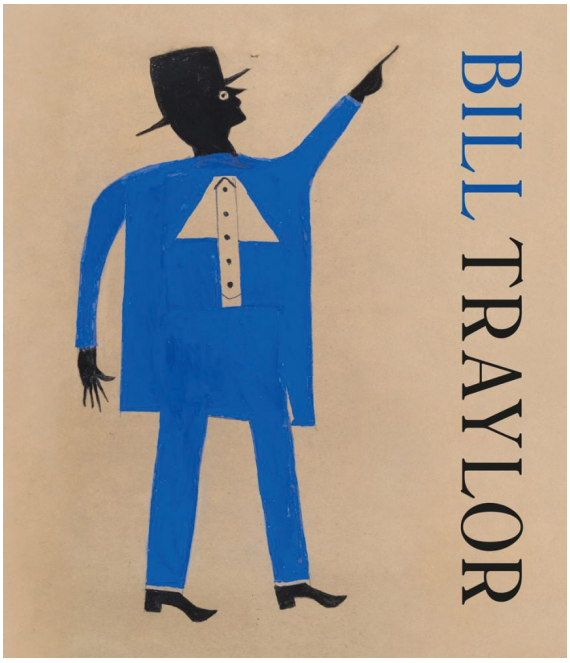
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Tel: +1 212 645 1111
Email: ussales@accartbooks.com
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# Bill Traylor

## Valerie Rousseau

## Debra Purden

## Foreword by Margit Rowell

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- Born into slavery around 1853-4 on a cotton plantation in Benton, Alabama, Traylor has become one of the most important self-taught artists of the twentieth century
- This publication is generously illustrated with full-page high-quality reproductions

Born into slavery around 1853-4 on a cotton plantation in Benton, Alabama, Traylor has become one of the most important self-taught artists of the twentieth century, and certainly one of the most celebrated African-American artists, along with Thorton Dial and William Edmondson. The story of Bill Traylor's life and work is a remarkable one. It is a story that deserves attention both nationally and internationally. This publication, generously illustrated with full-page high-quality reproductions, provides a close examination of Traylor's recurrent themes, composition schemes, favoured iconography, and contextual information related to the artist's biography, creative process and tools, visual environment, and artistic mindset. Each artwork is considered in a context beyond that of an isolated image and in response to one another, forming a series of intricate and consistent narratives, intriguingly cinematic in its development. The elements of Traylor's biography are the anchors of an individual mythology. Instead of merely being a basic depiction, the subject becomes a visual statement structuring Traylor's mind, bringing together hidden symbols from Kongo Vodou, Hoodoo, Southern Baptist, Freemasonry, and Blues sources, as well as layers of references: slavery, uncensored violence in the Jim Crow era, and turbulence within the black enclave known as 'Dark Town' in Montgomery, Alabama. Text in English and French.

**Valérie Rousseau** has been curator of self-taught art and art brut at the American Folk Art Museum, New York, since 2013, where she curated the AAMC Award-winning *When the Curtain Never Comes Down* (2015) and other critically acclaimed exhibitions. Rousseau holds a doctoral degree in art history and a master's degree in art theory, both from Université du Québec in Montréal, and a master's degree in anthropology from École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris. She is the author and editor of numerous publications, among them *The Hidden Art: 20th and 21st Century Self-Taught Art* (Rizzoli, 2017), *Revealing Art Brut* (Culture & Musées, 2010), and *Vestiges de l'indiscipline* (Canadian Museum of Civilization, 2007). **Debra Purden** is an American historian whose research has focused on the life and work of Bill Traylor. She has worked as a curator and registrar for many private collections in Chicago, among them the most significant private collections of Traylor. Previously part of the curatorial team at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, Purden has held positions at the Field Museum of Natural History, the Art Institute of Chicago, and the Chicago Cultural Center.

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