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MUSEUM

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New Museum Presents First US Retrospective of Work by Brion Gysin

Exhibition features the Dreamachine, an artwork experienced with closed eyes

New York, NY...The New Museum will present “**Brion Gysin: Dream Machine**,” the first US retrospective of the work of the painter, performer, poet, and writer Brion Gysin (born 1916, Taplow, UK—died 1986, Paris). Working simultaneously in a variety of mediums, Gysin was an irrepressible inventor, serial collaborator, and subversive spirit whose considerable innovations continue to influence musicians and writers, as well as visual and new media artists today. The exhibition will include over 300 drawings, books, paintings, photo-collages, films, slide projections, and sound works, as well as an original *Dreamachine*—a kinetic light sculpture that utilizes the flicker effect to induce visions when experienced with closed eyes. “Brion Gysin: Dream Machine” is curated by Laura Hoptman, Kraus Family Senior Curator, and will be on view in the New Museum’s second floor gallery from **July 7 through October 3, 2010**.



Brion Gysin, *Untitled*, 1962. Oil on canvas, 25 1/2 x 25 1/2 in (75 x 75 cm)
Collection Shane Akeroyd

“An exhibition of an artist who died more than twenty years ago represents an approach to the notion of the new that is somewhat different from the Museum’s standard—one that emphasizes relevance and fresh information over chronology, and brings to the fore a relatively neglected yet very influential innovator who continues to have a strong impact on artists working today,” said Laura Hoptman.

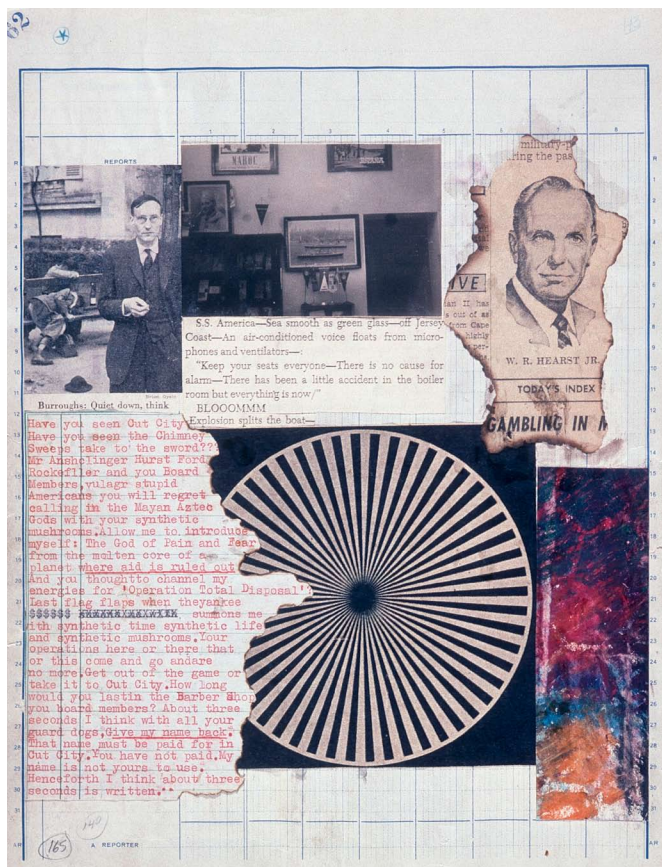


Brion Gysin with *Dreamachine* at Musée des Art Décoratifs, Paris, 1962.
Courtesy William S. Burroughs Trust, Lawrence, Kansas
© Harold Chapman/Topham/The Image Works

In 1959, Gysin created the **Cut-Up Method**, in which words and phrases were literally cut up into pieces and then rearranged to untether them from their received meanings and reveal new ones. His Cut-Up experiments, which he shared with his lifelong friend and collaborator **William S. Burroughs**, culminated in Burroughs and Gysin’s *The Third Mind*, a book-length collage manifesto on the Cut-Up Method and its uses. Transferring this notion to experimenting with tape-recorded poems manipulated by a computer algorithm, Gysin created sound poetry and was among the earliest users of the computer in art. At the same creative moment, Gysin conceived of the *Dreamachine*. During the '60s, '70s, and '80s, Gysin would continue his collaborations, and prove to be a mentor for myriad artists, poets, and musicians, from John Giorno to Brian Jones, to David Bowie and Patti Smith, to Genesis Breyer P-Orridge and Keith Haring, among many others.

The Cut-Up Emerges from Paintings and Drawings

Gysin's painting style manifested itself in a series of calligraphic paintings and drawings that he began to produce in Morocco from the late 1950s to the early 1960s. These were an attempt to fuse writing and painting into a single complex system of mark-making. A linguist who was knowledgeable in written Japanese as well as Arabic, Gysin's script-like marks show the influence of both styles of calligraphy. Basing many of his compositions on the grid formation of written magic spells, Gysin's mark-making runs from top to bottom as well as right to left, creating a dense pattern of incantatory language. (Watch Gysin make paintings <http://bit.ly/9eK9p5>). At the same time Gysin was working with painting as a form of writing; he devised a method of using words as a painter uses paint. Using found text, sound, and pictures, Gysin cut up and rearranged preexisting pieces of information. He also collaborated with Ian Sommerville, a mathematician and budding computer scientist studying at Oxford University, around 1960 to computerize the process of permutating words and sounds, naming his experiments with printed words and magnetic tape **Permutations**. Works like "Pistol Poem" (1960), which is comprised solely of pistol shots recorded at varying distances, and the poem "I Am That I Am" (1961) made him a pioneer of sound poetry. Embracing magnetic tape and computer technology, at a time when only scientists—and not artists—were working with it, Gysin equated his Permutations with that of a machine. Often performing these works accompanied by music and handmade slide projections, Gysin also was an early practitioner of multimedia performance. Gysin's performances, done intermittently in Europe from 1960 through 1965, were never documented by film or video, but several series of more than 100 hand-painted slides used in these performances will be projected as part of the exhibition. Listen to "Pistol Poem" <http://bit.ly/aRUmVN>; Listen to "I Am That I Am" <http://bit.ly/9pkFIC>.



William S. Burroughs and Brion Gysin, *The Third Mind*, 1965. Crayon, gelatin-silver prints, letterpress, offset lithography, and typescript on graph paper, 12.3/8 x 9.5/8 in. (31.3 x 24.3cm). Los Angeles County Museum of Art, purchased with funds provided by the Hiro Yamagata Foundation.

A Meeting of the Minds: Gysin and Burroughs Create The Third Mind

Gysin's experiments with the Cut-Up Method reached its apex with *The Third Mind* (1965), a 200-page Cut-Up collage manifesto produced collaboratively with Burroughs, Gysin's closest friend and collaborator. Many history books credit Burroughs with the invention of the Cut-Up Method, because he used it to produce most of his famous literary works, but Burroughs himself worked tirelessly to give credit to Gysin, whom he described as the only man he ever really respected. *The Third Mind* was never published in its entirety, but the exhibition at the New Museum will return some of *The Third Mind's* best-known collages to their original context offering the most comprehensive display of the work to date.

The Dreamachine:

The Mind as the Next Frontier of Painting

In 1961, Gysin and Sommerville developed the *Dreamachine*. A cylinder with slits cut in the sides with a suspended light bulb at its center is placed on a record turntable and rotated at seventy-eight revolutions per minute; the rotation speed projects light at a constant frequency of eight to thirteen pulses per second, which corresponds to alpha waves present in the human brain during wakeful relaxation.

The flickering light on eyelids can create a trance-like hallucinatory state. For Gysin, the *Dreamachine* brought together the elements of his research. With it, images were freed completely from representation. For Gysin, the future of painting was the mind, which, with the help of the *Dreamachine*, could be a perpetual, possibly inexhaustible source of artistic revelation. The *Dreamachine* was officially unveiled in March 1962 at an exhibition titled *The Object*, at the Musée des Arts Decoratifs in Paris. At the New Museum, an original, functioning *Dreamachine* will be installed to Gysin's specifications. Watch Gysin and Genesis Breyer P-Orridge talk about the *Dreamachine* <http://bit.ly/H5gQo>.

Gysin Collaborates with Musicians

In 1951, Brion Gysin was introduced to Moroccan **Joujouka** music and became fascinated and extremely influenced by it, leading Burroughs, **Brian Jones** and the **Rolling Stones**, and Ornette Coleman to the genre and village from which it came. In the 1970s through the 1980s, Gysin engaged in several collaborations, producing two albums with the jazz experimentalist Steve Lacy and performing live with a band fronted by Parisian punk rocker Ramuntcho Matta. Musicians as varied as **David Bowie** (who used the Cut-Up Method to write lyrics), **Michael Stipe** (R.E.M.), **Iggy Pop**, Patti Smith, **Lee Ranaldo** (Sonic Youth), Laurie Anderson, **Marianne Faithfull**, Genesis Breyer P-Orridge (Throbbing Gristle and Psychic TV), and **Nick Zinner** (Yeah Yeah Yeahs) cite Gysin's work as an inspiration. Watch Iggy Pop talk about Gysin <http://bit.ly/dARyQ9>.

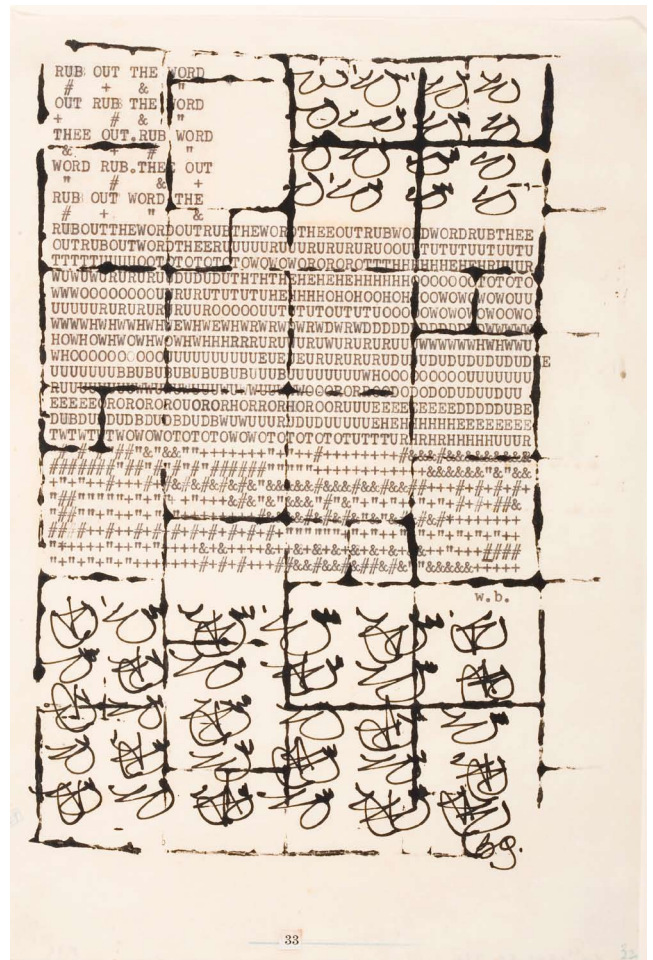
Photo-Collages and Permutations

Gysin continued his experiments merging drawing and writing and produced an artist's book with hand-written poems entitled *Alarme* (1974), which will be published for the first time in a limited edition on the occasion of the New Museum exhibition. He also turned to photography, creating compositions of permuted photos that took advantage of the grid formation of the photo contact sheet. Living in Paris across from the Centre Georges Pompidou, then under construction, Gysin's last works included photo-collages of the Pompidou, as well as *The Last Museum*, as a novel he wrote in 1985. The final part of the exhibition will include a selection of these collages.

Gysin's experiments in painting, drawing, performance, installation, and photography have remained on the periphery of the visual-arts discourse. The context in which we can look at the body of Gysin's work now includes not only art but also the international literary scene; the music world; the social subcultures in New York, Paris, and Tangier; and, of course, the traveling brotherhood of Beat-generation poets, writers, photographers, and musicians. However frustrating it was to Gysin to be ignored by the contemporary art community in his lifetime, it can be argued that being uncategorized has preserved his work, allowing us now to see it as a holistic series of fascinating experiments that expand beyond the typical visual-arts discourse. Forty-five years after his initial discoveries and more than two decades after his death, Gysin's work has not only endured, but influenced a new generation of artists who are drawn to his radical inderdisciplinarity; interest in the collation, manipulation, and reinterpretation of information; and, perhaps most importantly, his desire to subvert culture with the goal of creating a different way of seeing and of thinking.

CATALOGUE

"Brion Gysin: Dream Machine" will be accompanied by an illustrated catalogue co-published with Hugh Merrell, Ltd., featuring essays by Laura Hoptman; John Geiger, literary scholar and author of the definitive Gysin biography; Gerard Audinet, Chief Curator of the Musée d'art moderne de la ville de Paris, which houses Gysin's artistic estate; James Grauerholz, Gysin's friend and literary executor; as well as appreciations by contemporary artists, musicians, and poets including George Condo, Paul Elliman, Ugo Rondinone, Rirkrit Tiravanija, Cerith Wyn Evans, Shannon Ebner, Trisha Donnelly, and Sue de Beer.



William S. Burroughs and Brion Gysin, *The Third Mind*, 1965. Ink and typescript on paper, 10 1/8 x 6 3/4 in (25.6 x 17.3 cm). Los Angeles County Museum of Art, purchased with funds provided by the Hiro Yamagata Foundation

EVENTS AND PUBLIC PROGRAMS

“Brion Gysin: Dream Machine” opening celebration with performances by New York-based bands including new music luminary John Zorn, Beaut, and York Factory Complaint

July 13, 8 to 10 p.m., New Museum (Members only)

Genesis Breyer P-Orridge in Conversation about Brion Gysin and Other Matters

July 15, 7 p.m., New Museum Theater

Founder of the bands Throbbing Gristle and Psychic TV, Genesis Breyer P-Orridge was also a friend and an acolyte of Brion Gysin. P-Orridge met Gysin in the 1970s, and was deeply influenced by him, and particularly his Cut-Up Method. Along with P-Orridge’s partner, the late Lady Jaye Breyer, P-Orridge created and lived by the notion of pandrogeny, which advocated the merging of the sexes via the Cut-Up. Through a series of operations, P-Orridge and Lady Jaye became examples of a “third sex,” a riff on Gysin’s lifelong collaboration with William Burroughs that culminated in the collage work *The Third Mind*.

Initiation featuring Max G. Morton from Cold Cave

September 9, 7 p.m., New Museum Theater

Max G. Morton of the band Cold Cave will give a reading of Cut-Ups, accompanied by an ambient soundscape created by F. Sean Martin, a film by Sebastian Mlynarski, and a dance composition by Johanna Constantine.

Gysin’s Ghost: Poetry Marathon with John Giorno, Aaron Dillaway, Mónica de la Torre, and Kenneth Goldsmith, among others

September 25, 3 p.m., New Museum Sky Room

Three generations of poets will participate in a daylong poetry reading in the museum’s seventh-floor Sky Room to create a dynamic tribute to Brion Gysin. Invited poets include those who knew Gysin personally, and those who participated in the concrete and sound poetry communities; poets that have acknowledged Gysin’s influence; and those who engage in his life’s work of pushing the boundaries of writing.

EXHIBITION SUPPORT

Major lead support for “Brion Gysin: Dream Machine” provided by Shane Akeroyd and Shelley Fox Aarons and Philip Aarons. Generous grants have also been provided by the Fundación Almine y Bernard Ruiz-Picasso para el Art and the Terra Foundation for American Art. This exhibition is also made possible by generous contributions from Lonti Ebers and J. Bruce Flatt, the Robert Lehman Foundation, and The Robert Mapplethorpe Photography Fund. Additional support provided by Susan Hancock and Hilary and Peter Hatch. Support for the accompanying publication is made possible by the J. McSweeney and G. Mills Publications Fund at the New Museum.

ABOUT THE NEW MUSEUM

Founded in 1977, the New Museum is the first and only museum in New York City dedicated to contemporary art. The museum is a premier destination for new art and new ideas both in New York and beyond, with a curatorial program recognized in the United States for its global scope and adventurousness.

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