

Paintings & Drawings William S. Burroughs

PRESS RELEASE

Opening: Friday 11.8. 2017 5-7pm

Duration: 12.8. – 9.9.2017

The American author William S. Burroughs died 2 August 1997, almost precisely 20 years ago and only a couple of months after his last performance as icon in the U2 video for "Last Night On Earth". In the course of the 20 years prior Burroughs death he had become the darling of counterculture, and the aging writer went on reading tours, heard Patti Smith at GBGB in New York, dined with Andy Warhol and collaborated with prominent names, especially in music, such as REM, Sonic Youth, Kurt Cobain, Laurie Anderson and Tom Waits. The list is long.

But it was also in these years Burroughs got, and took his, time for doing visual art, and the works for this exhibition have all been created in the years between 1982-96. Burroughs had however worked with visual art, especially in form of collages and photography, since the end of the 1950s where he with the friend and colleague Brian Gysin developed the so-called cut-up technique, which became a hallmark of his written word, but also a technique he applied in the visual arts. It was exactly in respect of Gysin, and the feeling of owing him, that Burroughs did not exhibit his art to the public until after Gysin's death in 1986.

Besides more traditional collages and drawings the exhibition will show a series of Burrough's trademark paintings: the *Shotgun paintings*. In 1982 he develops this technique where he first works with those patterns that the wood panels, which are painted before and after, shatter by the gun shot and thus uses the gun shots in the composition. Later Burroughs further develops the technique and shoots at spray cans containing colour, which explodes all over the painting, and a hint of chance is added. The paintings are often worked with on both sides, and the effect of the gun shots differ on the front and back, which is why they are presented freely in the gallery space – to be seen all the way around. The inspiration for his *Shotgun paintings* Burroughs could have found back in art history in e.g. the Italian artist Alberto Burri or French Niki de Saint Phalle, but his personal history is significant as well. Back in 1951 in Mexico City Burroughs' destiny is sealed to firearms when he in a tragic shooting accident kills his wife Joan Vollmer. Others may never have touched a firearm again, but for Burroughs it is quite the opposite in what is a long almost therapeutic course of life with guns and rifles.

The exhibition is made in collaboration with *William Burroughs Communications*.

William S. Burroughs (1914-1997) is world known as the Beat poet, for his books, not least the main work *Naked Lunch*, but as a visual artist he also made his imprint with more than 30 solo exhibitions from the debut in 1987 and the 10 years up till is death. He collaborates with several different artists such as Robert Rauschenberg and Keith Haring, and it culminated in his lifetime with the large retrospective museum exhibition *Ports of Entry; William S. Burroughs and the Arts* at Los Angeles County Museum of Art in 1996. Since then his art works have been exhibited at museums and galleries all over the world such as at Centre Pompidou, Paris, Guggenheim Museum, New York, Royal Academy of the Arts, UK.