

William S. Burroughs & Brion Gysin

The Dreamachine

November 16 / 2019 – February 1 / 2020



Carl Laszlo and William S. Burroughs, New York at the Bunker, 1981, Image: Michael Heitmann, published in: Radar No. 1/1982, S. 23

When Burroughs read aloud from his book "Naked Lunch" at the gallery in Austrasse in 1979, he created an avant-garde achievement with us. (Miklos von Bartha)

William S. Burroughs visited Basel exactly twenty years after the publication of his legendary book *"Naked Lunch"*, together with Brion Gysin at the invitation of the art dealer Carl Laszlo¹. He not only managed to completely shock Basel society with a reading from the novel at Galerie von Bartha, but he and Gysin also found someone who was able to construct the first fully functional *Dreamachine* in Miklos von Bartha.

At the beginning of the reading there were about 50 people present, but gradually the premises emptied out. In the end, apart from the author, Brion Gysin, Carl Laszlo, Margareta and myself, only the legendary art lover Jacotte von Goldschmidt-Rothschild

¹ See Carl Laszlo, Edition C.L.A.G. Basel (Hrsg.): Radar– Die Zeitschrift zwischen Basel und New York, 1 / 1982, P. 42 – 45.

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was still present. She remained, unshakeable until the end of the reading... the dinner in the Bodega afterwards was great! (Miklos von Bartha)

Von Bartha is pleased to announce the exhibition **William S. Burroughs & Brion Gysin – The Dreamachine**, an extensive retrospective of the universe around the Beat Generation, running from 16 November 2019 - 1 February 2020. In addition to original construction plans, prototypes of the Dreamachine, archival photographs and numerous works by artists from the Beat Generation will be on display. Extensive photographic documentation, e.g. from Radar Magazine, impressively demonstrates the numerous points of contact between the Basel intellectual scene and New York in the 1970s and 1980s.

William S. Burroughs

William S. Burroughs (1914 - 1997) studied English literature at Harvard and attended lectures in medicine at the University of Vienna before meeting Allen Ginsberg and Jack Kerouac in New York in 1943/44. He became a drug addict and shortly afterwards settled in Mexico, where he began working on his novel *Junkie*. In the early fifties he travelled through several South American countries to explore the drug "Yage". Between 1958/1959 he stayed at the legendary Beat Hotel in Paris with Brion Gysin, where he finished the novel „*Naked Lunch*“².

Brion Gysin

Brion Gysin (1916 - 1986) first worked as a painter in the Surrealist tradition, then moved to Tangier in Morocco where he ran a bar and worked as an artist and novelist. There he met William S. Burroughs, who was inspired by the cut-up technique invented by Gysin to create novels like "*Naked Lunch*". In the early 1960s, Gysin designed the first Dreamachine with the help of mathematician Ian Sommerville³.

Carl Laszlo

Carl Laszlo (1923 - 2013) studied medicine in Pécs (Hungary), followed by deportation to Auschwitz. In autumn 1945 Laszlo moved to Basel where he continued his medical

² Carl Laszlo, Edition C.L.A.G. Basel (Hrsg.): Radar– Die Zeitschrift zwischen Basel und New York, 1 / 1982, P. 42 – 45.

³ Antje von Graevenitz: Der Traum geht weiter, in: von Bartha Quarterly Report 02/09.

studies. His medical studies were abandoned, and he then began to study Psychoanalysis, which led him to discover Surrealism. He ran a private gallery in Basel for many years, wrote plays and several books, was editor of the magazines Panderma and Radar, and participated intensively in international cultural events⁴.

The Dreamachine

A Dreamachine is a perforated paper tube, which is illuminated from the inside by light bulbs and placed on a turntable. Holes are cut into the tube according to a specific pattern devised by Gysin. The observer sits at eye level with their eyes closed in front of the Dreamachine. If the "dream machine" is constructed correctly and set at the right rpm, it emits light waves between 8-13Hz, the exact rhythm of the alpha waves in the brain. These prevail during the alpha status, which is the state of the brain in the stages of meditation or early stages of sleep. Alpha waves are associated with a healthy state of mind and a relaxed life.

⁴ Carl Laszlo, Edition C.L.A.G. Basel (Hrsg.): Radar– Die Zeitschrift zwischen Basel und New York, 2 / 1983, P. 8.

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Exhibition Facts

Title: *William S. Burroughs & Brion Gysin – The Dreamachine*

Address: von Bartha, Kannenfeldplatz 6, 4056 Basel

Telephone: + 41 61 322 1000

Website: www.vonbartha.com

Preview: November 15, 6 – 8 pm

Dates: November 16 / 2019 – February 1 / 2020

Opening Hours: Tue to Fri 2 – 6 pm, Sat 11 am – 4 pm or by appointment

Admission: Free

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#BrionGysin