The Drawing Center

For Immediate Release

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"All her life obsessed with faces, she draws faces. After an initial moment when the pen "swims" hesitantly on the white paper, she discovers the place assigned to the first eye. It is only when she is being watched from the depths of the paper that she begins to get her bearings and, effortlessly, one motif is added to another." Unica Zürn, *The Man of Jasmine* (1967)

THE DRAWING CENTER ANNOUNCES

Unica Zürn: Dark Spring

Main Gallery

April 17 – July 23, 2009
Opening Reception: Thursday, April 16, 6 – 8 pm

Gallery Talk: Saturday, April 18, 4:00 pm

New York, February 16, 2009 – From April 17 through July 23, 2009, The Drawing Center will present *Unica Zürn: Dark Spring*, the first major museum exhibition in North America devoted to the work of the German artist and author, Unica Zürn (1916–1970). The exhibition will foreground the role of drawing in Zürn's artistic career and will bring together for the first time 50 ink and watercolor works on paper spanning from the early 1950s until her death in 1970, as well as related texts, photographs, and personal correspondence. *Unica Zürn: Dark Spring* is curated by João Ribas.



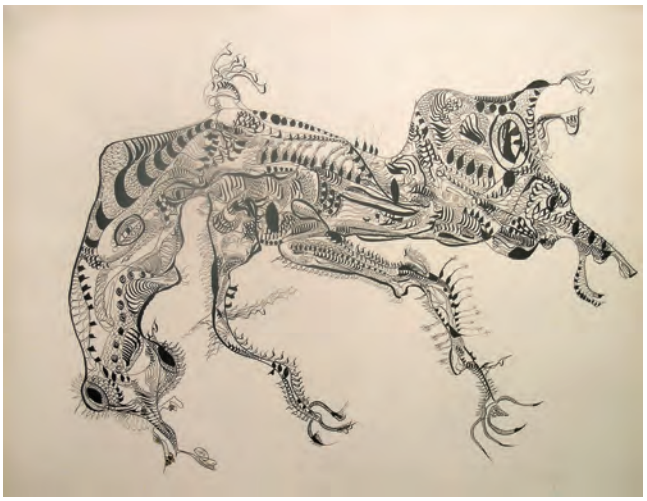
UNICA ZÜRN, *Untitled* (detail), 1961. Ink on paper, 12 3/8 x 9 1/4 inches. Courtesy of Ubu Gallery, New York & Galerie Berinson, Berlin. © Brinkmann & Bose Publisher, Berlin.

Already an established author in postwar Berlin, Zürn was introduced in the early 1950s to the practice of automatic drawing, and to the Paris Surrealists with whom she would collaborate and exhibit, by her partner, Hans Bellmer. Though largely unrecognized contributions to late Surrealism, the resulting drawings and texts, the majority of which were produced during an intensely productive two decades also marked by a series of mental crises, are imbued with the movement's fascination with the poetic force of madness and Zürn's own vivid experience of illness. At once playful and haunting, Zürn's body of work in drawing evinces one of the most febrile imaginations of the past century, tragically cut short by her suicide in 1970.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Unica Zürn was born in Berlin-Grünewald in 1916, and lived and worked in Berlin and Paris. From the mid-1930s, Zürn first worked as an archivist, editor, and artistic advisor at the Berlin-based German national

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Unica Zürn, *Untitled*, 1965. Ink on paper, 19 1/2 x 25 1/2 inches. © Brinkmann & Bose Publisher, Berlin.

film production company, UFA, before devoting herself to writing. Zürn produced numerous expressionistic short stories that were published in German newspapers throughout the 1950s before moving to Paris with German Surrealist artist, Hans Bellmer. During the following decade and a half, Zürn produced paintings and drawings while living in Paris, becoming acquainted and exhibiting with many artists in the Surrealist circle, including André Breton, Max Ernst, Man Ray, and Marcel Duchamp. From 1953 to 1964, Zürn composed nearly 124 anagram poems, many of which provided the central framework for her later experiments with prose, including her autobiographical novella, *Dark Spring* (1969), and more avant-garde texts such as *Im Hinterhalt* (1963) and *Die Trompeten von Jericho* (1968). In the early sixties, she began suffering a series of mental crises leading to intermittent hospitalization during which she continued to draw and write poetry. In October 1970, having been released from a clinic, Zürn returned to Paris and Bellmer; on the morning of October 19, Zürn leapt to her death from the balcony of the apartment the couple shared on the rue de la Plaine—as she had described in the last pages of *Dark Spring*.

PUBLIC PROGRAMS

Curator **João Ribas** will give a **free gallery talk** about the exhibition on **Saturday, April 18 at 4:00 pm**.

On **Thursday, April 23 at 7:00 pm**, The Drawing Center and Poets House will present ***From the Dark Spring of Language: The Poetry & Prose of Unica Zürn***. An evening of readings by acclaimed novelists and poets: Mary Ann Caws, Distinguished Professor of Comparative Literature, English, and French at the Graduate School of the City University of New York; Pierre Joris, poet; Jill Magi, author, visual artist, and faculty member at The New School Eugene Lang College; Anna Moschovakis, poet; Caroline Rupprecht, author and assistant professor of Comparative Literature at Queens College, City University of New York; Frederic Tuten, author and Professor Emeritus, City College of New York.



Unica Zürn, *Untitled*, 1953. Ink on paper, 6 1/8 x 5 7/8 inches. © Brinkmann & Bose Publisher, Berlin.

A **Family Art Workshop** related to the exhibition will be held on **Saturday, May 2 from 10:30 am to 12:00 pm**. This free program is geared to children ages 9 to 12 and their parents. Advance reservations are required. Please call 212-219-2166 x119 or email agood@drawingcenter.org by May 1 to register.

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On Wednesday, **May 20 at 6:30 pm**, artist, writer, and filmmaker **Eleanor Antin will read from her memoir** entitled *Conversations with Stalin*. Antin's work has been the subject of a major restrospective at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and is she an emeritus Professor of Visual Arts at the University of California at San Diego.

"Through Biography", a panel discussion organized by Ad Hoc Vox, will take place on **Wednesday, June 10 at 6:30 pm**. Panelists will discuss what happens when an artist's personal history becomes a part of his/her work, whether through biography or autobiography. The exhibition *Unica Zürn: Dark Spring* will serve as stage to a discussion of the various ways an artist's life is presented alongside his/her work and how that context can influence our relationship to their art. Panel participants include Jenifer P. Borum, Patricia Cronin, Wayne Koestenbaum, and Gail Levin. Colleen Asper will moderate the panel, which will be followed by a Q&A with the audience.

Admission to all public programs is free.

PUBLICATIONS

In conjunction with the exhibition, The Drawing Center will publish ***Drawing Papers 86: Unica Zurn: Dark Spring*** featuring essays by **João Ribas** and **Mary Ann Caws**. The publication will be approximately 100 pages, with 50 color images, and will sell for $20.

HOURS & ACCESSIBILITY

Gallery hours are Tuesday through Friday, 10 am to 6 pm and Saturday, 11 am to 6 pm (closed Sundays and Mondays). The Drawing Center is wheelchair accessible.

CREDITS

This exhibition is made possible, in part, by public funds from the New York State Council on the Arts, a St agency.

MISSION STATEMENT

The Drawing Center is the only museum in the U.S. to focus solely on the exhibition of drawings, both historical and contemporary. It was established in 1977 to provide opportunities for emerging and under-recognized artists; to demonstrate the significance and diversity of drawings throughout history; and to stimulate public dialogue on issues of art and culture.

www.drawingcenter.org
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