



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

A Finding Aid to the William Burroughs and Brion Gysin Writings, 1963-1973, 1997, in the Archives of American Art

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	William Burroughs and Brion Gysin writings
Date:	1997 1963-1973
Identifier:	AAA.burrwill
Creator:	Gysin, Brion, 1916-1986 Burroughs, William S., 1914-1997
Extent:	0.4 Linear feet
Language:	Collection is in English.
Summary:	The writings of American writer William S. Burroughs and British writer Brion Gysin measure 0.4 linear feet and date from 1963 to 1973, and 1997. This collection includes three books of writings by Burroughs and Gysin and one folder of letters from artist David Bradshaw to art collectors Stanley and Elyse Grinstein about William Burroughs.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

The William Burroughs and Brion Gysin writings were donated in 2017 by the Grinstein family, via Ayn Grinstein, Ellen Grinstein Perliter, and Nancy Grinstein, executors.

Related Materials

Also found at the Archives of American Art are the papers of Stanley and Elyse Grinstein, who were prominent art collectors and patrons.

The New York Public Library archive also possesses a substantial collection of William S. Burroughs papers.

Available Formats

The collection has been digitized and is available on the Archives' website.

Processing Information

Materials received a preliminary level of arrangement after receipt. The collection was fully processed and prepared for digitization by Rihoko Ueno in 2017 with funding provided by the Walton Family Foundation and Terra Foundation for American Art.

Preferred Citation

William Burroughs and Brion Gysin writings, 1963-1973, 1997. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions

Use of original papers requires an appointment and is limited to the Archives' Washington, D.C. Research Center. Contact Reference Services for more information.

Conditions Governing Use

The copyright for the material by William Burroughs and Brion Gysin is controlled by the William S. Burroughs Trust (which includes the Gysin Estate). The Wylie Agency LLC, 250 West 57th Street, Suite 2114, New York, N. Y. 10107, are literary agents representing the Estates of William S. Burroughs and Brion Gysin.

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Biographical / Historical

William S. Burroughs (1914-1997) was a writer in New York, Mexico, Morocco, and Kansas. Burroughs's friend, painter and poet Brion Gysin, developed the "cut-up technique" of writing, a form of collage using blocks of randomly arranged text, which was popularized by Burroughs. Gysin taught the cut-up technique to Burroughs at the Beat Hotel in Paris, France around 1959, and Burroughs implemented the technique to create his third novel, *Naked Lunch*. The two continued to collaborate on projects and remained close friends.

Scope and Contents

The writings of American writer William S. Burroughs and British writer Brion Gysin measure 0.4 linear feet and date from 1963 to 1973, and 1997. This collection includes three books of writings by Burroughs and Gysin and one folder of letters from artist David Bradshaw to art collectors Stanley and Elyse Grinstein about William Burroughs.

The three books of writings by William Burroughs and Brion Gysin use a "cut-up technique" of diaristic writings. Drawings, clippings, photos, and other items are pasted onto the pages throughout the books. Two of the books were created in agenda books and the third was created in a Les Goelands notebook. The third book has been identified as "John Brady's book," after a friend of Burroughs. There are a few loose pages from the Les Goelands notebook in a corresponding folder and one folder of letters about Burroughs written by the artist David Bradshaw.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged as 1 series.

Missing Title:

- Series 1: Writings, 1963-1973, 1997 (0.4 linear feet; Box 1)

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

- Authors
- Experimental fiction

Types of Materials:

- Drawings
- Photographs

Names:

- Bradshaw, David
- Brady, John
- Grinstein, Elyse, 1929-2016
- Grinstein, Stanley, 1927-2014
- Hotel Les Goelands (Saint-Jean-de-Luz, France)

Occupations:

- Collagists

Container Listing

Series 1: Writings, 1963-1973, 1997

0.4 Linear feet (Box 1)

Scope and Contents: The three books of writings by William Burroughs and Brion Gysin use a "cut-up technique" of diaristic writings graphically arranged with drawings, clippings, photographs, and other items pasted onto the pages and integrated into the narrative. Two of the volumes were created in agenda books and the third was created in a Les Goelands notebook. The third book has been identified as "John Brady's book." While Brady was a friend of Burroughs, the relationship between the book and Brady is unclear. There are a few loose pages removed from the third Les Goelands book in a corresponding folder. Also included is one folder of letters about Burroughs written by the artist David Bradshaw to art collectors Stanley and Elyse Grinstein, plus miscellaneous material such as a photograph, card, and drawing from Burroughs's funeral.

Arrangement: This series is arranged chronologically.

Box 1, Folder 1

[Black Book, 1963-1964](#)

Notes:

The copyright for this material by William Burroughs and Brion Gysin is controlled by the William S. Burroughs Trust (which includes the Gysin Estate). The Wylie Agency LLC, 250 West 57th Street, Suite 2114, New York, N. Y. 10107, are literary agents representing the Estates of William S. Burroughs and Brion Gysin.

Box 1, Folder 2

[Red Book, 1965-1973](#)

Notes:

Several entries were torn out (presumably by Burroughs or Gysin) prior to the book's arrival at the archives, so the missing pages are not omissions but a reflection of the original condition of the book as received.

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Box 1, Folder 3

Green "Les Goelands" Notebook, circa 1971-1973

[Digital Content: Green Les Goelands Notebook](#)

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Box 1, Folder 4

Loose Items from Green "Les Goelands" Notebook, circa 1971-1973

[Digital Content: Loose Items from Green Les Goelands Notebook](#)

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Box 1, Folder 5

[David Bradshaw Letters Regarding William Burroughs, 1997](#)

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