

Brion Gysin

The Last Museum

April 10-July 12, 2026



The Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris is presenting the first retrospective Brion Gysin's work in a Parisian museum.

Born in Great Britain in 1916, Brion Gysin was a multifaceted artist, painter, poet, performer, photographer, and musician, often associated with the Beat Generation. Inventor of the Cut-up and the Dreamachine, his oeuvre unfolds at the conjunction of painting and writing, enlisting a always renewed array of visual languages. Drawn to alterity and marginality, Brion Gysin roamed the world, mingling with alternative and underground movements. His travels brought him into contact with wide-ranging creative and intellectual circles, within which his work often finds unexpected resonance and enjoys an almost magical aura. Inspired by these encounters, his ceaseless creative drive found expression through a variety of forms such as sound and visual poetry, experimental film, performance, novels, and music, not to mention painting and photography.

The exhibition retraces the major stages of this uncommon career encompassing all the twentieth-century avant-garde movements, and in counterpoint, showcases the works of artists with whom he forged close ties and whom he inspired: William Burroughs, Françoise Janicot and Bernard Heidsieck, John Giorno, Keith Haring, Patti Smith, Ramuntcho Matta, and so on. It also bears witness to the strong connections between Brion Gysin and Paris, where he lived for a large part of his life. He spent time in the French capital during the 1930s when he was a student at the Sorbonne. At the turn of the 1960s, he gravitated to surrealist circles and the famous Beat Hotel (9, rue Gît-le-Cœur, Paris 6th). From the 1970s until his death in 1986, he was living in an apartment located opposite the Pompidou Center. Shortly before his death, he bequeathed his entire estate to the city of Paris.

The exhibition, comprising over 140 of the artist's works, builds on the Gysin collection at the Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris, the most extensive in the world, complemented by exceptional loans from public and private collections in France and abroad.

Director
Fabrice Hergott

Curators
Olivier Weil, independant curator
assisted by Juliette Theureau

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Brion Gysin
Dreamachine
1979

Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris
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Practical information

Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris
11 Avenue du Président Wilson
75116 Paris
Tél. 01 53 67 40 00
[www.mam.paris.fr](#)

Open Tuesday through Sunday
10am to 6pm

Late hours on Thursday until 9:30 p.m.

Cultural activities Information and bookings
Tel. 01 53 67 40 80

Ticketing

Regular admission : 17 €
Reduced admission : 15 €
Combined ticket including the Lee Miller exhibition: €18 / €20

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The exhibition

The exhibition offers a trajectory through the major stages of this category-defying artist's creative path. It opens with a selection of works illustrating his interest in dreams, surrealism, and the mind-altering effects of drugs. The exhibition continues by revealing how the main places he visited around the world shaped his work. Next, it addresses the various aspects of his creative process: the Cut-up and its permutations; drawing, writing, and calligraphy; the Dreamachine adventure; the different forms of play and performance; his forays into the realm of magic and the truly enchanting effect he had on his contemporaries; and finally, the use of photography as a symbol of his relationship to reality and of photomontage as an indicator of his presence in the world.

The exhibition highlights all the dimensions and possibilities of the Cut-up, a technique Brion Gysin discovered in fall 1959 at the Beat Hotel in Paris. This technique is a dadaist revival involving cutting up a text and randomly rearranging the pieces. The exhibition also demonstrates the centrality of the Dreamachine—a rotary cylinder with slits and a lightbulb inside—to the artist's oeuvre and his imagination. The rotating cylinder emits light through the slits at a special frequency, which produces a relaxing effect on the brain and generates visions for the user when they are looking at the Dreamachine with their eyes closed, through their eyelids.

Throughout the exhibition places an emphasis on the multimedia dimension of his artistic output and the ongoing dialogue he maintained with the works of other artists, both past and present (Victor Hugo, Henri Michaux, René Laubliès, Mohamed Hamri, and so forth).

The catalogue

Published by Paris Museés, the catalogue is the first comprehensive book on the artist in French. It includes an introduction by the curators, four essays (by James Horton, Barry Miles, Olivier Quintyn, and Brice Matthieussent) expanding upon the themes developed in the exhibition, an interview with the musician Marc Hurtado, a facsimile of Gysin's travel journal in Alamut, and a wide selection of reproduced works on view in the exhibition.