

LIVE

# JEFF KEEN

## GAZAPOCALYPSE – Return to the Golden Age



Jeff Keen *White Dust 1970-72* film still © Jeff Keen

### JEFF KEEN

### THE TANKS AT TATE MODERN

18 – 23 SEPTEMBER 2012  
10.00–18.00  
(10.00–22.00 ON 22 SEPTEMBER)

LIVE PERFORMANCE  
FRIDAY 21 SEPTEMBER 2012  
20.00, FREE

Jeff Keen (1923–2012) was a pioneer of experimental film based in Brighton whose rapid-fire animations, multiple screen projections and raucous performances helped to redefine multimedia art and the Pop aesthetic in Britain.

This major installation for The Tanks at Tate Modern was conceived by Keen in response to the unique nature of the Tanks. Featuring a broad range of Keen's films and videos projected onto a large, dioramic screen with recordings prepared for his live performances from the 1970s and 1980s, the installation will demonstrate the spirit of Keen's expanded cinema events, his early experiments in drawing, painting and animation, his fascination



**THE  
TANKS**  
AT TATE MODERN

with surrealism and popular culture, and his radical development of multiple screen projection, cut-up soundtracks and unruly live action.

A very special live performance in the Tanks on Friday 21 September at 20.00 will feature projections, live music and actions performed by Keen's daughter, Stella Starr with a range of his collaborators, including Alan Baker, Chris Blackburn, Rob Gawthrop, Michael Paysden as 'Mike Movie' and Jason Williams as 'Silverhead'.

Keen was a veteran of the Second World War, and his paintings, drawings, collages, assemblages, books, performances and films powerfully evoke the violence, colour, speed and noise of the 20th century. He transformed cinema into a riotous collage of comics, drawings, B-movie posters, plastic toys, burning props and extravagant costumes. His early 8mm and 16mm films are built for speed, combining footage of Beat-era motifs – jazz, motorbikes and car culture – with experimental animations in which the achievements and atrocities of the 20th century seem to flash by within a few short, cacophonous seconds.



A single frame could not contain the frenzied energy of Keen's imagination, and by the mid-1960s he began to use multiple screens and live action in presentations of his work.

He commented:

'Concerned from the outset with extending film beyond its traditional narrative limits, it seemed a logical step for me to get beyond the frame, and explore the full graphic potential of the medium in the direction of non-linear movement and synthetic vision. Expanded cinema became the social art directed at, and involving, the audience, through visual and sound projections, often combined in violently disconnected and overlapping patterns.'

Emerging from the 1960s counterculture, Keen's films and performances echo the climate of literary happenings and 'bomb culture' taking place at venues like Bob Cobbing's Better Books in Charing Cross Road, as well as Gustav Metzger's 1966 Destruction in Art Symposium. Recalling American underground films by Jack Smith, Ken Jacobs, George and Mike Kuchar and Kenneth Anger, his work also resonates with the Happenings and Fluxus movements and Viennese Actionism, and it anticipated work by American artists on the West Coast including Mike Kelley and Paul McCarthy.

Nothing stands still in his work. It is a constant process in which images and sounds evolve in quick succession through Keen's unique cinematic storm of destruction, creation and accumulation. As he noted about the children's toys and comics that inspired him, his films 'obey a law unto themselves.'

Films and videos in the installation:

***Like the Time Is Now aka Time Is Now***

1961, 8mm transferred to video, 6 min

***The Pink Auto***

1964, 8mm transferred to video, 21 min

***Meatdaze***

1968, 16mm transferred to video, 8 mins

***Rayday Film***

1968–70 + 1976, 16mm transferred to video, 13 min

***Day of the Arcane Light***

1969, 8mm transferred to video, 14 min

***Diary Films:***

***Stolen Moments***

1971–72, 8mm transferred to video

***Lone Star***

1974–75, 8mm transferred to video

***Godzilla – Last of the Creatures***

1975–76, 8mm transferred to video

***Rosa Canina***

1970s, transferred to video

***Spontaneous Combustion***

1980s, 8mm transferred to video, 34 min

***Artwar Loop 1***

1990s, super 8 transferred to video, 1 min

***Artwar Loop 2***

1990s, super 8 transferred to video, 1 min

***Artwar***

1993, video, 6 min

***Blatzomatika***

1990s, video, 4 min

***Kino Pulverizo***

1993, super 8 transferred to video, 1 min

Jeff Keen passed away on 21 June 2012. The presentation of his work in the Tanks is dedicated to his visionary creative spirit.

With special thanks to Stella Keen and the BFI.

A career-long retrospective, Shoot the Wrx, Artist and Film-maker Jeff Keen, will be on view 27 October 2012 to 24 February 2013 at Brighton Museum & Art Gallery.

The BFI's four-DVD boxset, GAZWRX: The Films of Jeff Keen is available in the Tate Modern Shop.

**Curator** Stuart Comer

**Assistant Curators** Kyla McDonald, Katie-Marie Ford

**Production Manager** Steve Wald

**Performance Projectionist** David Leister