

UNICA ZÜRN

## UNICA ZÜRN: DRAWINGS FROM THE 1960s

January 13 – April 16, 2005

Ubu Gallery is pleased to announce “Drawings from the 1960s,” an exhibition of works by the tormented and visionary Unica Zürn. Both an accomplished author and artist, Zürn remains best known as the companion of the German Surrealist, Hans Bellmer, with whom she was involved for 17 years until her suicide in 1970. The bulk of her relatively small artistic output was created during Zürn’s relationship with Bellmer, most famous for the erotically charged photographs he made of two adolescent female dolls he built in the 1930s. The works on view at Ubu were made during a period of intense productivity, but one marked by her deteriorating mental health and the unraveling of her relationship with Bellmer.

Born in Berlin on July 6, 1916, Zürn grew up surrounded by exotic, ephemeral objects collected by her father, a cavalry officer stationed in Africa. Inspired perhaps in part by her father’s gifts from afar and a longing for greater contact with him, Zürn developed a rich fantasy life and a vivid imagination. This is evidenced in her dense, otherworldly drawings of fantastical creatures meticulously constructed out of finely rendered, obsessively repetitive shapes and lines.

From the mid-1930s, Zürn worked as an archivist, editor and artistic advisor at the Berlin-based film production company, UFA. In 1949, she took up journalism, publishing extensively in the German and Swiss presses. By this time, she was also engaged in short story writing and painting. Although Zürn’s career as a writer of short fiction was already established, it was through the encouragement she received from Bellmer, whom she met at the opening of an exhibition of his drawings at Galerie Rudolf Springer in Berlin in 1953, that she found her strongest artistic voice and motivation. As natural extensions of Zürn’s established interest in hidden meanings and coincidences, Bellmer urged her to experiment with “automatic” drawings and anagrams. In summer 1954, Zürn published *Hexentexte* (Witches’ Writings), a book reproducing ten drawings and anagrams, with a short postscript on anagrams by Bellmer. (Thirty deluxe copies also had an original drawing by him).

Simultaneously, the couple returned to Bellmer’s apartment on rue *Mouffetard* in Paris’s 5th Arrondissement. It was a tiny, squalid affair and, although they lived in increasing isolation, each fueled the other’s work. Zürn had a number of exhibitions

of her drawings in the 1950s (including one in 1959 with Daniel Cordier, who also represented Bellmer) and continued to write. Bellmer, well established in Surrealist circles in Paris, introduced Zürn to many of his contemporaries, including Victor Brauner, André Breton, Hans Arp, Man Ray, Max Ernst and, most significantly, Henri Michaux. A poet and painter, Michaux engaged in a ten-year drug experiment beginning around 1955 in which he sought to understand—primarily through the use of mescaline—the mechanics of human consciousness. The encounter with Michaux, by Zürn’s own account, triggered the mental illness that plagued the last 13 years of her life. Zürn believed Michaux to be the incarnation of a childhood fantasy figure, which she described later in her final book—a reflection on her illness—*The Man of Jasmine*: “A few days later she experienced the first miracle in her life: in a room in Paris she finds herself standing before The Man of Jasmine. The shock of this encounter is so great that she is unable to overcome it. From this day on she begins, very very slowly, to lose her reason.”

Throughout the final eight years of her life, Zürn was in and out of psychiatric clinics. During brief periods of improvement, she continued writing, producing an autobiographical novella, *Dark Spring*, and recording her impressions of schizophrenia and institutionalization in *The Man of Jasmine*, both in 1970. In October 1970, having been released from a clinic following a relatively productive stay, Zürn, with nowhere else to go, returned to Paris and to Bellmer, who was partially paralyzed and bedridden following a stroke. Despairing over the impossibility of continuing to live with Bellmer, who felt incapable of coping with her instability, Zürn leapt to her death from the balcony of the apartment they had shared in the rue de la Plaine (20e) on the morning of October 19th. Bellmer died on February 24, 1975 and was buried, at his request, next to Zürn in Paris’s Père Lachaise Cemetery. Their marble tomb is marked with a plaque inscribed with the words Bellmer wrote for Zürn’s funeral wreath nearly five years before: “My love will follow you into Eternity.”

- 1 *La Serpente*  
1957  
Oil on panel  
Signed and dated "Paris, 57" on recto  
19¾ x 19¾ inches (50.2 x 50.2 cm)  
(ZURN 121)

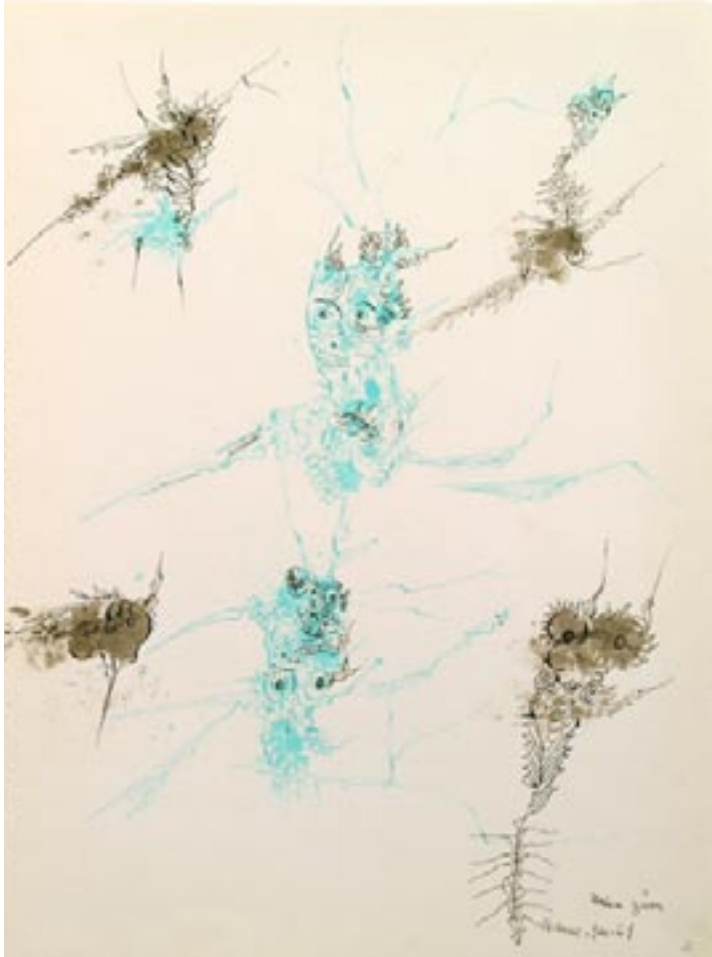




2 Untitled  
1961  
Ink and watercolor on paper  
Signed and dated "St. Anne, Decembre 61" on recto  
12¾ x 9¼ inches (31.4 x 23.5 cm)  
(ZURN 92)



3 Untitled  
1965  
Ink on paper  
Signed and dated on recto / Drawing on verso  
25¾ x 19½ inches (64.3 x 49.6 cm)  
(ZURN 33)

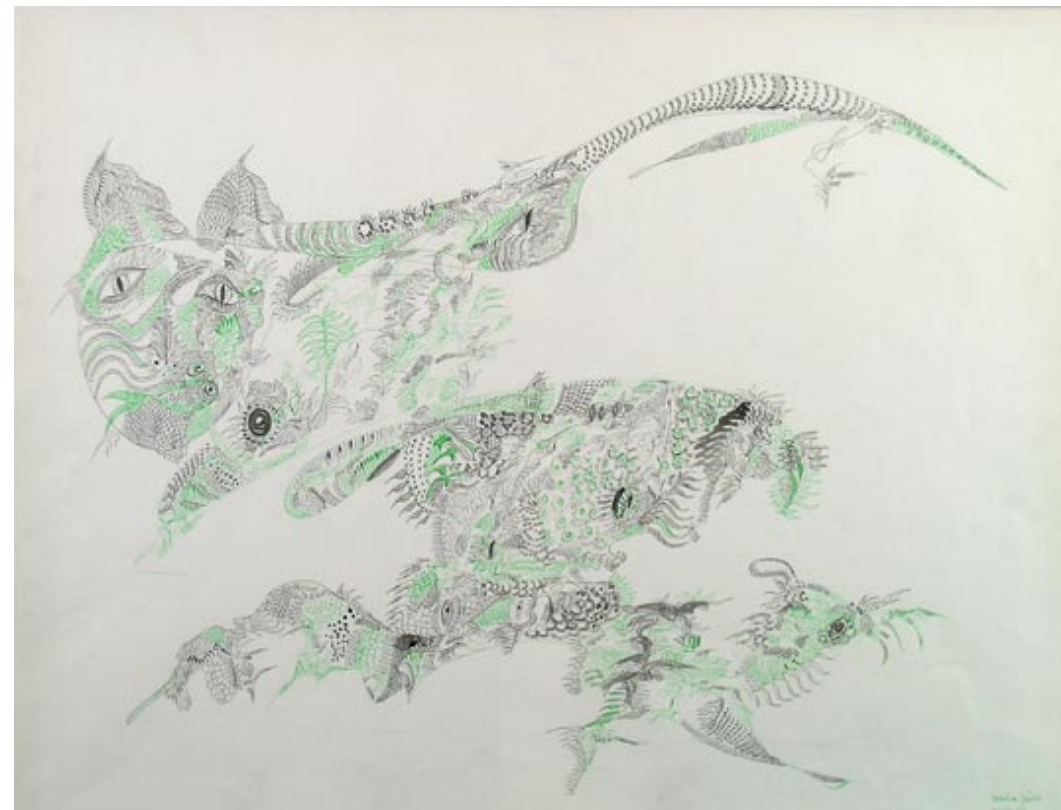


4 Untitled  
1961  
Ink on paper  
Signed and dated "St. Anne, Dec. 61" on recto  
12 3/8 x 9 1/4 inches (31.4 x 23.5 cm)  
(ZURN 62)



5 Untitled  
1965  
Ink and watercolor on paper  
Signed and dated on recto / Drawing on verso  
25 3/8 x 19 1/2 inches (64.3 x 49.5 cm)  
(ZURN 38)

- 6 Untitled  
1963  
Ink on paper  
Signed and dated "Paris, 63" on recto  
19½ x 25¼ inches (49.5 x 64.3 cm)  
(ZURN 30)





Untitled  
1959  
Ink, watercolor, gouache and pencil on paper  
Signed and dated on recto  
37 $\frac{7}{8}$  x 27 inches (95.6 x 68.6 cm)  
(ZURN 2) **7**



8 Untitled  
1963  
Ink, watercolor and white gouache on paper  
Signed and dated "Ile de Ré, 63" on recto  
19½ x 25½ (49.6 x 64.8 cm)  
(ZURN 14)



9 Untitled  
1960s  
Ink on paper  
Signed on recto  
20 x 26¼ inches (50.7 x 66.6 cm)  
(ZURN 37)



10 Untitled  
1961  
Ink on paper  
Signed and dated "St. Anne, Nov. 61" on recto  
12¾ × 9¼ inches (31.4 × 23.5 cm)  
(ZURN 80)



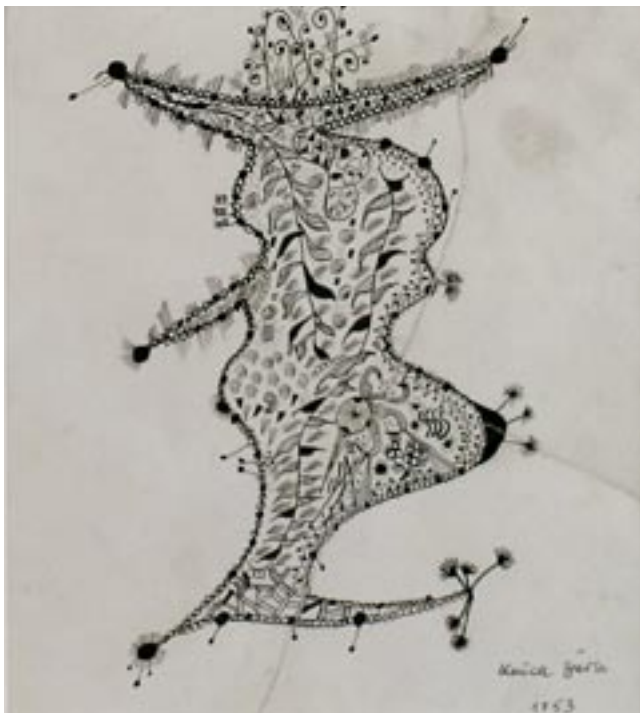
Untitled  
1960s  
Ink and watercolor on paper  
Signed on recto  
19½ × 25¾ inches (49.5 × 64.6 cm)  
(ZURN 41)



12 Untitled  
1961  
Ink and watercolor on paper  
Signed and dated "St. Anne, Nov. 61" on recto  
12 3/8 x 9 1/4 inches (31.4 x 23.5 cm)  
(ZURN 87)



Untitled 13  
1964  
Ink and watercolor on paper  
Signed and dated on recto  
19 1/2 x 25 3/8 inches (49.5 x 64.3 cm)  
(ZURN 39)



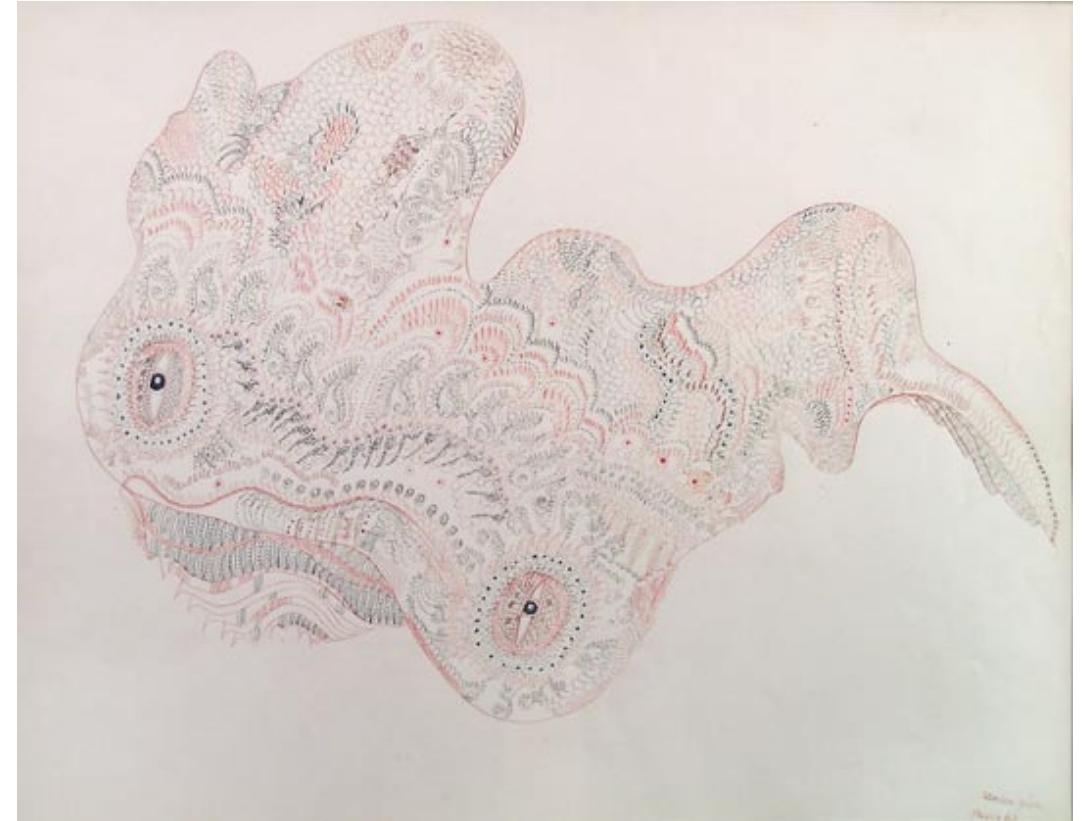
14 Untitled  
1953  
Ink on paper  
Signed and dated on recto / Stamped on verso  
6½ × 5½ inches (15.7 × 14.7 cm)  
(ZURN 6)



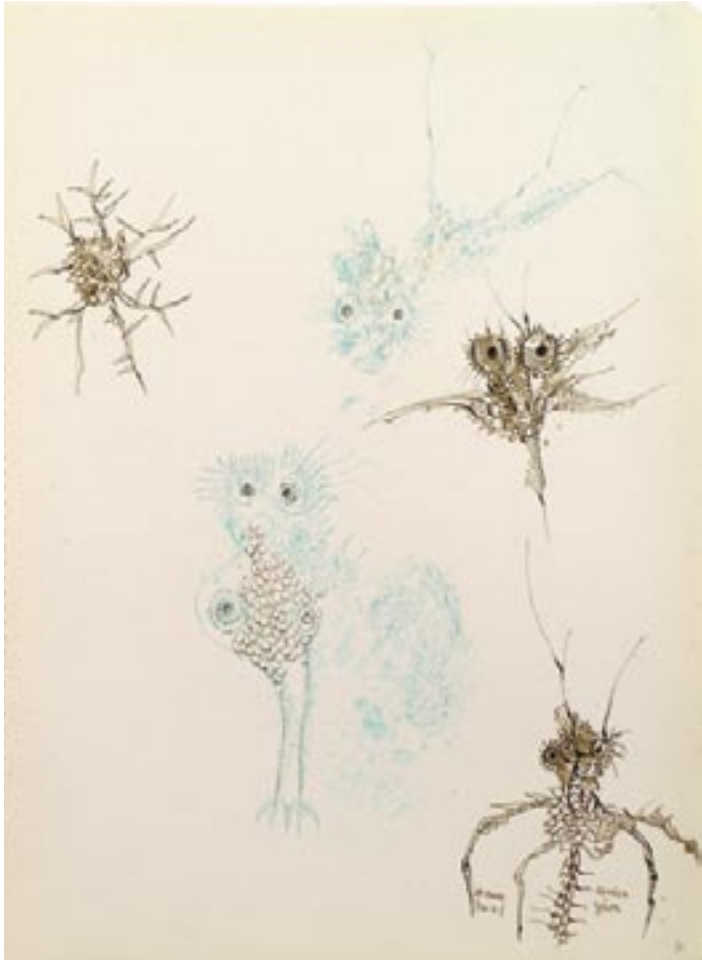
15 Untitled  
1966  
Ink and white gouache on paper  
Signed and dated on recto / Drawing on verso  
25½ × 19½ inches (64.6 × 49.5 cm)  
(ZURN 43)



**16** Untitled  
1961  
Ink and watercolor on paper  
Signed, inscribed "Die Rosliand und Familie" and dated  
"St. Anne, Nov. 61" on recto  
12¾ × 9¼ inches (31.4 × 23.5 cm)  
(ZURN 86)



Untitled  
1963  
Ink, watercolor and white gouache on paper  
Signed and dated "Paris, 63"  
19½ × 25½ inches (49.5 × 63.8 cm)  
(ZURN 40)



**18** Untitled  
1961  
Ink and watercolor paper  
Signed and dated "St. Anne, Dec. 61" on recto  
12¾ × 9¼ inches (31.4 × 23.5 cm)  
(ZURN 63)



Untitled  
1961  
Ink on paper  
Signed and dated "St. Anne, Nov. 61" on recto  
12¾ × 9¼ inches (31.4 × 23.5 cm)  
(ZURN 85) **19**



20 Untitled  
1961  
Ink on paper  
Signed and dated "St. Anne, Dec. 61" on recto  
12¾ × 9¼ inches (31.4 × 23.5 cm)  
(ZURN 72)



Untitled 21  
1966  
Ink on paper  
Signed and dated on recto / Drawing on verso  
25¾ × 19½ inches (64.6 × 49.5 cm)  
(ZURN 44)



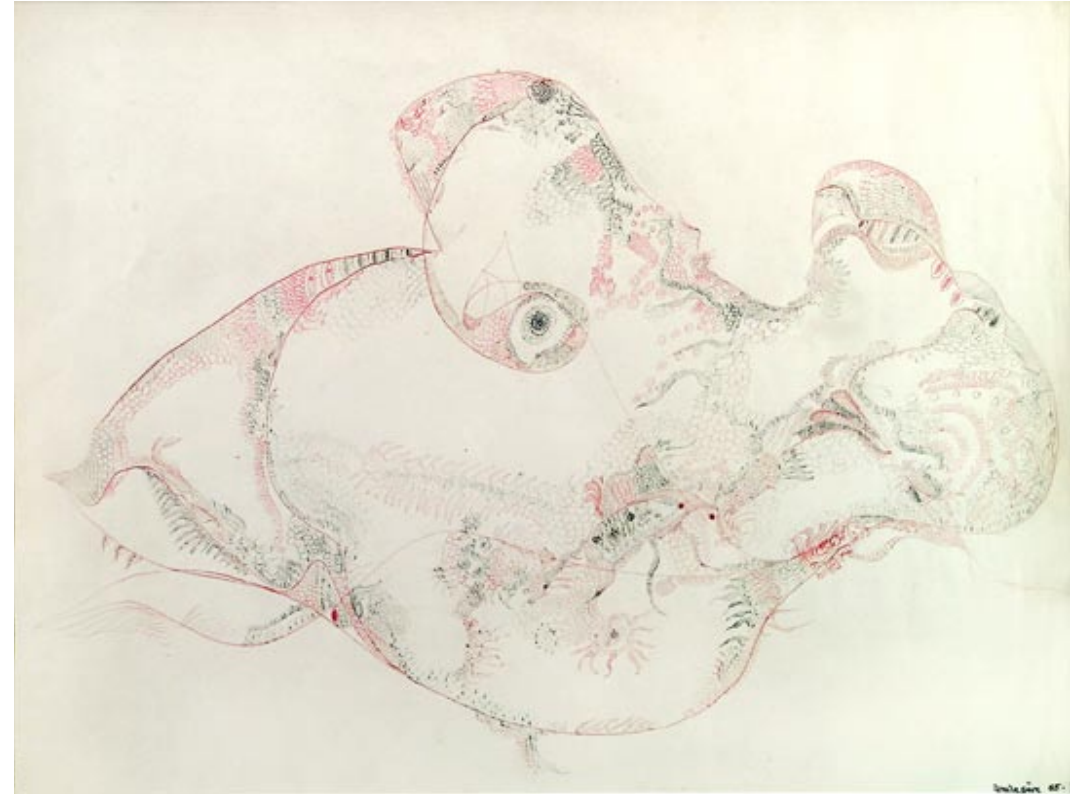
22 Untitled  
1961  
Ink and watercolor on paper  
Signed and dated "St. Anne, Dec. 61" on recto  
12 3/8 x 9 1/4 inches (31.4 x 23.5 cm)  
(ZURN 66)



23 Untitled  
1961  
Ink on paper  
Signed and dated "Nov. 61, St. Anne" on recto  
12 3/8 x 9 1/4 inches (31.4 x 23.5 cm)  
(ZURN 83)



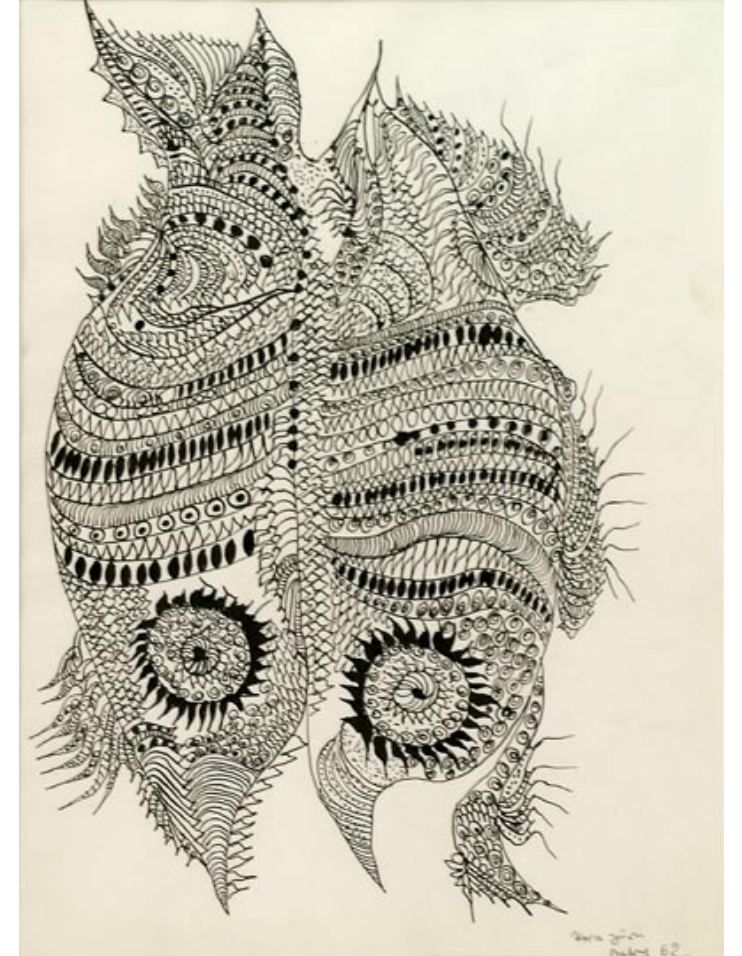
**24** Untitled  
1961  
Ink and watercolor on paper  
Signed and dated "St. Anne, Dec. 61" on recto  
12¾ x 9¼ inches (31.4 x 23.5 cm)  
(ZURN 93)



Untitled **25**  
1965  
Ink, watercolor and white gouache on paper  
Signed and dated twice on recto  
19½ x 15¼ inches (49.5 x 38.5 cm)  
(ZURN 5)



26 Untitled  
1963  
Ink on paper  
Signed and dated "Ile de Ré, 63." on recto /  
Drawing on verso  
25¼ × 19½ inches (64.5 × 49.5 cm)  
(ZURN 31)



Untitled 27  
1962  
Ink on paper  
Signed and dated "Butry, 62" on recto  
12¾ × 9¼ inches (31.5 × 23.5 cm)  
(ZURN 22)



**28** Untitled  
1963  
Ink on paper  
Signed and dated "Paris, 63" on recto / Drawing on  
verso  
19½ × 25½ inches (49.6 × 64.8 cm)  
(ZURN 15)



**29** Untitled  
1961  
Ink and watercolor on paper  
Signed and dated "St. Anne, Nov. 61" on recto  
12¾ × 9¼ inches (31.4 × 23.5 cm)  
(ZURN 88)



30 Untitled  
1967  
Ink on paper  
Signed and dated on recto  
25 $\frac{3}{8}$  x 19 $\frac{1}{2}$  inches (64.5 x 49.5 cm)  
(ZURN 35)



Untitled 31  
1961  
Ink and watercolor on paper  
Signed and dated "St. Anne, Dec. 61" on recto  
12 $\frac{3}{8}$  x 9 $\frac{1}{4}$  inches (31.4 x 23.5 cm)  
(ZURN 69)



**32** Untitled  
1961  
Ink and watercolor on paper  
Signed and dated "St. Anne, Decembre 61" on recto  
12¾ × 9¼ inches (31.4 × 23.5 cm)  
(ZURN 90)



Untitled  
1961  
Ink and watercolor on paper  
Signed and dated "St. Anne, Nov. 61" on recto  
12¾ × 9¼ inches (31.4 × 23.5 cm)  
(ZURN 82)

**33**



**34** Untitled  
1961  
Ink and watercolor on paper  
Signed and dated "St. Anne, Dec. 61" on recto  
12¾ × 9¼ inches (31.4 × 23.5 cm)  
(ZURN 64)



Untitled  
1961  
Ink and watercolor on paper  
Signed and dated "St. Anne, Decembre 61" on recto  
12¾ × 9¼ inches (31.4 × 23.5 cm)  
(ZURN 91) **35**



**36** Untitled  
1961  
Ink and watercolor on paper  
Signed and dated "St. Anne, Dec. 61" on recto  
12¾ × 9¼ inches (31.4 × 23.5 cm)  
(ZURN 73)



Untitled  
1961  
Ink and watercolor on paper  
Signed and dated "St. Anne, Jan. 61" on recto  
12¾ × 9¼ inches (31.4 × 23.5 cm)  
(ZURN 58) **37**



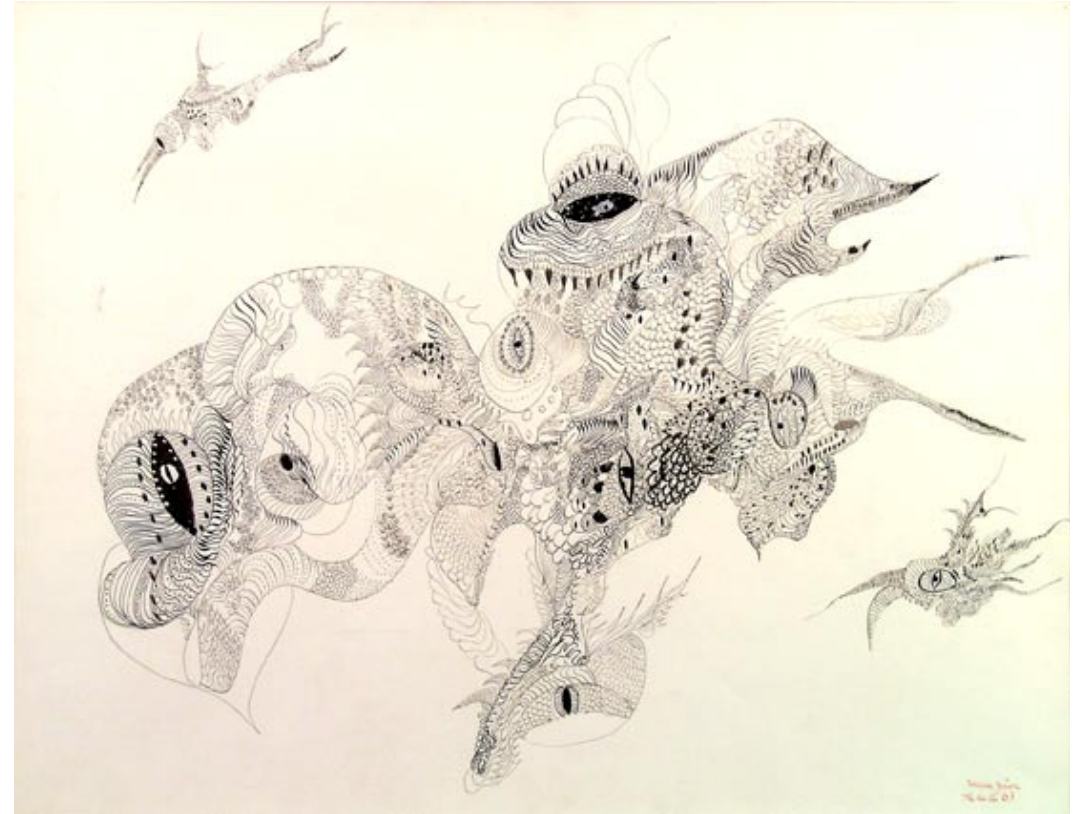
**38** Untitled  
1961  
Ink and watercolor on paper  
Signed and dated "St. Anne, Dec. 61" on recto  
12¾ × 9¼ inches (31.4 × 23.5 cm)  
(ZURN 71)



Untitled  
1961  
Ink and watercolor on paper  
Signed and dated "St. Anne, Dec. 61" on recto  
12¾ × 9¼ inches (31.4 × 23.5 cm)  
(ZURN 68) **39**



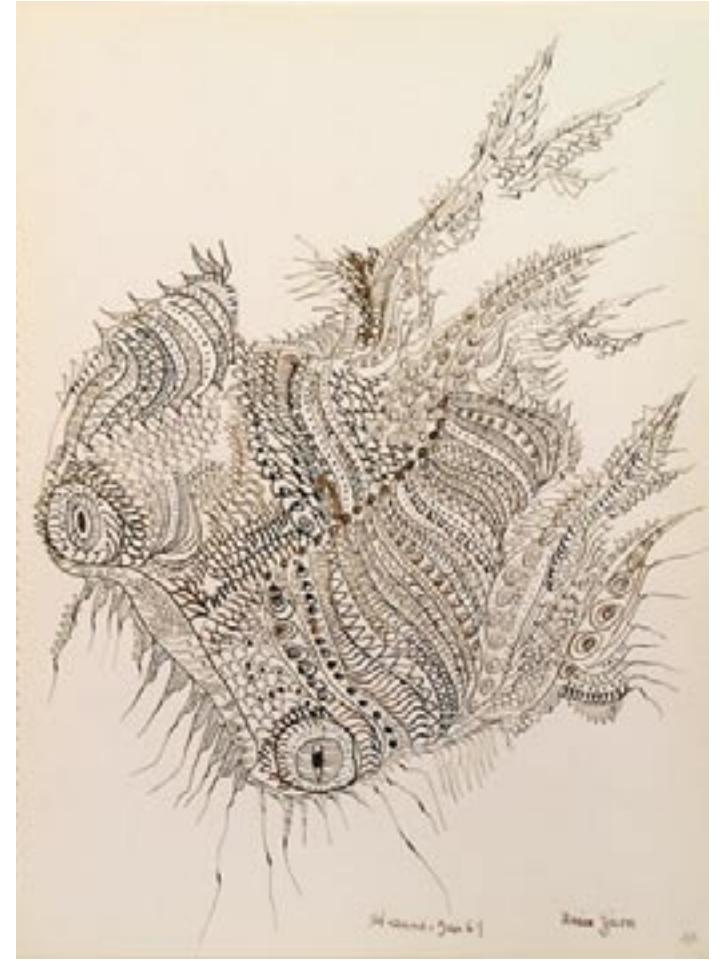
**40** Untitled  
1966  
Ink on paper  
Signed and dated on recto  
11 x 7½ inches (28 x 19½ cm)  
(ZURN 12)



Untitled  
1963  
Ink and white gouache on paper  
Signed and dated "Ile de Ré, 63" on recto  
19½ x 25½ inches (49.5 x 63.8 cm)  
(ZURN 32)



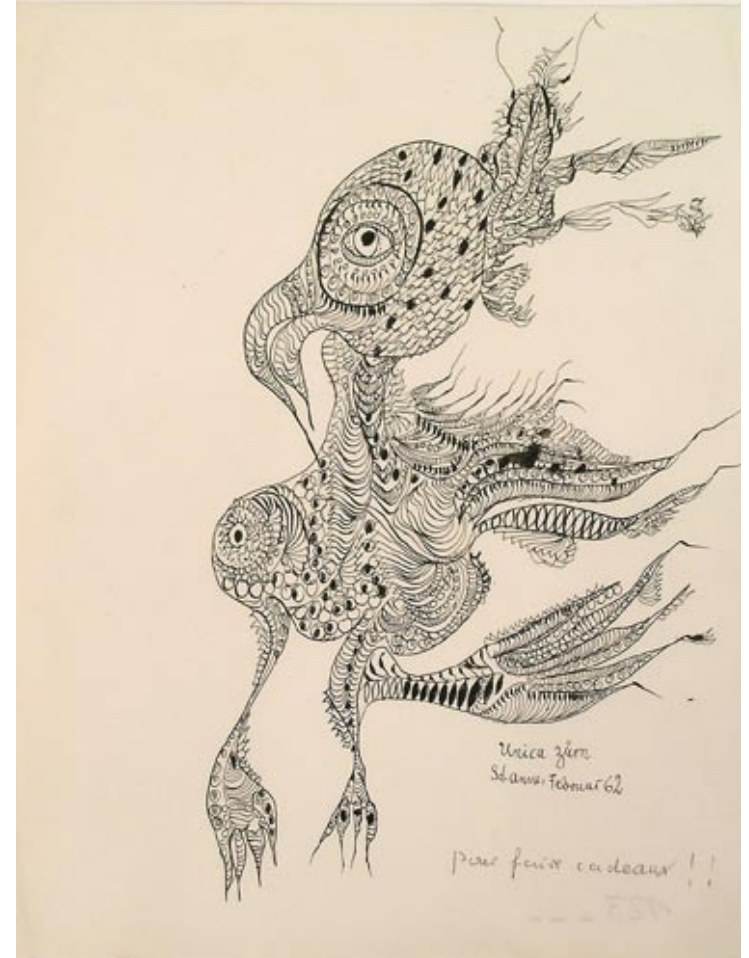
**42** Untitled  
1966  
Ink and watercolor on paperboard  
12 3/4 x 9 3/4 inches (32 x 25 cm)  
(ZURN 23)



Untitled  
1961  
Ink on paper  
Signed and dated "St. Anne, Dec. 61" on recto  
12 3/4 x 9 3/4 inches (31.4 x 23.5 cm)  
(ZURN 67)



**44** Untitled  
1963  
Ink and white gouache on paper  
Signed and dated "Ile de Ré, 1963" on recto  
19 1/8 x 24 3/8 inches (50 x 62 cm)  
(ZURN 34)



**45** Untitled  
1962  
Ink on paper  
Signed, inscribed "pour faire cadeaux!!," and dated "St. Anne, Februar 62" on recto  
10 1/2 x 8 1/4 inches (26.7 x 20.8 cm)  
(ZURN 25)



**46** Untitled  
1961  
Ink on paper  
Signed and dated "St. Anne, Nov. 61" on recto  
12¾ x 9¼ inches (31.4 x 23.5 cm)  
(ZURN 81)



**47** Untitled  
1961  
Ink and watercolor on paper  
Signed and dated "St. Anne, Dec. 61" on recto  
12¾ x 9¼ inches (31.4 x 23.5 cm)  
(ZURN 78)



**48** Untitled  
1961  
Ink and watercolor on paper  
Signed and dated "St. Anne, Dec. 61" on recto  
12¾ × 9¼ inches (31.4 × 23.5 cm)  
(ZURN 49)



Untitled  
1965  
Ink and watercolor on paper  
Signed and dated on recto / Drawing on verso  
19½ × 25½ inches (49.4 × 64.8 cm)  
(ZURN 16)



50 Untitled  
1961  
Ink and watercolor on paper  
Signed and dated "St. Anne, Dec. 61" on recto  
12¾ × 9¼ inches (31.4 × 23.5 cm)  
(ZURN 47)



51 Untitled  
1961  
Ink and watercolor on paper  
Signed and dated "St. Anne, Dec. 61" on recto  
12¾ × 9¼ inches (31.4 × 23.5 cm)  
(ZURN 52)



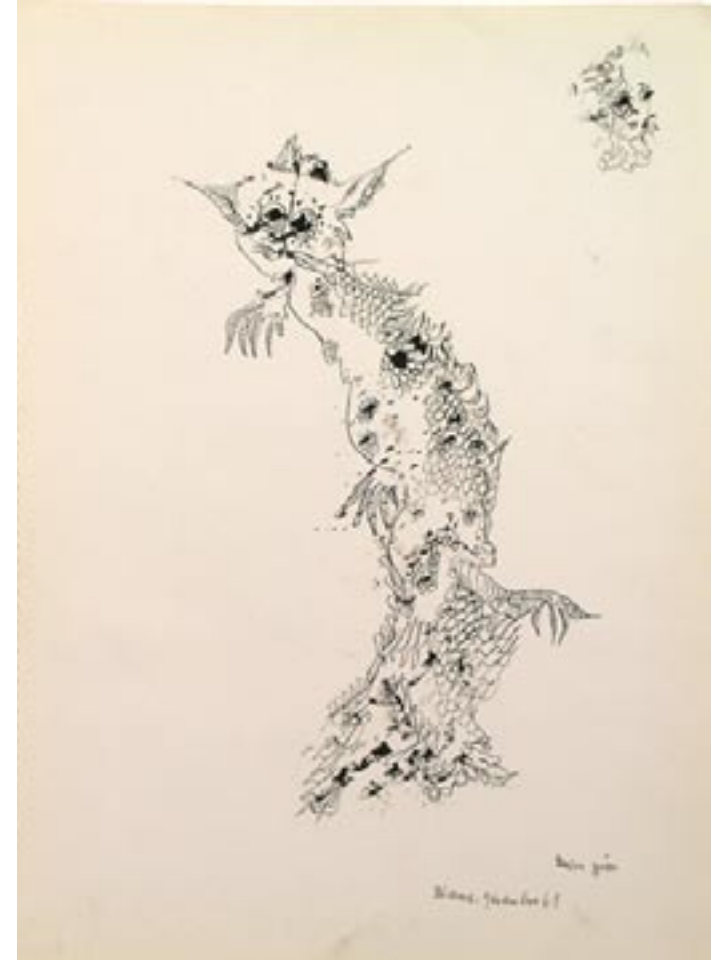
**52** Untitled  
1961  
Ink and watercolor on paper  
Signed and dated "St. Anne, Dec. 61" on recto  
12 $\frac{3}{8}$  x 9 $\frac{1}{4}$  inches (31.4 x 23.5 cm)  
(ZURN 75)



Untitled  
1960s  
Ink and watercolor on paper  
8 $\frac{1}{8}$  x 10 $\frac{3}{8}$  inches (20.6 x 27 cm)  
(ZURN 19)



54 Untitled  
1964  
Ink and pencil on paper  
Signed, annotated and dated on recto  
19½ x 12½ inches (49.9 x 32.3 cm)  
(ZURN 11)



Untitled  
1961  
Ink on paper  
Signed and dated "St. Anne, Decembre 61" on recto  
12¾ x 9¼ inches (31.4 x 23.5 cm)  
(ZURN 89)



**56** Untitled  
1967  
Ink on paper  
Signed and dated on recto  
11 x 7½ inches (27.8 x 19 cm)  
(ZURN 20)



Untitled  
1966  
Ink on paperboard  
Signed and dated on recto  
15 x 9¾ inches (38 x 25 cm)  
(ZURN 13) **57**



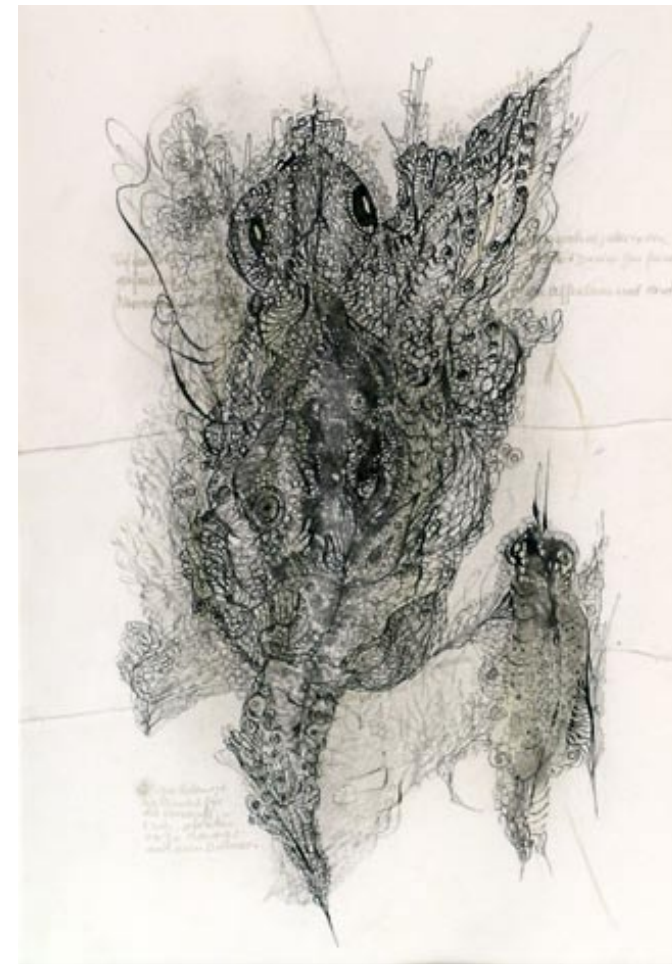
**58** Untitled  
1961  
Ink and watercolor on paper  
Signed and dated "St. Anne, Dec. 61" on recto  
12¾ × 9¼ inches (31.4 × 23.5 cm)  
(ZURN 54)



Untitled  
1962  
Ink and watercolor on paper  
Signed and dated "St. Anne, Jan. 62" on recto  
12¾ × 9¼ inches (31.4 × 23.5 cm)  
(ZURN 59)



**60** Untitled  
1965  
White gouache on black paper  
Signed and dated on recto / Drawing on verso  
25½ × 19½ inches (64.5 × 49.5 cm)  
(ZURN 29)



Untitled  
1957  
Ink and white gouache on paper  
Annotated on recto  
10 3/4 × 7¼ inches (27.3 × 18.4 cm)  
(ZURN 1)



**62** Untitled  
1961  
Ink and watercolor on paper  
Signed and dated "St. Anne, Dec. 61" on recto  
12 3/8 x 9 1/4 inches (31.4 x 23.5 cm)  
(ZURN 46)



Untitled  
1966  
Ink on paperboard  
15 x 9 7/8 inches (38 x 25 cm)  
Signed and dated on recto  
(ZURN 24) **63**



**64** Untitled  
1966  
Ink and watercolor on paperboard  
Signed, dated and numbered on recto / Drawing on  
verso  
9 $\frac{7}{8}$  x 7 $\frac{3}{8}$  inches (25 x 18.8 cm)  
(ZURN 9)



Untitled  
1961  
Ink and watercolor on paper  
Signed and dated "St. Anne, Dec. 61" on recto  
12 $\frac{3}{8}$  x 9 $\frac{1}{4}$  inches (31.4 x 23.5 cm)  
(ZURN 65)



**66** Untitled  
1961  
Ink and watercolor on paper  
Signed and dated "St. Anne, Dec. 61" on recto  
12 3/8 x 9 1/4 inches (31.4 x 23.5 cm)  
(ZURN 45)



**67** Untitled  
1966  
Ink on paper  
Signed and dated on recto  
15 x 9 7/8 inches (38 x 25 cm)  
(ZURN 27)



**68** Untitled  
1967  
Ink on paper  
Signed and dated on recto  
19½ × 12½ inches (49.5 × 31.75 cm)  
(ZURN 42)



**69** Untitled  
1966  
Ink on paperboard  
Signed and dated on verso  
15 × 9¾ inches (38 × 25 cm)  
(ZURN 10)



**70** Untitled  
1961  
Ink and watercolor on paper  
Signed and dated "St. Anne, Nov. 61" on recto  
12 $\frac{3}{8}$  x 9 $\frac{1}{4}$  inches (31.4 x 23.5 cm)  
(ZURN 84)



Untitled  
1961  
Ink and watercolor on paper  
Signed and dated "St. Anne, Nov. 61" on recto  
12 $\frac{3}{8}$  x 9 $\frac{1}{4}$  inches (32 x 24 cm)  
(ZURN 26)

72 Untitled  
1966  
Ink on paperboard  
Signed and dated on recto  
9 7/8 x 7 3/8 inches (25 x 18.8 cm)  
(ZURN 17)



**ubu**

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FRONT COVER Unica Zürn, 1953. Photograph by Johann Lederer.

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WE WISH TO THANK THE FOLLOWING FOR THEIR GENEROUS ASSISTANCE  
IN MAKING THIS EXHIBITION POSSIBLE:

Peter & Katrin Ziemke-Laupenmühlen

Jean-Marie & Doriane Bihl-Bellmer

John Zorn

Erich Brinkmann, Verlag Brinkmann und Bose, Berlin

Catherine Thieck, Galerie de France, Paris

Elisabeth Kaufmann, Galerie Kaufmann, Zürich

DESIGN Eileen Boxer