

## Unica Zürn

AT UBU GALLERY. THROUGH APRIL 16.

The companion of Surrealist artist Hans Bellmer for seventeen years, Unica Zürn paid close attention to his unnerving, and erotically charged, deformed dolls. Her art, exhibited for the first time in this country, is sprightlier and more fanciful—but it also shows some dark affinities with Bellmer's work. Zürn was a regular at psychiatric clinics and killed herself by leaping from the couple's apartment balcony in 1970, leaving behind a large body of writings as well as drawings. Made in the last decade of her life, these ink and watercolor works on paper are a throwback to the "exquisite-corpse" parlor games of an earlier avant-garde, but that doesn't diminish their many imaginative flourishes. Zürn's intricate scallops, skeins, and curlicues conjure the hybrid deities of Southeast Asian paintings, the patterned fields of the self-taught visionary Adolf Wölfli, and the mescaline-addled calligraphy of Bellmer's friend Henri Michaux. And while this selection creates the impression of an artist stuck in a groove, perhaps that's because Zürn drew to keep herself sane—ensuring that her line stayed tightly wound as her mind unraveled.

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