

JEFF KEEN

*Wail*, 1960

8mm film (transferred to digital)

black & white, silent

5 minutes

20 April – 19 May 2018

Jeff Keen's first film, *Wail* (1960), places us in an era of uninhibited rebellion, opening with a shot of leather-clad bikers silently circling the camera. The artwork observes Keen's early experimentations as a filmmaker - blending bizarre narrative, explosive animation and an orgy of surrealist collage with a ramshackle, stop-motion glimpse of film noir. *Wail* will be shown together with a turntable playing jazz, as it was first intended.

Shot on black and white 8mm film, *Wail* is startling for its technical experimentation and stylistic leaps. It is a crazed hybrid of the Nouvelle Vague and neorealist films that emerged from France and Italy in the Sixties, and animated collage which is chaotically cut, cropped and overlaid. Jeff Keen's delight in clashes of style and image are evident from his first film. As Stewart Home remarked - "using 8mm film, Keen created scratch video 20 years before anyone else had thought of it."

*Wail* was made ahead of the founding of the New York Filmmakers' Cooperative in 1962 and the London Filmmakers' Co-op in 1966, of which Jeff Keen was a part. *Wail* is an early, defining example of underground cinema when such a term had barely been born. A stupefaction of animated guns, superheroes, surrealist collage, car crashes and Goya, the defining quality of *Wail*, as with all of Keen's work, is a defiance to be co-opted into a singular movement or stylistic monotone.

JEFF KEEN was born in Trowbridge, Wiltshire in 1923 and died in Brighton in 2012. His work has been the subject of two large-scale retrospectives; *Shoot the Wrx, Artist and Filmmaker Jeff Keen* at Brighton Museum and Art Gallery 2012-13 and *Gazwrx: The Films of Jeff Keen* at the BFI, Southbank, London, 2009. A major installation, *Gazapocalypse – Return to the Golden Age*, took place in the Tanks at Tate Modern in 2012. Selected exhibitions include *Rayday Film*, Hales Gallery, 2016, *Cartoon Theatre of Dr Gaz*, Kate MacGarry, 2016 and projects at the Hayward Gallery, Trondheim Kunstmuseum, Norway, Tate Britain, Serpentine Gallery and the London Film Festival. Hales Gallery will present a solo exhibition of his work at Frieze Art Fair, New York next month. With thanks to the BFI National Archive.