

# SHOOT THE WRX!

Artist &  
filmmaker

Jeff Keen



A career-long retrospective - this exhibition celebrates the pioneer experimental artist, film-maker and poet Jeff Keen (1923 - 2012).

Originally exhibited at Brighton Museum and Art Gallery from 27 October 2012 - 24 February 2013.

Jeff Keen was one of the great figures of the British post-war avant-garde.

In his work, he revelled in a wild spirit of anarchic play, revealed a fascination with Surrealism and demonstrated true love for popular culture.

Keen received international acclaim for his experimental and expanded cinema projects, most recently with an installation in The Tanks at Tate Modern.

**Shoot the Wrx** shows Keen's films within his wider artistic production, presenting the close inter-relationships between the moving image, painting, drawing, assemblages and poetry.

His life-long commitment to "*play (as) the true revolutionary element in art*" is celebrated in this display featuring a selection of his films alongside his paintings, drawings, collage prints, assemblages and poetry.

Best known as a film-maker, people are only just discovering what a prolific artist Keen was - from the 1940's right up to his death - and some of the artwork exhibited here was shown for the first time.



His artwork is now represented in important international exhibitions and art collections.

The Tate have acquired four of his early works for their collection so far, with Andrew Wilson, curator at Tate Britain, stating he is "*a missing link in British art history, between Surrealism, Neo-Romanticism, Bomb Culture and Pop - fusing film collage, assemblage, paintings and happenings*".



Keen wrote:

*"I am old enough to be part of the second generation of Surrealists. And my visual education came from second generation Surrealism rather than from post-Mondrian abstraction, which doesn't particularly appeal to me. Now it seems as though the European avant-garde has moved away from Dadaist/Surrealist positions..."*

*During those postwar years, I'd go around discovering art shows by the Surrealists and modern abstract artists. I remember being very impressed by the work of Jean Dubuffet. It was all about the mixing of mediums..."*



Left:  
***Dr G in the manner of J. D.***  
 (Jean Dubuffet), 1980,  
 Mixed media on canvas 41 x  
 56 cm

Right:  
 Detail of display case  
 exhibiting a mix of smaller  
 sculptures, film props and  
 ephemera from Keen's  
 collection of toys and  
 American comics





Paintings displayed in the main room from 1960s to 1970s. Clockwise from top right:

**LAFF**, 1966

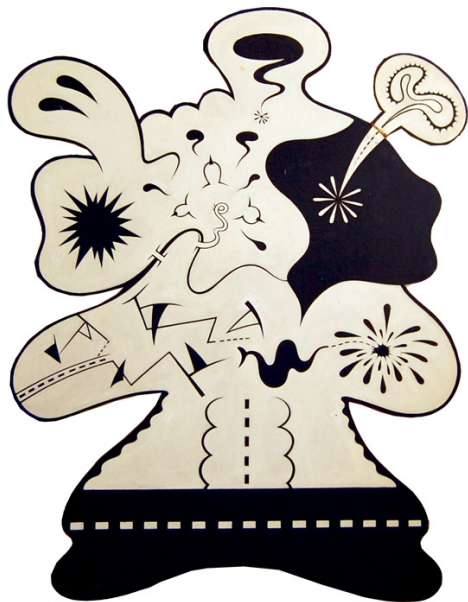
Oil on board, (122 x 122cm)

**Cut Back To 1962**, 1968

Oil & spray paint on board (92 x 123 cm)

**Dr Gaz**, 1972

Acrylic on cut out board (89 x 112 cm)





Mezzanine area showing a looping variety of films and documentary interviews on wall mounted monitors. A sound post was set up for visitors to listen to rare recordings of Keen reading his poetry.

Also featured here is *Head with Red Gun*, late 1970s, cut out oil on wood, 110 x 67cm + the Cinema sign that Keen salvaged from a local demolished cinema.

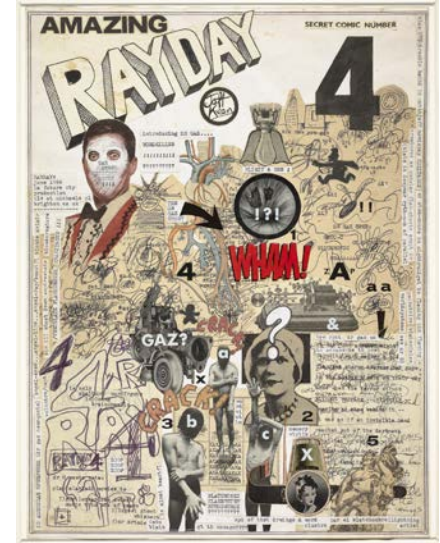


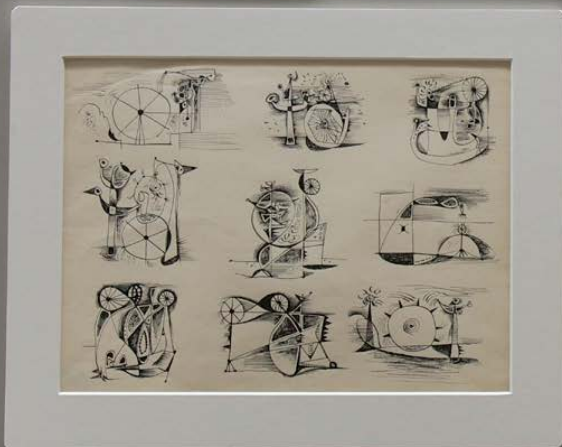
Displayed in the Heyer room were mainly large mixed media works on paper and cardboard from 1990s onwards, but also in vitrines were sculptures, film props and costumes from earlier films.

The Prints and Drawings Room featured works on paper from the 1940s to the 1970s, as well as early assemblages and collage books.

In the middle display case were the original collages for the set of **Amazing Rayday Secret Comics** - numbers 1 to 5 - which were printed and distributed internationally in the early 1960s.

*" Though complete in themselves the sketchbooks work playful variations around the themes and images of the film " - Jeff Keen*





Four Musicians, 1949  
Pencil on paper  
Jeff Koen Estate

Agonized Figure in Landscape, c1949  
Mixed media on paper  
Jeff Koen Estate

Street Scene with Nutrex Sign, 1949  
Pencil, ink and watercolour on paper  
Jeff Koen Estate

Reclining Nude, 1949  
Pencil on paper  
Jeff Koen Estate

Sequential (comic strip) Drawing, 1949  
Ink on Paper  
Jeff Koen Estate

Red Hardback Sketchbook, 1950s  
Mixed media on paper  
Jeff Koen Estate



Two Heads, 1950s  
Mixed media on paper  
Jeff Koen Estate

Two Men, 1950s  
Mixed media on paper  
Jeff Koen Estate

Three Figures, 1950s  
Mixed media on paper  
Jeff Koen Estate

The Second Ballroom scene, 1950s  
Mixed media on paper  
Jeff Koen Estate



Works from the 1940s, early 1950s and 1960s.

Right: **ZIPP ZAPP**, Koen's first hand printed poetry book from the early 1960s





## RELATED EXHIBITION EVENTS:

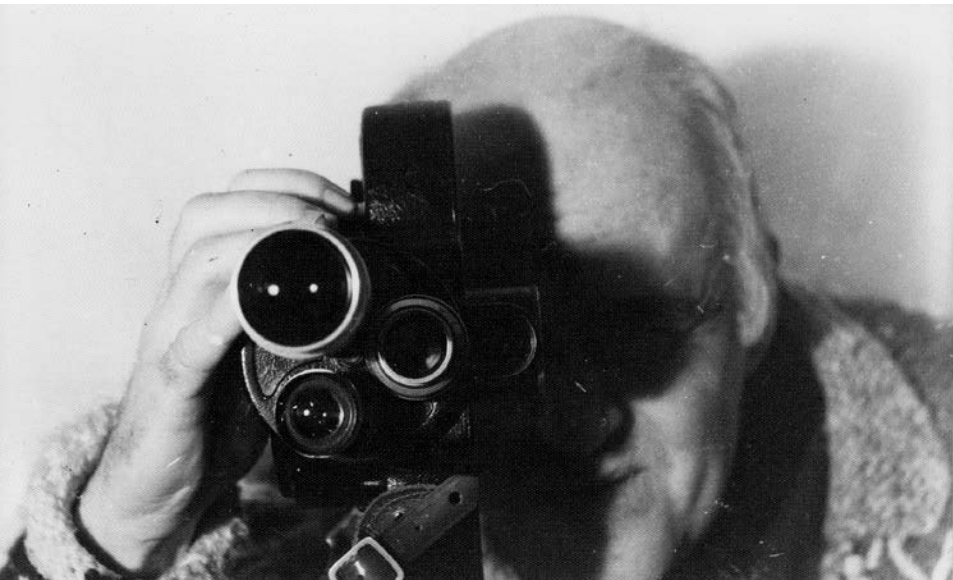
### **Shoot the Wrx - Talking Jeff Keen.**

*£5, book in advance 1.30pm - 2.30pm*

Stella Keen, actor and assistant in many of Jeff Keen's films, introduces her father's life and work in a special talk and slideshow presentation.

*An hour's break then at 3.30pm - 5pm*

A unique opportunity to hear film historians A. L. Rees and Duncan Reekie talk about Jeff Keen's films and their relation to the European avant-garde and underground cinema.



## TOURS:

### **Shoot the Wrx. Film-maker and Artist Jeff Keen**

*12pm - 12.45pm. Free*

Join the curator in a tour of the Jeff Keen exhibition. The talk will introduce Keen's work from the 1940s to the present and highlight Keen's imaginative use of Brighton & Hove as inspiration for his work.

## FAMILIES:

### **16mm film Animation Workshop**

*1pm - 4pm. £8, book in advance. 12 years+*

Hear Jeff Keen's daughter Stella talk about her father's work and its relation to early experimental cinema. You will have the opportunity to collaborate on an animation project by scratching and painting directly on to 16mm film.

### **Digital Animation Workshop**

*1pm - 3pm. £5, book in advance. 7 years+*

Work with Jeff Keen's daughter Stella on digital animations inspired by her father's works. Following Stella's introduction to Keen's imaginary world, you will have the opportunity to produce an exciting film featuring paper cut-outs, comic books, toy monsters and robots.



Jeff Keen's artwork has been exhibited in London, Paris and New York and his films are distributed worldwide. We are looking to further the expansion of knowledge about his work. For further information see:

[www.jeffkeen.co.uk](http://www.jeffkeen.co.uk)

<http://www.halesgallery.com/artists/72-jeff-keen/overview/>

<http://www.katemacgarry.com/artists/jeff-keen4/>

Contact: [stella@stellastarr.co.uk](mailto:stella@stellastarr.co.uk)

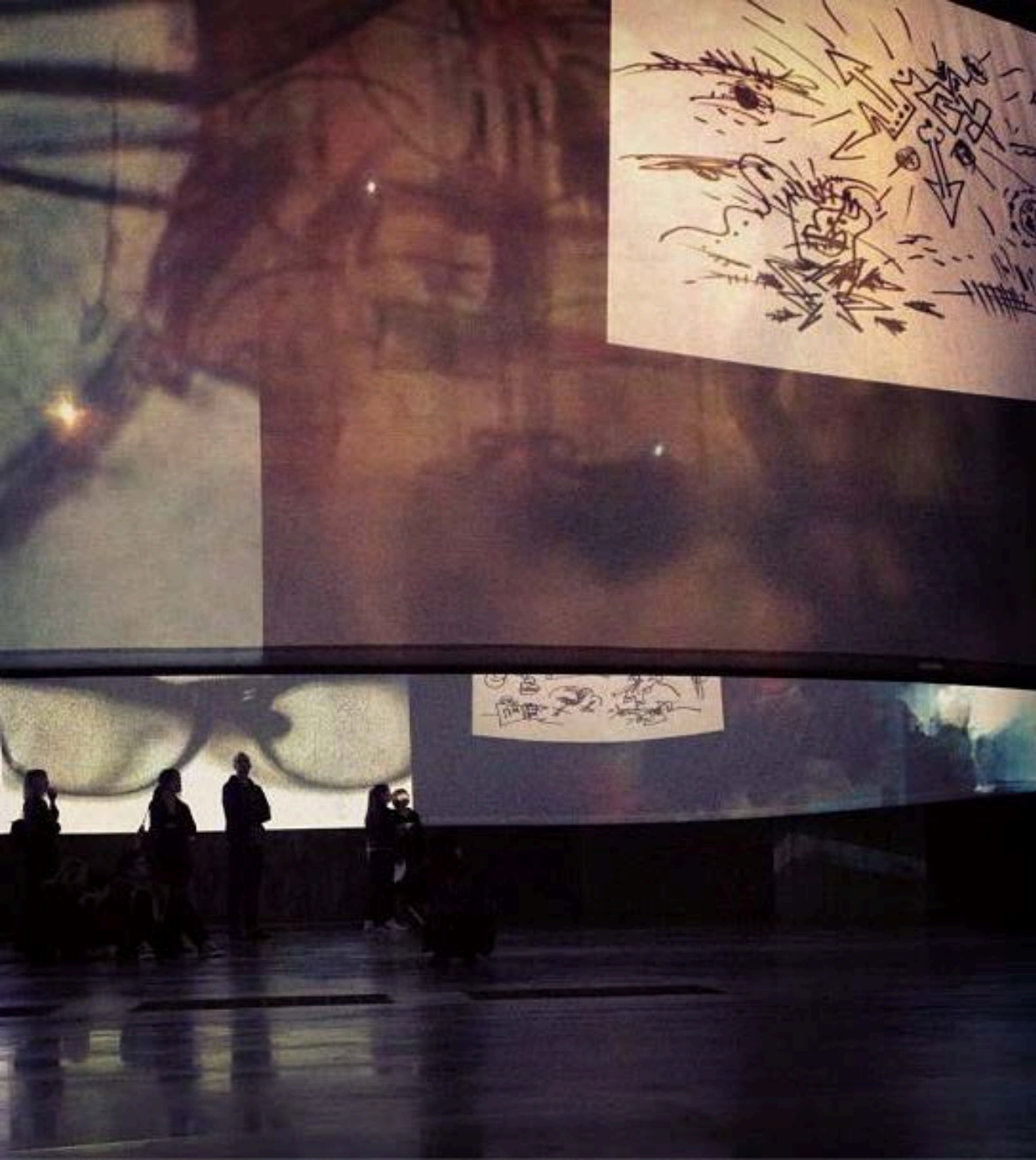




Jeff Keen: GAZAPOCALYPSE -  
The Return of the Golden Age

Cinematic and sound installation at  
The Tanks at Tate Modern:

originally exhibited from 18 - 23  
September 2012, with a live  
expanded cinema performance  
on Friday 21 September 2012.



"Concerned from the outset with extending film beyond its traditional narrative limits, it seemed a logical step for me to get beyond the frame...

Expanded cinema became a social art directed at, involving, the audience, through visual and sound projections, often combined in violently disconnected and overlapping patterns."

Jeff Keen on expanded cinema:

*Perspectives on British Avantgarde*, Hayward Gallery catalogue, 1977



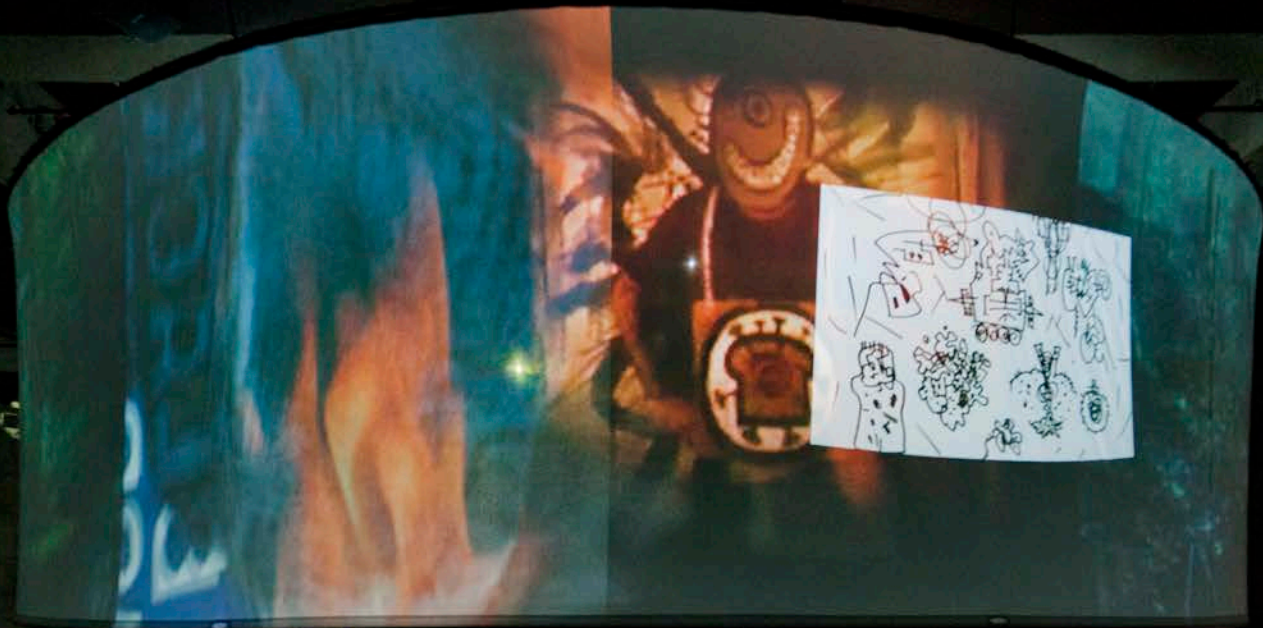
Jeff Keen (1923-2012) was a pioneer of experimental film whose rapid-fire animations, multiple screen projections and raucous performances redefined multimedia art in Britain.

This major installation for The Tanks at Tate Modern was conceived by Keen and his daughter Stella (now director of The Jeff Keen Archive) in response to the unique nature of the Tanks.

Featuring a large, dioramic screen, the installation demonstrates the spirit of Keen's expanded cinema events, his early experiments in drawing, painting and animation, his fascination with surrealism and popular culture, and his radical development of multiple screen projection, cut-up soundtracks and unruly live action.

Keen was a veteran of the Second World War, and his work powerfully evokes 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.





Keen's films and performances emerged from the 1960s counterculture and echo the climate of literary happenings and 'bomb culture' at Bob Cobbing's Better Books in Charing Cross as well as Gustav Metzger's 1966 Destruction in Art Symposium.

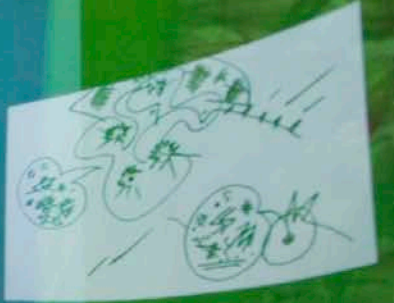
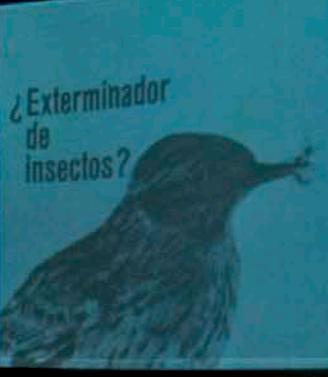
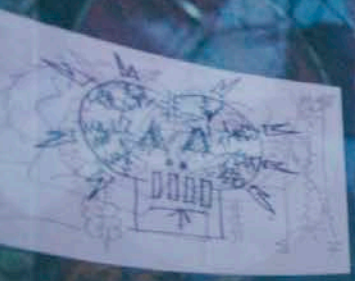
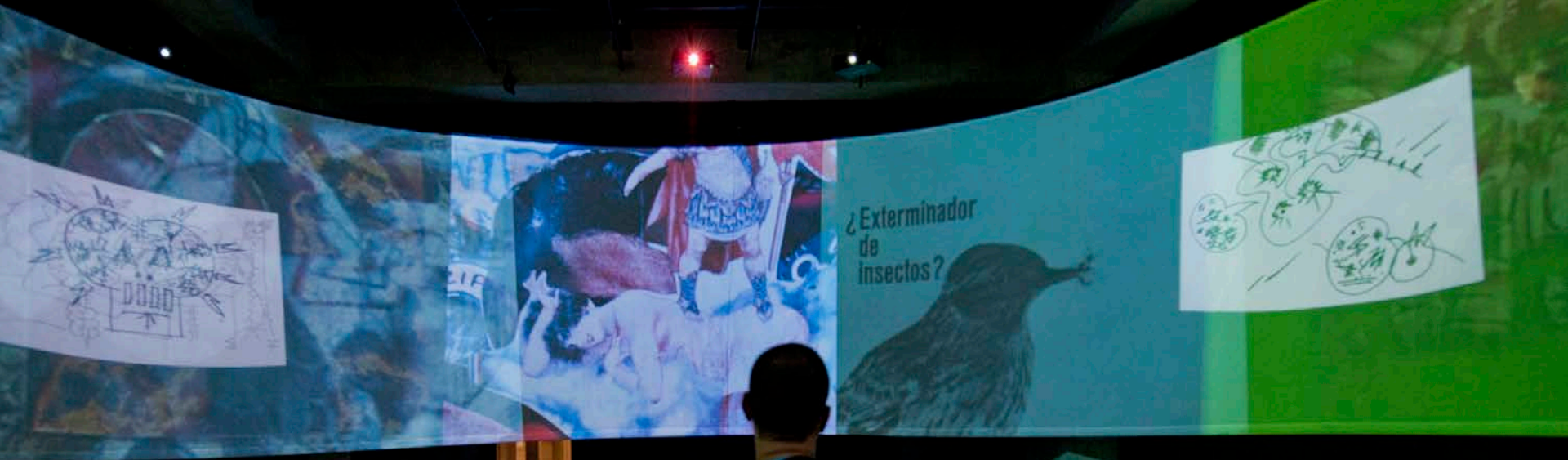
Recalling American underground films by Jack Smith, Ken Jacobs and Kenneth Anger, his work also resonates with Happenings, Fluxus and Viennese Actionism. Nothing stands still in his work, it is a constant process in which images and sounds evolve in quick succession through what Keen called 'violently disconnected and overlapping patterns of destruction, creation and accumulation'.

A special live performance in the Tanks featured projections and live performance by Keen's daughter Stella Starr and a range of Keen's collaborators – Alan Baker, Rob Gawthrop, Mike Movie, Chris Blackburn and Jason Williams as 'Silverhead'.

It recreated the feel of Keen's original expanded cinema performance work with experimental music, painting and spoken word.









Jeff Keen passed away on 21 June 2012.

The presentation of his work in the Tanks was dedicated to his visionary creative spirit.

For further details see: <http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tatmodern-tanks/exhibition/jeff-keen>  
and [www.jeffkeen.co.uk](http://www.jeffkeen.co.uk)