

VENUS MANHATTAN

H.C. Westermann: Works on Paper

February 20 – April 6, 2019

Opening: Wednesday, February 20th, 6:00 - 8:00 pm

Venus Over Manhattan

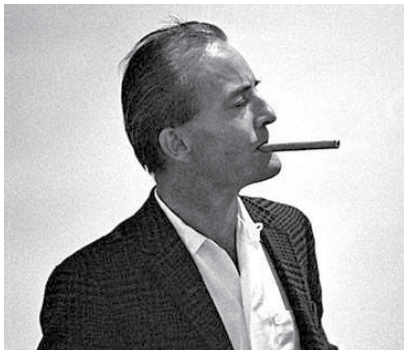
980 Madison Avenue

New York, NY 10075

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:



(New York, NY) – **Venus Over Manhattan** is pleased to present **H.C. Westermann: Works on Paper**, an exhibition dedicated to the artist’s signature drawings and illustrated letters. Staged to coincide with “Going Home,” a major retrospective of Westermann’s work currently on view at the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, the presentation features over twenty-five works on paper, as well as a portion of the artist’s workshop and studio from his home in Brookfield Center, Connecticut. The presentation marks the gallery’s second project devoted to Westermann’s work, following 2015’s “See America First: Works from 1953-1980,” staged a year prior to Germano Celant’s critically lauded exhibition, “H.C. Westermann,” at the Fondazione Prada. The exhibition will be on view from February 20th through April 6th, 2019.



Portrait of H.C. Westermann

Though H.C. Westermann is known primarily as a sculptor of witty and carefully crafted objects, his vivid drawings and illustrated letters constitute a body of work commensurate with the achievement of his most accomplished sculptures. He began sending letters while serving on the U.S.S. Enterprise during World War II – some ten years before making his first sculpture – which typically paired personal messages with punchy drawings. This signature blend of text and image developed into Westermann’s mature drawing style, typified by a particular brand of slapstick humor, saturated color, pressurized narrative, and contoured lines. Drawing remained a central aspect of Westermann’s practice for the rest of his life, through subsequent tours of duty, cross-country road trips, time spent in Chicago and San Francisco, and ultimately the years he spent with his wife, Joanna Beall Westermann, in Brookfield Center, Connecticut. Indeed, she recalls him spending “a couple of hours every morning writing and drawing.”



H.C. Westermann, *In the Petrified Forest*, 1966

Westermann’s works on paper offer a comprehensive picture of his idiosyncratic worldview. Populated with a cast of repeating characters and persistent forms – forlorn soldiers, stylized self-portraits, feral animals, and his trademark Death Ships – Westermann’s drawings served numerous purposes throughout his life. He sent them to friends and fellow artists to update them on his travels; he made studies for images that later became lithographs; and he drew images of his

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H.C. Westermann in his studio, Connecticut, c. 1975



H.C. Westermann, *Green Planet*, 1967



H.C. Westermann, *A Dried Up Desert Oasis*, 1964

sculptures to inform galleries of his production. Notable works on view include a suite of drawings featured in "Eye Infection," the celebrated exhibition curated by Robert Storr at the Stedelijk Museum in 2001; *Green Planet* (1967), a preparatory drawing for a lithograph of the same name, held in the collection of The Metropolitan Museum of Art; and *Terrifying Sea Picture* (1966), which features a death ship and an oversized shark fin, two of Westermann's most iconic images. He made many of these drawings in Connecticut, where, starting in 1969, he spent twelve years building a house and two studios for himself and his wife. Bringing to the construction of his house a level of detail found in his sculpture, Westermann's home and studio have been called his "greatest work of art." Complimenting the works on view, a portion of Westermann's own studio will be installed in the gallery.

ABOUT H.C. WESTERMANN

Horace Clifford Westermann was born in 1922 in Los Angeles, California. He attended Los Angeles City College for two years before enlisting in the U.S. Marine Corps in 1942, serving aboard the U.S.S. Enterprise during World War II in the Pacific. Following the war, Westermann enrolled at the Art Institute of Chicago, before reenlisting for a tour of duty in the Korean War. Upon his return, Westermann reenrolled at the Art Institute, and staged his debut solo exhibition at the Allan Frumkin Gallery in 1958. In 1959, he married the painter Joanna Beall, with whom he moved to Brookfield Center, Connecticut, in 1964. Westermann's work has been the subject of numerous solo presentations, including recent exhibitions at the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid; Fondazione Prada, Milan; and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago. His work is held by many public institutions, including The Museum of Modern Art, New York; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; and the Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago. Westermann lived and worked in Brookfield Center until his death in 1981.

For further information about the exhibition and availability, please contact the gallery at info@venusovermanhattan.com

For all press inquiries related to the exhibition, please email press@venusovermanhattan.com