

LAWRENCE ALLOWAY

Pedagogy, Practice, and the Recognition  
of Audience, 1948-1959

In the annals of art history, and within canonical accounts of the Independent Group (IG), Lawrence Alloway's importance as a writer and art critic is generally attributed to two achievements: his role in identifying the emergence of pop art and his conceptualization of and advocacy for cultural pluralism under the banner of a "popular-art-fine-art continuum." While the phrase "cultural continuum" first appeared in print in 1955 in an article by Alloway's close friend and collaborator the artist John McHale, Alloway himself had introduced it the year before during a lecture called "The Human Image" in one of the IG's sessions titled "Aesthetic Problems of Contemporary Art." <sup>1</sup> Using Francis Bacon's synthesis of imagery from both fine art and pop art (by which Alloway meant popular culture) sources as evidence that a "fine art-popular art continuum now exists," Alloway continued to develop and refine his thinking about the nature and condition of this continuum in three subsequent texts: "The Arts and the Mass Media" (1958), "The Long Front of Culture" (1959), and "Notes on Abstract Art and the Mass Media" (1960).

In 1957, in a professionally early and strikingly confident account of his own aesthetic interests and motivations, Alloway highlighted two particular factors that led to the overlapping of his "consumption of popular art (industrialized, mass produced)" with his "consumption of fine art (unique, luxurious):" <sup>3</sup> First, for people of his generation who grew up interested in the visual arts, popular forms of mass media (newspapers, magazines, cinema, television) were part of everyday living rather than something exceptional. The appreciation of art subsequently took place in a considerably expanded visual culture that rendered the formalist tradition of art appreciation somewhat dislocated from contemporary culture, given its emphasis on the exclusive value of the work on its own terms. Such a tradition of art criticism, exemplified by Roger Fry and Herbert Read, seemed to remove the artwork from the everyday. As Alloway saw it for his own generation: "We were born too late to be adopted into the system of taste that gave aesthetic certainty to our parents and teachers. Roger Fry and Herbert Read were not my culture heroes. Significant form, design, vision, order, composition etc. were seen as high level abstractions. The effect of all these redundant terms was to make the work of art disappear in an excess of 'aesthetic distance.'" <sup>4</sup> In 1961, the year Alloway left England for America, he continued to critique British art critics who failed to recognize the impact that mass media had had upon the appreciation of the visual arts and the extent to which the public no longer felt intimidated by the traditional distinctions in value between "high" and "low" art; as Alloway put it, "the spectator can go to the National Gallery by day and the London pavilion by night, without getting smeared up and down the pyramid." Alloway concluded that "spectator mobility ... is not recognized by art criticism and art theory, which is still written about one spot on the continuum, and one spot only." <sup>5</sup>

While Alloway's self-reflexive analysis of his critical position came out of changing patterns of cultural consumption in the 1950s, wider historical appraisal has also connected his critical position to his interests in information theory, communication theory, and cybernetics. <sup>6</sup> Alloway's embrace of these theories in the mid-1950s, particularly as

reflected in the IG sessions he convened at the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA) with John McHale in 1955, provided him with a strong theoretical framework from which to develop a new critical paradigm that demonstrated the value of both traditional forms of art produced through the unique and original labor of the individual artist (for example, painting, sculpture, drawing) and contemporary art produced from ready-made popular culture that was already imbued with cultural meaning and value. As Alloway observed, "What is needed is an approach that does not depend for its existence on the exclusion of most of the symbols that people live by. All kinds of messages are transmitted to every kind of audience along a multitude of channels. Art is one part of the field; another is advertising."<sup>7</sup>

But while Alloway's interest in new theories of visual communication and information exchange undoubtedly enabled him to refine his critical formulations of cultural experience and value, research into Alloway's archive suggests that the foundations for Alloway's popular-art-fine-art continuum were in fact forged earlier through his pedagogical practice in the early 1950s and his "research and writing for a major, self-initiated monograph on William Hogarth—a rites-of-passage project that, in the end, failed to find a publisher. Alloway's letters to the artist Sylvia Skigh, whom he married in 1954, along with other historical data, reveal that the confluence of Alloway's teaching practice with his writing on Hogarth sparked an interest in the changing relationship between art and culture. The changes brought about by mass communication and the democratization of spectatorship encouraged him to challenge contemporary epistemologies of taste and aesthetics—terrain that had traditionally belonged to the British social elite and had been extended through patterns of patronage and the tradition of British "public" school education, which was historically defined by its high tuition and restricted admission policies based on family ties and social status.

### Pedagogy and Practice

Alloway had a checkered history in terms of formal education. Although the stratification of British society based on education and privilege decreased after World War II, it continued to have a significant influence on social and cultural interaction, not least in terms of professional employment and intellectual credibility. In 1937, at the age of eleven, Alloway contracted tuberculosis; finding himself bedridden, he took advantage of the fact that his father owned a bookshop and became an avid reader, later enrolling at the Wimbledon School of Art in 1940. Though the war curtailed his formal studies, Alloway pursued his passion for scholarship, subsequently attending evening courses at the University of London in 1943, with the ambition of becoming a poet and author. Succumbing to illness again, and falling behind with the necessary course work, Alloway transferred to a course in art history taught by Charles Johnson, who would go on to write *The Language of Painting* in 1949. Johnson's lectures, which took place at the National Gallery in London, provided unique training in art history in terms of their art historical scope (French and English contemporary painting; Flemish, Dutch, and Spanish seventeenth-century art; and the art of Renaissance Italy) and because they were delivered in the absence of the works of art themselves; the collection was safely stored outside of London, away from potential bomb damage. This presentation of knowledge through verbal description and photographic reproduction

introduced Alloway to the idea of reading paintings primarily as images rather than as material objects.

Most importantly for Alloway, Johnson regularly recommended his student as a lecturer. Johnson's help was much appreciated by Alloway, whose daily letters to Sleigh at the end of the 1940s invariably carry some reference to the endless challenge of trying to secure work, stave off hunger, keep warm, and secure financial credit. The collective pathos of these communications is perhaps most poignantly captured in his request to Sleigh in November 1949 for two clothing coupons to buy socks for the cold winter days and nights.<sup>8</sup> The strain of filling out applications and going to interviews, along with the disappointment of missing out on teaching jobs due to his lack of university education, is also palpable in these letters. Despite these setbacks, it is clear that Alloway developed a high level of interest in the lecturing opportunities he did secure. As his letters note, the work included lecturing at the National Portrait Gallery in 1948, at the National Gallery from 1948 to 1954, and at Tate Gallery from 1951 to 1954. To fulfill these varied positions, Alloway had to acquire significant bodies of art historical knowledge, ranging from the work of Hieronymus Bosch, Diego Velazquez, Francisco de Zurbaran, and Dutch genre painters to contemporary artists such as Francis Bacon, Reg Butler, Victor Pasmore, and William Turnbull. He also had to master the knowledge sufficiently to communicate it effectively in person. He wrote to Sleigh in August 1952, "Darling I must do some more work on [Marcel] Duchamp. He is terribly difficult to explain impartially to a popular audience:"<sup>9</sup>

Methodical in approach, Alloway assiduously researched everything he could find on his subjects, regularly visiting the national library collection and archives of the National Gallery, the Tate Gallery, and the Victoria and Albert Museum, and in one instance, in November 1949, exclaiming to Sleigh, "I am preparing vast preparatory notes for [Jacques-Louis] David-I shall soon be an expert . . . on him:"<sup>1</sup> By 1951, as Alloway continued to amass an extensive bibliography, he also began to reveal his own sense of critical judgment, writing to Sleigh, "You know what [Paul] Valery says, 'It is by no means the mischievous who do most harm in this world; it is the awkward, the negligent and the credulous: Valery's aphorism makes one terribly impatient with most of the books one has to read in the course of duty getting lectures ready and so on:'<sup>1</sup> Knowledge acquisition was a necessary skill, but as the comment to Sleigh about lecturing on Duchamp highlights, Alloway was also aware of the need to communicate with his audiences directly. While much of the lecturing he undertook was for educated public audiences who regularly attended the wide array of gallery lectures on offer in London, he also encountered through his work for social and educational initiatives-including the Arts Council of Great Britain, the Society for Education in Art, and the Working Men's Institute-nonspecialist audiences, of varying social classes, who had different levels of interest in the visual arts. In 1951, Alloway lectured throughout London and beyond, often traveling by train to Birmingham, Newcastle, Redcar, and Middlesbrough (fig. 1).

Alloway kept two newspaper reviews that provide an important insight into his teaching methods. The reviews, titled "Public Duty to Understand" and "Few Have Seen Painting;"<sup>1</sup> focus on a lecture he gave at the Institute of Adult Education in Harpenden, a small town in Hertfordshire, in 1949. The pieces indicate that Alloway's audience was very small (and predominantly female), although this did not affect the seriousness of his

pedagogical intent, which was obvious to those present.<sup>11</sup> As the reviews noted, Alloway put forward a series of arguments and dictums that overrode traditional norms of art appreciation based on the principles of connoisseurship and received taste. He instead transferred the responsibility of art appreciation to the grounded experience and visual analysis of the individual spectator: "It is only if you work mentally at a picture that you begin to understand it. It means hard work on your part but if you do this work I recommend, you get a greater understanding of painting:" Crucially, by encouraging his nonspecialist audience to have confidence in developing their own modes of aesthetic judgment through active looking, Alloway was adamant that the distinction between "classical" and "modern" painting would break down.

In short, Alloway was arguing that a continuum of aesthetic value could be formed through the active spectatorship of the viewer if he or she adopted an empirical and interpretive approach to the work of art. This approach would allow meaning to be generated through a network of associative imagery, rather than through recourse to established norms of aesthetic judgment based on existing canonical forms of knowledge, such as art history. In this formulation, the production of aesthetic and cultural value was reassigned to the individual spectator—who was considered a legitimate actor in the creation of meaning—rather than produced and mediated through the epistemological concerns of specialists. The latter conception, for Alloway, produced only the "aesthetic distance" of Fry's and Read's models of art education and criticism. But as Alloway emphasized, according to his newer model, "one had to be broad-minded" and "to have high standards;" standards that were based on both visual curiosity and historical awareness and that would support the reading of objects across historical and contemporary culture, rather than within a fixed historical time frame. For Alloway, this disruption of the formalist and modernist model of art appreciation (as defined by Fry and Read, respectively) was underpinned by his reading of Erwin Panofsky, whose writings on iconology were circulating through journal articles in the late 1940s and early 1950s. By 1951, in his article "Meaning in the Visual Arts;" published in the *Magazine of Art*, Panofsky had laid the groundwork for a reading of the art object as a form of expanded cultural production, inherently defined by the condition of social reception rather than aesthetic intentionality. This new interpretive framework dismantled the fundamental tenets of a paradigm of art based on connoisseurship and taste, which inevitably led to the destabilization of the category of art itself. As Panofsky wrote:

The modern assumption that a work of art is produced in order to express the experiences of its maker and thereby give pleasure to the beholder is not true of the majority of such works ... Yet a chair, an automobile or even a typewriter may be designed and constructed with the intent of pleasing ... the eye, in addition to serving its practical purpose and, in so far as this intent is present, such objects may be classified as works of art. ... Most works of art, then, confront us with a multitude of intentions other than that of pleasing the beholder. All these intentions are conveyed to us simultaneously and are simultaneously reactivated or re-created by ourselves.<sup>12</sup>

Hogarth

In addition to shaping his pedagogical method, Alloway's embrace of Panofsky's ideas also informed his use of a descriptive, ethnographic approach to writing on art. This allowed him not only to interpret art from his own self-educated perspective but also to maintain an intellectual vivacity. As he wrote to Sleight in 1949, during the throes of writing what he hoped would be his major tome on William Hogarth (fig. 2), "Writing is really for me a process of discovery like a poem. I make up my mind as I write and the things that have occurred to me about Hogarth are thus not too stale!"<sup>13</sup> The adoption of this open-ended, accumulative type of descriptive writing, rather than predetermined analysis, allowed Alloway to draw from his store of ideas, making associations between historical and contemporary reference points. Along with his pedagogical practice, Alloway's unpublished manuscript on Hogarth, written between 1949 and 1951, is key to understanding his intellectual formation at this time, as well as his dogged interrogation and rejection of the aesthetic as the domain of an elite cultural class. Initially prompted by a commission in 1949 from the art book publisher Phaidon for a book on Hogarth's drawings, Alloway's interest in Hogarth gained momentum as he learned more about the eighteenth-century artist's commitment to new industrial modes of print production and circulation-modes that had significant parallels with the state of mass media during the late 1940s and early 1950s. But he was also motivated by a desire to revive Hogarth's reputation as an erudite and sophisticated artist and theorist. Hogarth had been historically undermined by the artist Joshua Reynolds, whose writings dismissed Hogarth's claims to the position of a serious history painter on account of his choice of contemporary subject matter over mythological and biblical tales. Equally, Reynolds's belief in the elevated and educational value of art, as he outlined in his *Discourses on Art* (1770), relegated, by implication, Hogarth's topical paintings of everyday life to the status of genre painting, further discounted because of its popular appeal. Alloway's aim to retrieve Hogarth from this historical position is clear in his forceful opening remarks:

Bearing in mind the image of Hogarth as a half-educated cockney which has received currency we may remark that he was nevertheless familiar with Le Brun's theory of the passions, the principles of Venetian colouring, mannerist art theories, French baroque portraiture, and Diirer's anatomy. ... Those who think of Hogarth solely as the exponent of the topical and the satirical need to be reminded that he could write appreciatively of the Apollo Belvedere, the Farnese Hercules.<sup>14</sup>

Appointing himself as an archdefender of Hogarth, whom he described as "the champion and exponent of modern art, of popular art:"<sup>15</sup> Alloway built a series of arguments that sought not only to validate Hogarth's historical importance but also to demonstrate the value and relevance of his work in the contemporary moment. First, Alloway recontextualized Hogarth's treatise *The Analysis of Beauty* (1753) within a history of aesthetics that included the writings of Charles Alphonse Du Fresnoy, Gian Paolo Lomazzo, and Roger de Piles to demonstrate how familiar Hogarth was with the literature. Second, he relocated *The Analysis of Beauty* within the formation of aesthetic discourse in England from Joseph Addison's *Eleven Essays on Imagination* to John Locke, the Earl of Shaftesbury, and, most notably, Jonathan Richardson, whose "Essay on the Whole Art of Criticism as It Relates to Painting and an Argument in Behalf of the Science of the Connoisseur" (1719) established the principles of taste and connoisseurship in England. This latter repositioning

was a further riposte to the kind of historical marginalization that Hogarth's reputation as a painter and writer had suffered through Reynolds's dismissive writings.

Hogarth's challenge to history painting was, of course, manifested through his introduction of contemporary, nonreligious, and nonmythological subject matter, or as Alloway termed it, his topicality, which, Alloway argued, was "better satisfied in the streets, taverns, prisons, of London:' where . "the emotions of the characters are personal and private rather than heroic:'<sup>16</sup> Alloway supported Hogarth's rejection of the most dominant types of cultural activity, such as opera and pantomime, at the extremes of the spectrum. Instead, Hogarth retained his determination to establish a new category of painting, the "conversation piece:' and chose to create serial engravings of his modern subjects, which Alloway identified as prefiguring the means and methods of contemporary popular mass media, which also bypassed historical patterns of elitist patronage of the arts. Throughout the Hogarth manuscript, Alloway consistently drew attention to the artist's commitment to the audience, not an imaginary ideal audience but a collection of actively engaged spectators comparable to a theater audience. Hogarth made no assumptions about this group in terms of their ability to make aesthetic judgments, for as Alloway noted of Hogarth's approach, "Taste is extended to the general public, away from the virtuosi: a blacksmith is allowed to be a discriminating judge of two naked boxers and Hogarth observes gallantly, 'the ladies always speak skillfully of necks, hands and arms.'"<sup>17</sup>

As a project of historical retrieval, Hogarth also represented a kind of alter ego for Alloway, sharing a position of social and cultural marginalization- due, in Alloway's case, to his repeated failure to secure teaching jobs and his frustrated attempts to find permanent work as a reviewer. Like Hogarth, Alloway located himself outside the epistemological traditions of taste and connoisseurship, as well as the fine art conventions of aesthetic production. And like Hogarth, and, indeed, through Hogarth's example, Alloway was beginning to build his own aesthetic theory, one that extended beyond specialized knowledge and established modes of practice.

#### Theory and Practice: The Institute of Contemporary Arts and the Independent Group

After starting the Hogarth manuscript in 1949, Alloway began to expand his network of professional contacts and friends through visits to the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA), which moved to new premises on Dover Street in central London in 1950. The following year, some of the younger members of the ICA approached the institute's management with proposals to arrange informal discussion groups, from which the now well-documented Independent Group (IG) emerged.<sup>18</sup> Alloway's initial impressions of the ICA and its young members were mixed, as his letters to Sleigh detail. In 1951, he wrote that despite the IG's colorful cast of characters, he found the ICA dreary and often felt apathetic about his visits there. Indeed, he recalled Eduardo Paolozzi's epidiascope lecture, a seminal moment in the history of the IG, as "a flop. Eduardo Paolozzi showed a collection of material-marine biology, early aeroplanes, and w!)at have you-but the discussion never got started. Reyner Banham spent most of the evening sniggling at Paolozzi's scrapbook as it was flashed on the screen:'<sup>19</sup>

The potential usefulness of association with the ICA to his career kept him engaged, but paid lecture work elsewhere always took precedence over existing offers of unpaid talks at the ICA. On one occasion, this situation offered a welcome alibi, as he wrote to Sleight in 1951, following his withdrawal from a talk on Herbert Read: "So I shall not be there after all. At least I won't have to read *Education through Art*, which I was dreading:"<sup>20</sup> This rejection of Read and Read's support of British neo-romanticism and universal art values did, however, find an outlet in July 1953 when Alloway gave a lecture titled "British Painting in the 1950s:" As he reported to Sleight, "Despite a charge of Puritanism and over-intellectualism (who me?), I was complimented ...by [Richard] Hamilton [Roland] Penrose was nice too, though I think a little bit taken aback by some of my views. I really knocked [John] Craxton, [Keith] Vaughan, [Josef] Herman, [Martin] Froy and [William] Scott. My candour caused some comment, I think:"<sup>21</sup> Alloway's personal and professional confidence was also undoubtedly enhanced in August 1953 when he secured his first major contract, a position with *Art News* writing pieces for \$75 a month. Alloway had met with the publisher of the journal, who, according to Alloway, praised his writing style, which he found "much superior (to his American taste) to most British criticism. He likes my informal style ... it looks like my admiration for American critical pure style is beginning to show:"<sup>22</sup> Like Hogarth, Alloway was learning how to be both inside and outside the establishment, and the endorsement from an American journal, rather than an English one, clearly helped to consolidate his sense of belonging and not-belonging.

In June of that year, Alloway was invited to join the ICA's advisory committee, which included the architecture critic and design historian Reyner Banham and the art critic Robert Melville as members and which led the planning of the group's lecture program. As Alloway wrote, he "had a very pleasant time with [the cofounder of the ICA] E.L.T. Mesens and Robert Melville saying my values were 'anti-values' and Robert saying 'I have an erratic interest in inferior objects:"<sup>23</sup> In September 1953, following the resignation of the art historian Toni del Renzio, Roland Penrose asked Alloway to serve on the exhibitions subcommittee alongside the art critics Melville and Peter Wilson. On the suggestion of another critic-member David Sylvester, he was also invited to give a talk on Paul Klee's *Pedagogical Sketchbook* in October 1953.<sup>24</sup> In January 1954, with his profile and credibility well established, his first major ICA exhibition proposal, *Collages and Objects*, was confirmed for December of that year, and his friend John McHale was appointed to design the show.

Also in January 1954, in a letter to Sleight, Alloway alluded to his first public use of the continuum concept: "My seminar went fairly well: half fine, half popular art. John [McHale] worked the epi[diascope] very well. It wasn't the success my sci-fi lecture was but it was ok by seminar standards:"<sup>25</sup> The momentum of Alloway's interest in the relationship between fine art and popular culture manifested itself most significantly in 1955, however, when he co-convened the second series of IG sessions with McHale, this time focusing on the theme of mass media and communication. In addition to discussing Hamilton's paintings and Banham's analysis of car styling and iconography, Alloway and McHale organized two other sessions. The second, on advertising and led by Alloway, was listed as "sociology in the popular arts ...intensive, multi-layered analysis of one advertisement as exemplar of descriptive method with performance as referent:"<sup>26</sup> Behind this series of talks lay Alloway's interest in the expanding field of information and communication theory, which focused on

demonstrating how meaning was not fixed within either the object or the subject of communication but in the process and mode of communication itself. Alloway's research in the field led him to invite speakers from the Communications Research Centre, University College London (UCL).<sup>27</sup>

The UCL's Research Centre published a book of multidisciplinary papers in early 1955, bringing together biology, medicine, economics, linguistics, sociology, classics, and the visual arts. Titled *Studies in Communication* and edited by the philosopher A. J. Ayer (who also took part in sessions at the ICA), the book included an essay by Rudolf Wittkower, "Interpretation of Visual Symbols in the Arts;" in which painting was understood, in the tradition of Panofsky, as a "field of communication." This rendering of the work of art as "a field of enquiry;" with the critic as an anthropologist whose job it was to identify patterns of communication for tracing and decoding art, significantly reoriented the historical and modernist paradigm of the art object as a self-referential entity, shifting the epistemological base of both art history and art criticism to a hybrid form of cultural analysis. For Alloway, information and communication theory provided all the theoretical armature he needed to support his concept of a popular-art-fine-art continuum. The theory crystallized both his thinking and his writing as a curator and a critic—a fact that came to the fore the following year, 1956, with the exhibition *This Is Tomorrow*.

Fields of Communication: *This Is Tomorrow* (1956) and an Exhibit (1957)

Alloway had two roles to play in the exhibition *This Is Tomorrow*, which took place at the Whitechapel Art Gallery in London in 1956. First, he was invited by the exhibition's organizer, Theo Crosby, to write an introductory essay for the catalog; second, he participated in the exhibition itself as part of Group 12, which also included del Renzio and the architect Geoffrey Holroyd.<sup>28</sup> As indicated by Alloway's essay and his contribution to Group 12, it is clear that he maximized both opportunities to publicly advocate key principles of the aesthetic theory that he had first begun to formulate in his writing and teaching practice in the late 1940s and early 1950s—namely, the role and responsibility of the spectator and the legitimacy of popular art. As Alloway wrote in the catalog introduction, the spectator had a "responsibility" and an essential role to play in determining the meaning of the exhibition.<sup>29</sup>

Building on the ICA sessions on communication theory, Group 12's contribution must have seemed both esoteric and challenging to visitors; it was presented through an aesthetic informed by the social sciences and included diagrams, symbols, and coded forms of visual communication. The collaborative nature of the installation was clear, but in terms of conceptualization and content, it benefited especially from the input of Holroyd, who had travelled in the United States in 1953. While there, he had enjoyed direct contact with the architects and designers Charles and Ray Eames, and he had been present at a screening of their film *A Communication Primer* (1953).<sup>30</sup>

Returning to London in the summer of 1954, Holroyd shared the new theories of communication that were circulating in the States with his London colleagues in architecture and design circles, which subsequently led to both a screening of the Eameses' film at the ICA in April 1956 and an article written by Alloway on the creative couple, which



was published just before *This Is Tomorrow* opened. In the article, Alloway cited Johan Huizinga's seminal text *Homo ludens* (1938; published in English, 1949) and emphasized the value of play as a strategy to engage the spectator and to open up non-instrumentalized forms of communication.<sup>31</sup> Extending the logic of collage, and adapting the contemporary trend of the "blackboard" or bulletin board, Group 12's installation referred to the dynamic and fluid nature of image interpretation and meaning making that contemporary modes of communication produced, and the group actively sought to embrace the popular, the topical, and the everyday through the changing display of clippings from daily newspapers.<sup>32</sup> The accompanying exhibition catalog reproduced flowcharts from the mass communications specialist Wilbur Schramm's book *The Process and Effects of Mass Communication* (1954), annotated by explanatory captions, such as "All communication depends on the transmission of signs In an efficient communication system the field of accumulated experience must be similar to encoder and decoder ...because without learned responses there is no communication."<sup>33</sup> These excerpts highlighted new models of communication analysis (illustrated by the diagrams), which underpinned the difference between pre- and post-mass communication.

As Reyner Banham noted in his review of *This Is Tomorrow*, collectively, the exhibition seemed intent on "category-smashing;" while certain installations, such as that of Group 12, presented themselves particularly as "an invitation to smash all boundaries between the arts, to treat them all as modes of communicating experience" (fig. 3).<sup>34</sup> But as Banham also noted, Group 12's approach resonated closely with the conceptual ethos of Group 2's contribution, which was created by the artists Hamilton and McHale and the architect John Voelcker, and which also presented different modes of human perception and visual communication. It is perhaps not surprising that Banham drew this connection between Group 2 and Group 12, since he was close to both Alloway and Hamilton through the first half of the 1950s and shared their mutual interest in the relationship between the arts and mass media. Indeed, Banham had convened the first IG meetings and, like Alloway, had identified Hamilton during his first solo exhibition at the Hanover Gallery in London in 1955 as an artist vigorously committed to mediating and interpreting the imagery and conditions of popular visual culture.<sup>35</sup> Given their interest in the new conditions of visual communications, it is not surprising that in 1957 Alloway and Hamilton worked together on another exhibition, a collaboration with the abstract artist Victor Pasmore, an Exhibit (fig. 4).

Conceived as a game, an artwork, and an environment, an Exhibit, which opened at Newcastle University's Hatton Gallery before traveling to the ICA, included in its design thin acrylic panels of varying degrees of transparency suspended at varying heights by nylon thread within a rectangular grid. The overall arrangement was also variable, as demonstrated at the exhibition's two venues. Hamilton used the commercially available gray, black, and white acrylic, as well as transparent sheets. Several sheets of Indian red acrylic, a color Pasmore used in his work, were also included. The arrangement was determined by Hamilton and Pasmore only during installation (fig. 5). Hamilton designed the grid and the components, Pasmore produced the colored-paper cutouts that attached to the blank panels, and Alloway wrote instructions for visitors on how to navigate the space. The invitation highlighted each of the collaborators' intentions: for Hamilton, the exhibition was designed as "a game" "pre-planned" to be "played"; for Pasmore, it was an "artwork" "individuated" to be "viewed"; and for Alloway, it was "an environment" "verbalised" to be

"populated:' Incorporating the Eameses' participative design principles, Huizinga's philosophy of play, and a synthesis of communication theory and cybernetic "feedback systems;' an Exhibit can also be read, despite its radical conceptual appearance, as the ultimate distillation and embodiment of Hogarth's genre-bending conversation piece: a compelling assemblage of signs, symbols, and spaces open to multiple interpretations by the actively engaged spectator (fig. 6).<sup>36</sup> As the appointed spokesman for the installation, Alloway undoubtedly enjoyed creating an opening gambit in the exhibition catalog: "The meaning of a Exhibit is now dependent on the decisions of visitors, just as at an earlier stage it was dependent on the artists who were the players. It is a game, a maze, a ceremony completed by the participation of all visitors. Which routes will they take, will they move through an Exhibit is a test and an entertainment; are you maze-bright or maze-dim?"<sup>37</sup> To prevent the installation from seeming like an exercise in purely formal aesthetic experience, the opening event (at the ICA) included a moment of seemingly frivolous popular culture—a calypso, likely written for the occasion by Alloway himself:

If you want to know how to play  
Read the verbalisation of Lawrence Alloway  
With Calypso playing its contemporary part  
In the Institute of Contemporary Arts.<sup>38</sup>

The following year, 1958, Alloway took his first trip to the United States. As his letters convey, he was overwhelmed by what he found as he traveled across the country, hosted in style, chauffeured in luxury, and enjoying the warmth and color of both the climate and the conversations he encountered with artists and critics, including Hans Namuth, Barnett Newman, Harold Rosenberg, Mark Rothko, and William Rubin. The easy access to artists and critics and the informality of the conversations, which seemed to range widely across art as part of a wider popular culture, clearly connected with what he had been seeking in his personal statement for the Royal College of Art journal ARK: "What is needed is an approach that does not depend for its existence on the exclusion of most of the symbols that people live by. ... The new role of the spectator or consumer, free to move in society defined by symbols, is what I want to write about."<sup>39</sup> Arguably for Alloway, the cultural conditions in the United States supported the idea of a popular-art-fine-art continuum more than the cultural conditions in England, and they more closely resonated with his aspirations toward cultural pluralism. In the years that followed the writing of his Hogarth manuscript, Alloway continued to develop his interest in aesthetics and theory-building alongside other interests, including the currency of popular imagery, its distribution and circulation through new industrial forms of reproduction, and the new conditions of spectatorship through which it was encountered and consumed. As he had written in 1950, "Hogarth is a painter who works on the principle applied by Professor Cleanth Brooks to poetry, namely the inclusive both--,-and, not the exclusive either-or. How else shall we allow for the abundance of his art?"<sup>40</sup> In the United States, Alloway seemed to feel he no longer had to choose between either/or but could begin to relax into a more fluid and expansive style of writing and, indeed, curating.

Notes

This essay is dedicated to Nigel Whiteley, without whose generosity of spirit- intellectually, academically, and personally-my knowledge of the Independent Group, and Alloway in particular, would be significantly impoverished. I am also grateful to Courtney J. Martin, Rebecca Peabody, and Lucy Bradnock for inviting me to join the Alloway research project, and to the staff of the Getty Research Institute who ensured that the experience of archival research was both immensely productive and highly enjoyable.

1. John McHale cited Alloway's use of the term cultural continuum in his article "Gropius and the Bauhaus;" *Arts*, 3 March 1955; reprinted in David Robbins, ed. *The Independent Group: Postwar Britain and the Aesthetics of Plenty*, exh. cat. (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1990), 182. See also Lawrence Alloway Papers, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, acc. no. 2003.M-46, box 30, folder 5.

2. See Lawrence Alloway, "The Arts and the Mass Media;" *Architectural Design* 28, no. 2 (February 1958); "The Long Front of Culture;" *Cambridge Opinion* 17 (1959); and "Notes on Abstract Art and the Mass Media;" *Art News and Review* 12 (1960).

3. Lawrence Alloway, "Personal Statement;" *ARK* 19 (Spring 1957).

4. Alloway, "Personal Statement:"

5. Lawrence Alloway, "Artists as Consumers;" *Image* 3 (1961): 15.

6. Alloway, "Personal Statement:"

7. Alloway, "Personal Statement:"

8. Lawrence Alloway to Sylvia Sleight, 2 November 1949, Alloway Papers, box 2, folder 7.

9'. Lawrence Alloway to Sylvia Sleight, 6 August 1952, Alloway Papers, box 5, folder 8.

10. Lawrence Alloway to Sylvia Sleight, 7 September 1951, Alloway Papers, box 4, folder 9.

11. Press clippings, Alloway Papers, box 2, folder 3.

12. Erwin Panofsky, "Meaning in the Visual Arts;" *Magazine of Art*, February 1951, 45-50.

13. Lawrence Alloway to Sylvia Sleight, 7 September 1949, Alloway Papers, box 2, folder 8.

14. Lawrence Alloway, "Hogarth Manuscript;" unpublished manuscript, 1949-51, Alloway Papers, box 14, folder 4.

15. Alloway, "Hogarth Manuscript:"

16. Alloway, "Hogarth Manuscript:" As Nigel Whiteley has observed regarding Alloway's idea of "topicality": it "could refer to up-to-dateness, social commentary, the exploration of current themes and ideas, or cultural understanding;" Nigel Whiteley, *Art and Pluralism*:

Lawrence Alloways Cultural Criticism (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2012), 461.

17. Alloway, "Hogarth Mimuscript:"

18. Anne Massey, *The Independent Group: Modernism and Mass Culture in Britain, 1945-59* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995); and Robbins, *The Independent Group*.

19. Lawrence Alloway to Sylvia Sleight, Alloway Papers, box 5, folders 2 and 12.

20. Lawrence Alloway to Sylvia Sleight, 7 September 1951, Alloway Papers, box 4, folder 9.

21. Lawrence Alloway to Sylvia Sleight, 23 July 1953, Alloway Papers, box 6, folder 7.

22. Lawrence Alloway to Sylvia Sleight, 9 August 1953, Alloway Papers, box 6, folder 8.

23. Lawrence Alloway to Sylvia Sleight, 20 June 1953, Alloway Papers, box 6, folder 6.

24. Lawrence Alloway to Sylvia Sleight, 30 October 1953, Alloway Papers, box 6, folder 10.

25. Lawrence Alloway to Sylvia Sleight, January 1954, Alloway Papers, box 7, folder 1.

26. See Massey, *The Independent Group*, 143. For a full list of the session talks, see Massey, *The Independent Group*, 142-44.

27. See Whiteley, *Art and Pluralism*, 54.

28. For a full overview of all the installations, see Robbins, *The Independent Group*, 134-59.

29. Lawrence Alloway, "Design as a Human Activity;" introduction 1 to Theo Crosby, ed., *This Is Tomorrow*, exh. cat. (London: Whitechapel Art Gallery, 1956), n.p.

30. See Robbins, *The Independent Group*, 189.

31. Lawrence Alloway, "Eames' World;" *Architectural Association Journal*, July- August, 1956.

32. For a detailed overview of Group 12's installation, see Robbins, *The Independent Group*, 147.

33. Group 12 text, Theo Crosby, ed., *This Is Tomorrow*, exh. cat. (London: Whitechapel Art Gallery, 1956), unpaginated.

34. See Reyner Banham, "This Is Tomorrow;" *Architectural Review*, September 1956; 186-88.

35. See Lawrence Alloway, "Re Vision;" *Art News and Review*, 22 January 1955; and Reyner Banham, "Vision in Motion;" *Art*, 5 January 1955.

36. For an account of other IG exhibitions engaged with principles of cybernetic feedback systems, see Victoria Walsh, "Reordering and Redistributing the Visual: The Expanded 'Field' of Pattern-Making in Parallel of Life and Art and Hammer Prints," *Journal of Visual Culture* 12, no. 2 (August 2013).

37. Richard Hamilton, Victor Pasmore, and Lawrence Alloway, "an Exhibit;" in an Exhibit: Richard Hamilton, Victor Pasmore, Lawrence Alloway, exh. leaflet/poster. (Newcastle: Hatton Gallery, 1957).

38. "Exhibit Calypso;" unpublished manuscript, Richard Hamilton archive, Richard Hamilton Estate.

39. Alloway, "Personal Statement:"

40. Alloway, "Hogarth Manuscript:"