

# All Play and No Work? A 'Ludistory' of the Curatorial as Transitional Object at the Early ICA

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Using the idea of play to animate fragments from the archive of the Institute of Contemporary Arts, this paper draws upon notions of 'ludistory' and the 'transitional object' to argue that play is not just the opposite of adult work, but may instead be understood as a radical act of contemporary and contingent searching.

It is impossible to examine changes in culture and its meaning in the post-war period without encountering the idea of play as an ideal mode and level of experience. From the publication in English of historian Johan Huizinga's *Homo Ludens* in 1949 to the appearance of writer Richard Neville's *Play Power* in 1970, play was used to signify an enduring and repressed part of human life that had the power to unite and oppose, nurture and destroy in equal measure.<sup>1</sup> Play, as related by Huizinga to freedom, non-instrumentality and irrationality, resonated with the surrealist roots of the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA) in London and its attendant interest in the pre-conscious and unconscious.<sup>2</sup> Although Huizinga and Neville did not believe play to be the exclusive preserve of childhood, a concern for child development and for the role of play in childhood grew in the post-war period. As historian Roy Kozlovsky has argued, the idea of play as an intrinsic and vital part of child development and as something that could be enhanced through policy making was enshrined within the 1959 Declaration of the Rights of the Child, which stated that 'the child shall have full opportunity for play and recreation, which should be directed to the same purpose as education; society and the public authorities shall endeavour to promote the enjoyment of this right'.<sup>3</sup> The vicissitudes of war and war-time evacuation had generated particular anxiety surrounding childhood as a space of safety and nurture.<sup>4</sup> In Britain, the bombsites of its towns became unorthodox and uneasy playgrounds for children, whose play often mimicked the games of war, resulting in a championing of purpose-built playground development.<sup>5</sup> While the post-war moment was gripped by the fear of cultural rupture, a fear that was reflected in the use of children's play to signify the brutality of the adult world and its potential resolution,<sup>6</sup> the late 1950s and early 1960s saw the emergence of a new cultural consumer, the teenager, who extended the domain of childhood play into adulthood and with it generated new fears for the destruction of sensible and

rational society.<sup>7</sup> Play, therefore, can be seen as a dynamic preoccupation of the post-war period, from town-planning and reconstruction to the popular interpretation of philosopher Herbert Marcuse's 'Great Refusal' of 'One Dimensional Man' in the late 1960s.<sup>8</sup>

As both mirror and prism of contemporary culture, London's ICA, founded in 1947, reflected and refracted shifts in the signification of play through its programme. From the artist Nigel Henderson's photographs of children playing hopscotch, through to the curator Jasia Reichardt's 1969 exhibition *Play Orbit*, an interest in childhood, games and the rituals of everyday life permeated the Institute.<sup>9</sup> However, it was not just the explicit appearance of representations of childhood, toys and games that linked the early ICA to developing ideas of a *homo ludens*. Its programme also shared with Huizinga's formulation of play a particular interest in mediating an anthropological and evolutionary biological approach to culture with a historical study of representational form. Huizinga conceived of play as a theoretical concept that located the particular condition of human relations in a given historical period and, at the same time, suggested a trans-historical universalism of human (and non-human) experience. It was with such a concern for universally persistent elements of culture that Huizinga wrote, on poetry as a form of play, 'it lies beyond seriousness, on that more primitive level and original level where the child, the animal, the savage, and the seer belong, in the region of dream, enchantment, ecstasy, laughter'.<sup>10</sup> Play, as a persistent 'element' of culture, related to other words such as form, ritual and creativity, which were used regularly in early discussions at the ICA to challenge and affirm the categories of cultural value through the association of adult and child, modern and primitive. <sup>11</sup>

*40,000 Years of Modern Art*, the ICA's second exhibition held in 1948, was exemplary of such an approach to culture as a trans-historical, trans-geographic phenomena that, although being an expression of time and place, also exhibited underlying patterns and forms. Despite promulgating a dominant early twentieth-century divisive and essentialising discourse of primitivism, *40,000 Years* inverted the general tendency to look for 'primitive' elements in 'modern' culture and instead attempted to show how a 'modern', that is to say a non-academic, non-traditional form of art could be found across periods and places as an expression of similar psychological forces at work.<sup>12</sup> Speaking at the ICA in response to *40,000 Years*, the art theorist Anton Ehrenzweig explained that:

the striking title was meant to be more than spectacular publicity; the exhibition wanted to document the fundamental identity of archaic, primitive and modern art, whatever the purport of this identity was for a deeper understanding of our own culture. The form [of] identity did not rest on a superficial similarity brought about by sophisticated style imitation; no, our own age was oppressed by anxieties and fears similar to those which gave birth to primitive art, and this identical situation brought forth the same forms of art.<sup>13</sup>

While Huizinga had rejected a psychoanalytic theorising of play as an 'impulse' or 'drive', his formulation of the play element as a move between preconscious irrationality

and conscious social structures of rule-making bore striking similarity to Ehrenzweig's understanding of art as the play between a preconscious state of chaotic non-differentiation and a conscious, communicable gestalt form.<sup>14</sup> Ehrenzweig's thoughts on art were indebted to ICA President Herbert Read and it was in Read's work that the relationship between creativity, as a fundamental aspect of human existence, and play, as an elemental part of culture, took on particular significance. Just as Huizinga rooted play as a fundamental but historically specific concept, so Read's conceptualisation of aesthetics was grounded in a universalism of human experience pitched against a relativism of geographic and historic context.<sup>15</sup> For Read, the underlying universality of form was the bedrock of his belief in anarchy as the only valid radical politics. He believed that, under the right conditions, the individual would unfold as a part of a community, in accordance with a collective unconscious connected to archetypal forms. While anarchy and archetype might be etymologically opposed, it was the possibility of the latter to give form to the former, when discovered in freedom rather than under governmental tyranny, that made both crucial to Read's aesthetic politics. It is therefore not surprising that it was his discovery of the mandala, a Jungian archetype of circular connectivity, in a child's drawing that confirmed for Read the validity of the 'archetypal and the universal'. According to historian David Goodway, it was this revelation that confirmed Read's belief that 'young children were naturally in harmony with deeply-embedded cultural and social experiences'.<sup>16</sup> It was in the freedom of the creative process, as a process of 'individuation', that the child was to develop in accordance with the 'organic wholeness of the community'.<sup>17</sup> This notion informed Read's *Education through Art* (1943), a text that proved highly influential among reformers of children's education. However, Read had never meant his text to be exclusively about child development; rather he imagined the classroom would be one of a number of sites where a non-authoritarian education would take place. Given Read's interest in children's art and non-authoritarian approaches to aesthetic development, it is not surprising that he suggested that the ICA should be an 'adult play centre'.<sup>18</sup> The need for adult play, in an institute of the arts, was, therefore, born of a desire to connect with a collective unconscious and realise an 'organic' rather than 'academic' relationship between art and society.

Twenty years after Read's call for an adult play centre, ICA exhibitions director Jasia Reichardt organised the exhibition *Play Orbit*. The catalogue for *Play Orbit* could be seen as a summative publication for the first two decades of the ICA's history, drawing together various strands of the Institute's preoccupation with the possibilities of play. Through a collection of images, re-printed texts and short histories of particular play-objects, it presents the toy as an ideal object of human creativity. *Play Orbit* was anchored in the ICA's surrealist and anthropological predilections through the reproduction in its catalogue of texts from André Breton and Claude Lévi-Strauss, as well as the first chapter of *Homo Ludens*. Through its catalogue, *Play Orbit* was presented, like *40,000 Years* and *Homo Ludens*, as a provocation to think about culture not just in terms of artistic genius, authorship, progress and rationality, but via the neglected, overlooked, though anthropologically and psychologically significant forms of cultural practice common to children and adults, present and past societies alike. Originally conceived as an exhibition called *100 Toys*, *Play Orbit* continued the ICA's

commitment to considering the relationship between art and design, and, with it, the blurring of boundaries between diverse forms of creative practice.

While it is possible to view *Play Orbit* as reflective of the ICA's initial and enduring concerns, it can also be understood, when considered alongside other exhibitions at the ICA in the late 1960s, such as Reichardt's 1968 show *Cybernetic Serendipity*, to presage future uses of play in art institutions. Both *Play Orbit* and *Cybernetic Serendipity*, with its creation of a user-orientated exhibition environment, are demonstrative of an interest in audience engagement and non-didactic forms of display, functionalities that Reichardt called 'play-participation', but that might be more widely encompassed under the term 'interactivity'.<sup>19</sup> Consequently, these exhibitions could be placed within a trajectory of what might be called 'edutainment'; indeed, reviews of both tended to focus on their fun and diverting nature.<sup>20</sup> Similarly, *Play Orbit* and *Cybernetic Serendipity* may be seen as looming portents of the commoditisation of the exhibition in the museum shop, where the exhibition is reduced to playful souvenir, and within an experience economy where venues compete for people's leisure time through the marketing of exciting and unique experiences. As popular successes – rare for an avant-garde art centre – both exhibitions garnered interest from international museums, prefiguring the transnational phenomena of the blockbuster exhibition: it appeared that the ludic was sellable.<sup>21</sup>

However, as art historian Rainer Usselman has argued, the popularity of *Cybernetic Serendipity* appeared to obscure the less-than-playful ways in which technology was being used and developed, in particular with regard to war.<sup>22</sup> Similarly, it could be said that *Play Orbit* wilfully ignored the social and political significations of toys, most notably the ways in which they supported hegemonic sexist and racist narratives.<sup>23</sup> Perhaps popularity and playfulness were antithetical to critical and political engagement. In addition, by 1969 the playfulness and the daring of the avant-garde had become instrumentalised in ways that were to become fundamental to the future of the museum via the development of corporate sponsorship. While *Cybernetic Serendipity* had secured backing from IBM to help cover the considerable costs involved in mounting such a ground-breaking and ambitious show,<sup>24</sup> *When Attitudes Become Form*, curated by Harald Szeemann at the Kunsthalle, Bern, and arguably the most widely discussed avant-garde exhibition of 1969, had been made possible by the carte blanche given by tobacco company sponsor Philip Morris.<sup>25</sup> The idea of play and related notions of boundary-breaking, freedom, leisure, childhood and games, exemplified, if not entirely realised by *Play Orbit*, provide a connecting arc from an anthropological and ethnographic interest in culture and the everyday, embodied by the early ICA, to the 'edutainment', customer-orientated corporate logic of the late twentieth-century art museum.

## **Beyond the canon**

It does not appear that Reichardt's intention was to create a model of exhibition practice that would support, through commodification of the exhibition or artwork, the future of the museum. In preparation for the exhibition Reichardt requested that the artists 'make their prices as low as possible, since the intention of the organisers is to get the toys

into general circulation, rather than have an exhibition of future museum pieces'.<sup>26</sup> Reichardt's hostility to the creation of museum pieces was also reflected in her introduction to the catalogue, where she stated that the original title of *100 Toys* had been abandoned because it 'suggested a display of isolated museum exhibits'.<sup>27</sup> Michael Punt, one of the participating artists, argued in 2008 that the radicality of *Play Orbit*, especially as experienced through its catalogue, lay not just in its embrace of mixed-media art, nor in its open call (although he acknowledged the significance of both of these aspects of the exhibition), but in the way in which the scattered traces of the exhibition have since challenged how history is imagined: 'in retrospect, *Play Orbit* can be seen as both fun and a wide-reaching intervention into art, history and the history of art'.<sup>28</sup> In other words, *Play Orbit* challenged the ideas of fixity and permanence associated with the museum and aligned this anti-museum impulse with the notion of play. Knowing that Reichardt sought to resist the return of the toys to the museum, the question remains how historians should avoid enacting the same violence to the exhibition itself by placing it back within the museum of art history.

Punt suggested that one day *Play Orbit* might be given a similar place to that of the more widely celebrated *Cybernetic Serendipity*, as a 'significant footnote in art history'.<sup>29</sup> However, Punt did not offer such a history himself but, rather, used *Play Orbit* as a tool with which to reflect on notions of history and creative practice in the present. Through a double reflection, whereby he considers how *Play Orbit* might be used to unpick contemporary conceptions of history and, in turn, how contemporary conceptions of history might make *Play Orbit* conceptually visible, Punt conducts a playful historicising of the exhibition. Firstly, he considers how *Play Orbit* might be compared to the historian Aby Warburg's *Mnemosyne Atlas*, as a form of opened-ended curatorial imagining, offering the 'immaterial play of association between discontinuous forms'.<sup>30</sup> Secondly, Punt examines the speculative manner in which *Play Orbit* posited a history of play as suggestive, but, ultimately, partial and unresolved. He views this approach as a precursor to new historicism and the shift in history from institutional and institutionalised histories, to contested and contestable public histories that are fundamentally political in intent and maintain an 'image of the past as fugitive and vulnerable: no more than a playful story told around a particular campfire'.<sup>31</sup> Finally, Punt uses *Play Orbit*, in relation to *Cybernetic Serendipity*, to expose a gap in artistic thinking that existed at the time of the exhibition. He muses that the artists who responded to the task of making a toy for the exhibition largely ignored new technologies, especially developments in computer technologies, and, in so doing, demonstrated the practised division of the two fields. However, Punt then uses the gap between *Cybernetic Serendipity* and *Play Orbit* to reflect on how the discourse of technology has subsequently developed in relation to a logic of innovation. Citing the historian David Edgerton's *Shock of the Old*, Punt comments that 'there are many other, much more significant, technologies that are simply ignored because they do not support the underlying narrative of progress and modernism'.<sup>32</sup> Through his three meditations on contemporary history-making, Punt recovers *Play Orbit* as a 'ghost story' that offers, through its archival traces, a playful history of play and, simultaneously, a provocation for a more playful method of history-making. If the traces of experiments such as *Play Orbit* are not to be returned to the museum of art history – a museum that

the exhibition itself tried to displace through its non-canonical, democratising and non-hierarchical methods – then how might an encounter within a ludic mode be re-imagined? How and to what end might one play with the archival traces of experiments in juxtaposition, reanimation and history-making? Punt called for the instantiation of a different sort of history-making that he termed ‘ludistory’: playful histories that allow questions to be asked of the present.<sup>33</sup>



Fig.1

Nigel Henderson

Installation view of *Parallel of Life and Art*, Institute of Contemporary Arts, London 1953

Tate

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Returning to the history of the early ICA, not as a singular institutional history in which play was imbricated, but as an archive of traces that are themselves examples of play and, simultaneously, provocations to play, what meaning for the present might emerge from the juxtaposition of these traces? To play in the archive is to unpick what is believed to already be known, to make the familiar strange. Take, for example, a well known installation photograph of the 1953 exhibition *Parallel of Life and Art* (fig.1). How might this image be understood, or, rather, how might understanding be achieved *with* this image? What is this image of and what opening does this image create in the time-spaces of the archival then-and-there and the curatorial here-and-now? The answer to these questions is, on one level, quite straightforward. It is an image of an exhibition of mechanically reproduced images selected and arranged by the architects Alison and Peter Smithson and the artists Nigel Henderson and Eduardo Paolozzi. The exhibition took place at the ICA's first proper home and premises at Dover Street and is usually considered to be a part of the output of the Independent Group (IG). Indeed, it took place during the first season of the IG's discussions, organised by architecture critic and historian Peter Reyner Banham, who also wrote the most famous review of the exhibition and later historicised the exhibition by seeing it as a founding instance of the architectural movement new brutalism.<sup>34</sup> However, considering this image within the ludic mode, the question remains what is this image? Is it a witness to a process? A view of an installation, or of an architecture of mediation? Does the partiality of the image fail to capture the experience of the exhibition or does it mirror the partiality of the display itself, its iterative and potentially infinite expansion? Can artists, editors or curators be seen at work? Is it an image of a dynamic museum or an iconoclastic archive? Is the image selection important or arbitrary? The answers to these questions, of course, depend on the function to which the image is put, and on its own contingency within the context of current institutional realities. But they also depend on whether the image is approached as a fragment to be played with or as a part of an indexical archive capable of fixing its subjects and objects of study.

The most straightforwardly historical way of answering the above questions would be to establish how this image, as a record of *Parallel of Life and Art*, has been made to signify within particular disciplinary practices: initially architecture, following Reyner Banham's foundational account of the exhibition, and, subsequently, art history and curating. Just as the IG exhibition *This is Tomorrow* (1956), via its most famous poster, has been incorporated into the story of pop art – where it has a significant place – so, *Parallel of Life and Art* has been inexorably drawn into the canonical history of exhibitions supporting the field of curating.<sup>35</sup> If a field of professional practice or an interpretative community is to be established, then canonical accounts are needed, albeit with constant revision.<sup>36</sup> However, this type of singular signification obscures other uses and ramifications of the image in the present. In other words, how might this



image be looked at again and seen as part of another set of possibilities that reach forward, as well as backwards, and which, as Punt proposed, 'liberate some ghost stories through elective affinities and explore what other routes there were for art [and, additionally, art institutions] to take'?<sup>37</sup>

What follows is my own attempt at 'ludistory' in order to rediscover another route for this image. I want to imagine what this image might mean as a frontispiece to the catalogue of a fictional exhibition of the ICA as an archive of play and at play. To create an imaginary exhibition of fragments from this conjured archive, I have selected a series of items that render this image meaningful and are, in turn, made collectively visible by this image, but attempt neither to fix this image within a given narrative, nor reduce the image to a purely illustrative function. These objects are not recreated chronologically, but are held as a constellation of 'elective affinities' suspended together in a shared time, while also pointing to other places and other times. I have called this imaginary exhibition *With Time*.

### ***With Time: An imaginary exhibition of an archive at play***

The first object one encounters is the structure within which the exhibition is held. It is a kind of tent-like structure, a disordered and reordered geodesic dome, or series of domes. It is an open structure of endless corners, suggesting the constant juxtaposition of things. Within this structure nothing is sequential, but, instead, relational. The structure is a re-imagining of the one designed and built by the producers of the exhibition *Living City* at the ICA in 1963; a structure they termed 'gloop' (a word that suggests something organic, bodily, messy and staining, implying that the stuff of the city sticks to our very being). Similar in name and form to an igloo, gloop implies an otherness of time and place transposed onto contemporary urban experience. Making manifest the techno-primitivism of media theorist Marshall McLuhan's global village, the 'loop' within 'gloop' holds open the possibility for relationships that are networked, cybernetic and self-regulating.<sup>38</sup> Writing in *Living Arts* magazine at the time of the 1963 exhibition, one of its creators, architect Peter Cook, stated: 'There is no comfort from the dusts of Brasilia or Chandigarh ... Whether we have a liking for their aesthetics or not, neither is a Living City. Perhaps in fifty years, or a hundred? But it will be almost despite the architecture rather than because of it.'<sup>39</sup> Designer Theo Crosby, in his editorial for the magazine, succinctly summed up the message of *Living City*, when he stated 'we have come to cherish disorder'.<sup>40</sup> However, Cook was not just asserting a preference for riotous disorder over a cool modernist aesthetic, but making a claim for the messiness of lived experience, its disregard for the rules of planning and structure. The gloop's temporary form, adaptable to the inhospitable environment of the modern city, appears part nomadic museum and part pop-up research laboratory. With tongue-in-cheek seriousness, the makers of *Living City* presented a 'survival kit' to go with their emergency structure – a series of urban and urbane objects, including 'puffed wheat, coke, Nescafé, wonderloaf, Coltrane, whisky, Daz, Ornette Coleman, pills, alka seltzer, make-up, chocolate, playboy, cars, fags, matches, garden peas (frozen), deodorant'.<sup>41</sup> This list suggests that to survive, one must curate a personal relationship with the city. Archigram, the architectural group that emerged from the 1963 exhibition, were concerned with finding solutions to urban design problems that might not necessarily be

found in buildings.<sup>42</sup> In this respect the ethos behind *Living City* was antithetical to modernist architectural planning, but the exhibition also revealed the underbelly of the city as media-scape. Rather than representing the city through the seamless text of its signage and advertising, *Living City* seemed to ask: what does it mean to find oneself returned to a world of discontinuous fragments?<sup>43</sup>

Entering the gloom structure one is confronted with a sheet of Plexiglas hanging awkwardly, intersecting the space. The plane recalls the transparent panels that made up *an Exhibit* at the ICA in 1957. The artist Richard Hamilton claimed, in a perhaps apocryphal tale, that the idea for *an Exhibit* originated from a conversation with his colleague Victor Pasmore about his 1955 exhibition *Man, Machine and Motion* (Hatton Gallery, Newcastle, and the ICA). Hamilton asked Pasmore what he thought of the show, to which Pasmore replied, allegedly, that he liked it apart from the images.<sup>44</sup> Consequently, the artists collaborated on 'an exhibit' that comprised a hanging structure of more-or-less transparent planes, but no images. The card for the exhibition suggested that *an Exhibit* might be a 'game to be played', a possibility that Pasmore was later to refute because he saw the installation as a pre-planned artwork.<sup>45</sup> However, there is a play that occurs in one's confrontation with the transparent and reflective surfaces of *an Exhibit* that is hard to deny; it is the play of the viewer's own image across the installation, a play that simulates the ubiquitous experience of late-modernity, one's reflection in shop windows, televisions and computer screens.<sup>46</sup>

A cryptic text is embossed onto the single suspended Plexiglas plane:

Movies as Anti-Art

Camera's libidinous inspection of human figure

Hollywood as Hollywood

Not framed as questions, these floating articulations appear as possibilities for thinking; they drop like playful bombs into one's consciousness and begin a critical process of searching. They are statements from a list that was presented to the ICA's film committee organiser Brenda Poole by the artist Magda Cordell in 1954. Poole wrote to director Derrick Knight explaining that, 'a small group of members are very insistent that we should study the "popular" cinema as an important social phenomenon (e.g. why Marilyn Monroe has become accepted so widely as a symbol of desirable femininity – I thought I could have answered that one easily, but they insist that I am simplifying, and that if one could find the answer one would have found out a lot about our age, etc. etc.)'.<sup>47</sup> The result of Poole's exchange with the group was the presentation by Cordell of a long list of possible topics for the discussion of 'popular' cinema. The list contained a series of footnotes and references, from 'Goodman: The Shape of the Screen and the Darkness of the Theatre, *Partisan Review*, 1942' to 'Kinsey's friend Albert Ellis (*Folklore of Sex*, 1951, *American Sexual Tragedy*, 1954)'.<sup>48</sup> Despite the fact that Cordell remained a painter, her commitment to the construction of spaces and fora for the consideration of dominant and emergent media, begun at the ICA in the 1950s, continued throughout her life.<sup>49</sup> Although Cordell's list could be understood as part of the development of what the critic Lawrence Alloway was to later call the 'first phase of

pop', this would be to reduce the enigmatic and playful nature of the fragmentary list.<sup>50</sup> Could this rather be seen as a series of speculative propositions for a nascent cultural studies curriculum? Or, perhaps, as an experiment with the programmatic form itself, a surreal take on the idea of topic and theme?

And what of Marilyn Monroe? Was her status within popular culture the stuff of common-sense or worthy of analysis? Perhaps this is the same Marilyn of Andy Warhol's 1962 *Marilyn Diptych* (Tate T03093). If so, there appears a neat link between the ICA, as a handmaiden of British pop art, and Warhol's Factory. However, the trace of Marilyn captured in 1954 does not yet belong to the archive of pop. Instead she appears here uncertainly, in relation to 'Hollywood as Hollywood', and Paul Goodman's essay on the shape of the cinema screen. It is her everydayness, her ubiquity and easy acceptance that makes her worthy of scrutiny: she is a site of contemporary ritual and mythology. As the curator Andrew Wilson has discussed, Richard Hamilton's 1965 print *My Marilyn* (Tate P04251) reveals Monroe to be not just the empty icon of desirability, but a cultural producer of her own image. This Marilyn refuses to stay in place, refuses to conform to a simple narrative.<sup>51</sup> In 1958 Hamilton had taken a life-size cut-out of Monroe, the heroine of Group 2's display at *This is Tomorrow*, on the Aldermaston Nuclear Disarmament March.<sup>52</sup> And why not? After all, the bikini had been named after an atomic bomb test site. Marilyn, not just as icon, but as cultural producer and political subject haunts the exhibition.<sup>53</sup>

Moving past the Plexiglas plane there is a large canteen table around which are assembled a series of images and sculptures that seem to represent human heads. The table is similar to the one used in the ICA's 1968 exhibition *Hornsey Strikes Again*, which in turn was a simulacrum of the canteen table from the former Hornsey College of Art, where the longest student sit-in protest in the UK of 1968 took place. The canteen became the heart of the revolution – during the exhibition the recreation of the canteen was used as a place to view a film about the sit-in.<sup>54</sup> Around the table are suspended figures from the ICA's 1953 exhibition *The Wonder and Horror of the Human Head*. Operating like a page from Warburg's *Mnemosyne Atlas*, *The Wonder and Horror of the Human Head* linked disparate images and periods through strange juxtaposition, revealing the enduring interest in the human head and the great diversity of its representations. Lee Miller, reviewing the exhibition that she had helped organise, mused on the cyborg nature of the contemporary human form: 'by the application of science, courage and imagination the aquiline nose, once a sign of aristocratic breeding and therefore of beauty, can be exchanged for a more currently admired model and, like motor-cars or teeth, can be re-exchanged as the owners taste alters.'<sup>55</sup> The 1953 exhibition not only compounded historical periods but mixed reproductions with originals. Unlike the use of casts in nineteenth-century museums, where the aim was the illusion of totality, the ICA made the displacement of the original by the reproduction an explicit subject for discussion, and included the category of 'recordings' within its early programme.<sup>56</sup> This interest in the democratic possibilities of technological reproduction were reflected fifteen years later in the demands of the rebelling Hornsey students of 1968, who called for an abandonment of the traditional art history syllabus in favour of an engagement with forms of everyday life. As much as the students called for

democratic participation in art and education, so too did they reflect Lee Miller's rhetoric of individual choice in the consumer age through their advocacy of a personalised syllabus.<sup>57</sup>

On the table among this nightmarish meeting of disembodied board members is a button. Upon pressing the button a voice declares, 'not another museum, but a workshop for all the arts, where work is a common activity, a source of vitality and daring experiment'. If the button is pressed a second time the same voice says, 'We spoke of experiment and research, of workshops and cooperative projects. All this has gone. We failed to carry the artists with us. Perhaps we proved that the artist is essentially an individualist and will not cooperate'. Both statements are from Herbert Read. The first, from a public address in 1948, was the foundational statement of the ideal archive.<sup>58</sup> The second statement, from a private memo circulated at the ICA in 1960, cast a long shadow over the idealism of the ICA and the reality of its programmatic function.<sup>59</sup>

As one approaches an exit to the gloom there is a large map with a table in front of it on which sits a dart gun and a blindfold. This set-up mimics and re-deploys the process used by artists Mark Boyle and Joan Hills in their 1969 exhibition *Journey to the Surface of the Earth*. During that show participants were invited to fire at the map in order to randomly generate locations for the artists' earth studies series. Each earth study took the form of a six foot square capture (through transposition of the surface onto canvas) of a piece of ground, to be re-presented vertically and de-contextualised on a gallery wall. In the gloom one is invited, just as before, to fire at the map.<sup>60</sup> But for what purpose this time? Recovered as an event from the archive, Boyle's and Hills's random generator sits as a marker of the importance of serendipity: the happenstance of chance filtered through the lens of wisdom. Perhaps this is the only available method of discovery in the ludic archive.

### **Making sense of play**

Leaving the exhibition the visitor is handed a catalogue. This catalogue, however, does not serve its conventional function as a record or index affirming the order of the exhibition. Instead it provides further points for departure by re-presenting pages from two books: Herbert Read's *Art and Industry* (1934) and *Playing and Reality* (1971) by the psychoanalyst D.W. Winnicott. These fragments of text, in parallel with the collection of fragments that make up the exhibition, unfold a 'ludistory' of the ICA as an archive of play.

*Art and Industry* takes a typically Radian dialectical approach. Beginning with two quotes – one from the artist and activist William Morris (1834–1896) and one from the American historian Lewis Mumford (1895–1990) – it sets out to consider the relationship between aesthetics and modes of production.<sup>61</sup> Read was never able to choose between Romanticism and classicism in his appreciation of art, and *Art and Industry* bears the marks of his attempt to give reign to what he defined as the crucial triad of formal, expressive and intuitive principles in art and design. However, *Art and Industry* is no tame middle-road between the values of the arts and craft movement and the

aesthetics of the machine age. Rather, it is a radical thesis against ‘taste’ and what Read perceived as the false separation between the spiritual satisfaction of art and the functional satisfaction of design. While declaring the need to abandon the aesthetics of handicraft in a machine age, Read did not see the disappearance of individual creativity necessary, believing instead that machine production heralded the arrival of a new art of construction. For Read, ‘construction is synthesis and creation’.<sup>62</sup> In fact, synthesis and creation appear as the *modus operandi* of Read’s approach to being in the world, dialectically and generatively. However, the true radicality of his text is not found in its aesthetic proposals, but in its concern for the organisational and the institutional, the conditions of synthesis and creation. Read’s radical proposition ‘to convert the schools into factories’ may seem to suggest the end of art education in favour of industrial education, an instrumental training for industry. But this was not what Read desired at all. <sup>63</sup> He believed that the coming together of the two would (again, dialectically) transform both. A clearer sense of what Read desired from this re-organisation can be found in a statement given to *Studio International* magazine in 1966, where he again suggested the end of the art school in favour of an interdisciplinary space – or, to borrow philosopher Walter Benjamin’s term, a polytechnic space – and offered Black Mountain College in North Carolina as an ideal example.<sup>64</sup> The underlying purpose of *Art and Industry* was to propose the reconciliation of spirit and matter and the Victorian critic Matthew Arnold’s opposing spheres of culture and civilisation through the introduction of a sensory education. Read may have begun *Art and Industry* with Morris’s and Mumford’s respective pleas for an abandonment of style in favour of the ‘aims of art’ and the ‘lessons of the mechanical realm’, but he ended with praise for Marion Richardson’s recent experiments in child education, by which the child was encouraged to play with materials to discover and invent. It is crucial to Read’s interest in the pragmatics of institutional organisation that the final section of *Art and Industry* is dedicated to a detailed consideration of the contemporary educational situation (something he was to explore in greater depths in *Education through Art*). Read, like Morris, was dedicated to the possibility that there was another way of organising production and consumption, so that people were not engaged in what Morris had called ‘useless toil’.<sup>65</sup> The ICA, as an ‘adult play centre’, was not just an atavistic throw-back, an attempt to connect with a more ‘primitive’ way of being in order to realise an organic community, but a proposal for a space where, echoing Morris, ‘work is joy’ and where Richardson’s educational principles could be extended into adult society. Read never wrote a theory of play, but in an article for the *New Scientist* in 1964 he did write on work and play. For Read, work and play were falsely divided by a society that had created the meaningless vacuum time of leisure. Leisure was not time in which to do something, but time that needed filling, that became a social and psychological problem. In fact, the distinction between work and play was less important for Read than the distinction between active play and passive entertainment. The latter – a kind of infantilising play-time of distraction – was the opposite of the affective engagement through doing and experiencing that Read had pursued throughout all the organisational experiments of his life.<sup>66</sup>

Now it is possible to see how Read’s text encounters this imaginary exhibition of fragments from the archive of the early ICA. It does so as a meditation on organisation

and education, work and play. From *Living Cities* to Cordell's list and the Hornsey sit-in, each can be viewed as a proposal for the reconsideration of production and consumption, the active and passive modes of a post-industrial society. They are moments of the reorganisation of the museum of artefacts into an experimental space, with the promise of tradition, of value, deferred in favour of the joyous work of construction and reconstruction. Instead of looking at the products of culture, as had been Read's role as Keeper of Ceramics at the Victoria & Albert Museum, *Art and Industry* encourages a look into the nature of production itself, the way in which value is constantly made and re-made – as Richard Hamilton was to show in *My Marilyn*, or Lee Miller was to muse in relation to plastic surgery. And yet there is something unfulfilled here. The ICA was never a workshop like the Bauhaus, nor was it a school and studio like Black Mountain College. And it did not in any way remake industrial relations or re-orientate production. Although Read's internal memo of 1960 was unjustified in claiming the lack of collaborative, daring, playful experiment at the ICA, his sense of failure was appropriate to an institution that was understood best in the negative: not a museum, not quite a laboratory, not a place of production, nor of active play as Read was to define it. Perhaps these archival fragments are, even in the moment of their actualisation, just that, fragmentary proposals, potentialities, possibilities. They were, in their very conception, fictions to be displayed as part of an archive of possible futures, before they were ever truly part of the institutional present.

If these proposals are not to be viewed simply as failures to reconstruct education, production and consumption into the productive play of joyous work, what type of play might be made possible through these programmatic interventions? To answer this question it is necessary to look beyond specific ideas of play as a new site of work and productivity towards less instrumentalised notions of play. While Read was attempting to carve a third-way between European modernism and British Romantic modernism, British psychoanalyst D.W. Winnicott was also attempting a synthesis as part of a group of British practitioners who, like the 'small group' referred to in Brenda Poole's letter, became known as the Independent Group.<sup>67</sup> Winnicott was as exploratory and contradictory as Read. He was, like Read, sceptical of acculturation and tradition; his greatest fear for the developing child was that impingement or compliance should take the place of creativity and the search for the self.<sup>68</sup> Not only were Read and Winnicott both hugely influenced by Freud, but they also shared similar concerns about Freud's work, namely his ambivalence towards shared cultural experience.<sup>69</sup> Much of the work of Winnicott and his circle can be said to be concerned with the establishment of creativity and object-orientated cultural being within psychoanalytic discourse, displacing psycho-sexual relations as the core of psychoanalytic work. Where Read turned increasingly to Carl Jung's idea of the collective unconscious, Winnicott turned increasingly towards the situated nature of therapy, the spaces and contexts of the therapeutic relationship. Although Winnicott became famous for his contribution to the discourse on mother-child relationships, his work took on a more radical colouring when he began to discuss and theorise creativity and play. His most famous theoretical concept, the transitional object, was for Winnicott the special object chosen – elected – by the child to mediate between inner and outer reality in order to delineate a specific sphere for the on-going illusion of omnipotence while exploring the limits of illusion and,

hence, to begin the process of disillusionment. However, it was not the symbolic power of the object that was especially important for Winnicott, but, rather, the way in which the object facilitated and necessitated play as the condition of what Winnicott termed creative living. It was in play that the transitional object did its most important work.<sup>70</sup> Winnicott never provided a succinct definition of play, but he did dedicate two key texts to exploring how play functioned within the therapeutic context.<sup>71</sup> From these texts it emerges that for Winnicott playing is the practice of working with, manipulating and utilising that which is in between the analyst and the analysand; the shared world of objects, or, rather, the world found as object. Winnicott preferred the word 'playing' to 'play' because, breaking with the concerns of his peer Melanie Klein, he was not primarily interested in the analysis of the content of a discrete act, but the development of the activity of playing itself. However, although Winnicott may not have been interested in play as a form of language, he was interested in play as something with a particular type of non-instrumental or non-specific productivity in the world. Thus motivated, he rejected the affiliation of play with masturbation, preferring instead to see play as an activity that always reaches beyond the instinctual gratification of the self. For Winnicott, playing is not just an activity that is immanent to the situation, it is the very act of being immanent to the situation, of being fully present temporally and spatially. The function of playing in Winnicott's practice, then, was to draw attention to the situated-ness and contingency of experience and our spatial being in the world. As already stated, it is the transitional object that facilitates the move from illusion to safe disillusion as a developmental process. However, as ever within Winnicott's work, for every statement that is constructed in terms of developmental normativity and 'health' there is another that suggests a more complex and philosophical position, for example when he commented: 'it is assumed here that the task of reality-acceptance is never completed, that no human being is free from the strain of relating inner and outer reality, and that relief from this strain is provided by an intermediate area of experience.'<sup>72</sup> Transitional phenomena are not simply named as such because they usher in a particular stage of development, but also because they are what allow us to constantly make the transition between inner and outer realities. Playing, then, became for Winnicott the activity whereby phenomena are rendered transitional.

Winnicott stated that if an analyst cannot play then he is in the wrong profession and if an analysand cannot play then the therapist must create a situation, the conditions, where play is possible, otherwise no *work* can be done.<sup>73</sup> Furthermore, if playing is therapeutic, not because of the material that it provides the therapist, but because of the act in itself, the task of the therapist radically alters from that of the interpreter of the material to the curator of the situation – a situation that allows the activity of play to happen. From the making available of a spatula on the table, a box of toys under the bookcase, to the removal of a child's socks so she can play with her toes, Winnicott constantly recognised the situated nature of the encounter and the importance of making object-relations possible. Indeed, for Winnicott, one does not abandon the transitional object because one has out-grown it, but rather it gradually loses its particular status as the transitional task is spread over the 'whole cultural field'.<sup>74</sup> In turn, culture becomes more than a specific series of objects pre-ordained with value but is that which is elected in any given moment as the locus of the intermediary space that

keeps one in relation to, but apart from, the world. In turn, creativity becomes the process of using transitional objects to find and lose oneself in the world.<sup>75</sup>

Winnicott's theorisation of playing, although originating in his work with children, was not meant to be exclusively applied to them. Indeed, it is important that one of Winnicott's main essays on play, 'Playing: Creative Activity and the Search for Self', focuses primarily on a case-study of a session with an adult patient. Through the case-study Winnicott explores how the therapist's interpretation, his or her own desire to impose order on chaos, can limit the creative response of the patient and that, in turn, it is only through the provision of the space for the patient to play that creativity can occur. The adult patient does not play as the child patient does, with string, toys or socks, but with language and in particular, recalled pieces of 'found' language, such as poems. It is in this process of playing that the patient constantly loses and finds herself in the world, negates and affirms her existence in the world, finally declaring: 'one could postulate the existence of a ME from the question, as a form of searching.'<sup>76</sup> From this Winnicott concludes that the purpose of the therapeutic procedure is 'to afford opportunity for formless experience, and for creative impulses, motor and sensory, which are the stuff of playing'.<sup>77</sup> And here Winnicott comes very near to Read's conception of anarchy as the development of the individual, not in heroic difference to the world, but as reflected in and as a part of the shared cultural sphere. Or, as Winnicott put it: 'we experience life in the area of transitional phenomena, in the exciting interweave of subjectivity and objective observation, and in an area that is intermediate between the inner reality of the individual and the shared reality of the world that is external to individuals.'<sup>78</sup>

Writer and psychoanalyst Adam Phillips has argued that when Winnicott wrote about the importance of playing he was talking as much about his own right to play as that of his patient's; his right to play with psychoanalytic theory, like a whole set of transitional objects.<sup>79</sup> Tradition, as dogma and heritage, is replaced by a fragmentary field of contemporary objects to be played with. For Winnicott psychotherapy 'is done in the overlap of two play areas, that of the patient and that of the therapist'.<sup>80</sup> Psychotherapy is a contingent and contemporary practice because it is about the affective space between the therapist and the patient and about the shared temporal zone in which everything that needs to be present is present. Playing as therapeutic practice, then, is a process of searching, finding, losing and searching again. But playing, as the necessary condition of what Winnicott called 'creative living', is the full abandonment of tradition as the bedrock of cultural being, 'not getting killed or annihilated all the time by compliance' in favour of 'seeing everything afresh all the time'.<sup>81</sup>

What would an institution dedicated to such contingency and contemporaneity as a constant state of becoming through searching look like? All of the archival traces in the imaginary exhibition *With Time* are fragments from other potential institutions, anti-museums and other educational situations, but they are also instantiations of potentiality, methods for seeing afresh. In 1955 Reyner Banham spoke of new brutalism as an ethics rather than an aesthetics, the third principle being 'valuation of materials for their inherent qualities "as found"'.<sup>82</sup> New brutalism was a challenge to begin with a situated experience, not an ideal form. Whether encountering a photograph from a magazine, an exposed drainage pipe, or the indentations of wooden moulds on concrete, to experience the world 'as found' was to recognise the philosophical



completeness of the fragment and its utter contingency within time and place.<sup>83</sup> The world discovered by a dart fired at a map; the common sense of a film star's sex appeal rendered as complex social phenomena; a canteen repurposed as a discussion platform; a piece of hanging plastic that could be part of an artwork, a game or an environment; or a temporary structure designed to re-encounter the ephemera of contemporary life: these were all methods for fragmenting and finding the world as a cultural field beyond tradition and received wisdom. Individually and collectively they are invitations to abandon history and interpretation as something received, unchallenged and inherited, in favour of the constant play of construction, reflection and questioning. As devices for re-configuring the 'as found' into constellations of temporary meaning through juxtaposition, these traces of past exhibitions, programmatic interventions and installations are instances of curatorial thinking.<sup>84</sup> They are sites of play that are never end-points in themselves, but simply openings onto other possible playful configurations. The intention, however, is not to propose that the curatorial, as an ideal mode, is simply the creation of a safe, therapeutic space where encounter can be mediated through the offering of a speculative proposition rather than a definitive interpretation, although it may fulfil this role. Rather, that instantiations of the curatorial (exhibitions and other forms of juxtaposition of 'as found' elements) are ideal transitional objects in themselves. Winnicott noted that it is crucial that the transitional object is found, not imagined, but that, as it is found, it appears as if it was magically conjured.<sup>85</sup> The curatorial is the construction of the found, as it is that which is made from what is already created for something else or, potentially, for somewhere else, but it is also conjured, in that it creates a series of internally consistent relationships that magically recreate the world (as a series of human heads, for example); it is a form that creates illusion and disillusionment in equal measure. Because the curatorial proposes through juxtaposition, there is always a gap into which the possibility of another relationship can be inserted, making the curatorial the ideal situation for the exploration of the 'interweave of subjectivity and objective observation'. An experiment in the curatorial, like Boyle's and Hill's chance process – deciding the next site of discovery with the firing of a dart at a map – is not the giving-up of the ego-illusion of creativity, but the mature abandonment of the fantasy of authorial originality. As well as being a transitional object in Winnicottian terms, the curatorial proposition is institutionally transitional. A curatorial proposition – as that which not only brings things into proximity with each other but simultaneously brings into view the very rules of its propinquity – is never the end point, but always a way of moving from the given and known to the possible and not yet imagined. The curatorial, therefore, is never foundational, because it always contains the acknowledgement of its own contingency; the rigidity of curatorial structure always contains within it the possibility of its own entropic return to play.

## **Playing with the museum**

To play in the museum of the post-war period was to play in its ruins. The museum's ruins, as art historian Douglas Crimp named them, are conceptual, rather than physical, resulting from the museum's failure, a failure present 'from its inception', to manage heterogeneity into a 'homogenous system or series'.<sup>86</sup> The desire to place something within a museum or to instantiate a museum, as the attempt to remove the object from circulation and to fix it within a given framework – consign it to a deathly silence, as

philosopher Theodor Adorno would have it – is always undermined by the laughter that comes from such hubris. For Crimp, the strongest fantasy of deathly capture in the post-war period was that of French culture minister André Malraux's museum without walls. Malraux sought to destroy the walls of the museum in order to extend its reach infinitely in the hope of revealing something that transcended material concerns: the ongoing work of mankind as 'a destiny shaping human ends'. However, 'once photography itself enters as an object among others, heterogeneity is re-established at the heart of the expanded museum and its pretensions to knowledge are doomed'.<sup>87</sup> A hollow laughter resounds (like philosopher Michel Foucault's laughter at a certain Chinese encyclopaedia<sup>88</sup>), as the museum's expansion through photography results in an absurdist poetry of deadpan juxtapositions; or, in Crimp's words, 'Malraux's dream becomes Rauschenberg's joke'.<sup>89</sup>

At the beginning of *Art and Industry* Read thanked 'the authorities of the British Museum, the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Science Museum, the Museum of Modern Art (New York)', among others, who had provided images of the many objects reproduced in the book. The result is a museum without walls, but one that does not seem to reinforce the total work of mankind as a bland post-war hope born from Malraux, the cultural policy maker, and UNESCO, the strategic champion of children's play, but instead provides an almost surreal, anarchic ghost story in picture-book form. Take, for instance, the juxtaposition of a Vernier depth gauge and a sea plane, or a series of pages dedicated to 'contrasted textures of fabrics'.<sup>90</sup> The designer Norman Potter remarked of the first edition of *Art and Industry*, designed by Joseph Bayer, that 'the nature of the book, its plea, belongs with its physical substance'.<sup>91</sup> The plea that is emitted appears to be for an awareness of the world as a place designed and discovered in equal measure. It operates as an anti-museum, rendering the world a strange place of coincidence and magic.

The ICA was born from this desire to replace the museum with something more vital. Read had pleaded that the ICA should not be 'another museum', while committee member Jacques Brunius asked for a less 'mausoleumesque' word to define the new venture.<sup>92</sup> Read's desire for an 'adult play centre' must be viewed in relation to this negation of the museum. It is not surprising that the main opponent of the designation 'museum' within the committee was a committed surrealist, who had been involved (along with Read and other committee members) in the 1936 *International Surrealist Exhibition* in London. For surrealists, the exhibition space was not a place of viewing but of encounter, with situation taking precedence over the artwork. The 'artworks' were, therefore, rendered contingent within the exhibitionary machine, or, rather, contemporary with the exhibitionary event. The surrealist exhibition did not aim at presentational clarity or univocality, but at an agonistic and confrontational experience.<sup>93</sup> However, the surrealist exhibitions did not simply destroy the museum, but made manifest the reality that the museum was never singular, never fixed, but a proliferated and hybridised cultural form intermingling playfully with its opposites, the fun-fair and the department store.<sup>94</sup> If, as Read, Winnicott and Huizinga had argued, play was not only part of individual or cultural development but was intrinsic to an understanding of an individual's cultural being-in-the-world for adult and child alike, then

the museum had the potential for being repurposed as an ideal place to practice such play through an exploitation of the very thing that the taxonomic museum made visible and disavowed, the gap between words and things.<sup>95</sup> Appropriate to their psychoanalytical sympathies, the surrealist exhibitions were concerned with the unfixed and the disruptive id of the museum that escaped from this gap. The denial of context (political and situational) that Crimp abhorred in the museum as mausoleum was challenged by the surrealist exhibitions' release of the eventfulness of the exhibition – its contingency and politics. Marcel Duchamp's famous interventions in the second *Exposition internationale du surréalisme* in Paris in 1938 and *First Papers of Surrealism* in New York in 1942 – suspending 1,200 bags of coal and weaving a 'mile of string', respectively – were not just spatial disruptions but temporal ones, making the theatre of the exhibitionary event visible, proving that publicity is as important as presence. Exhibition designer Callum Storrie has identified the eventful nature of the museum as 'delirious'.<sup>96</sup> For an institution that has frequently been associated with temperance and reserve, the less-than-sober excess of the museum, spilling out of its frame onto the streets and across time and space, threatens the stability of the institutional form that aims at hermetic separation from the contingency of the everyday. For Storrie, the museum began its delirious journey, symbolically, with a dadaist intervention: Duchamp's self-imbrication in the theft of the Mona Lisa from the Louvre. Duchamp's reversal of the process of acquisition reinstated the politics of provenance back into the naturalised discourse of the total museum. The humorous and the playful were used to oppose the rigidity of culture exemplified by the hallowed spaces of the Louvre, most notably in Duchamp's defacement of a postcard of the Mona Lisa with the addition of a moustache and the letters L.H.O.O.Q which, when read out loud in French, supposedly translates as 'she has a hot ass'.<sup>97</sup> Instituting a space that opposed itself to the imagined deathly timelessness of the museum extending out of these pre-war challenges to the museum's authority, the ICA carried the id of the museum, its propensity for strangeness and slippage, into its inchoate space. It also carried through Duchamp's licentious joke. As a Freudian, Read was surely aware of the sexual innuendo of 'adult play'. To create an institution dedicated to the post-museum in the name of Eros over Thanatos, was, indeed, an act of incontinence; a desire to abandon labels and structures, the fixity of words and things and to play with categorisations, namings and identifications, to embrace the freedom of radical difference. To play with the world 'as found' was to recognise the arbitrariness of its significations.

### **A space for 'ludistory'**

Leaving the imaginary exhibition I look again at the image of *Parallel of Life and Art*. I see in it the post-war world laid bare – a moment of possibility and fragility, culture itself under scrutiny. Banham likened *Parallel of Life and Art* to Malraux's museum without walls,<sup>98</sup> but what is presented here is not a wall-less, pre-digital presaging of the endlessly repeating archive of the internet, but, instead, an object-relation machine, where one can find themes and drop them, find oneself and lose oneself.<sup>99</sup> This is the constant instituting of the contemporary at the centre of the institution of the modern; the playfulness of the temporary curatorial incision that constantly undoes the categorical permanence of the museum. What now seems remarkable about this image is its stillness; at the centre of the whirling pool of contemporary connectivity is a slowing

down, a holding space where one can play in the search for self. For Huizinga, the one thing that was always true of play was that it required a space, a playground, just as for Winnicott the space between mother and baby or therapist and patient was the precondition of play. IG architects Alison and Peter Smithson, concomitant with their construction of *Parallel of Life and Art*, had suggested that the ideal space for thinking about architectural planning was not the house but the street, a street filled with hopscotch and skipping rope and forms of play.<sup>100</sup> Three years after the exhibition, the artists Eduardo Paolozzi and Michael Andrews starred in Lorenza Mazzetti's Free Cinema film *Together*, in which, as two deaf mutes living and working in the bombed remnants of the East End of London, they were to be, fatally, the victims of children's play, a play from which they were excluded as they were confined instead to the isolating experience of day-to-day work in the docks.<sup>101</sup> Play was imagined as an activity as well as the demarcation of a space with the potential to connect people and place in an experience of contemporaneity, of being *with* one's *time*, but it was also used to represent the irrationality of a disconnected world in ruins. To re-animate these fragments is to reconnect with the hope and fear of that moment in order to reflect on our own timeliness.

Why tell this particular story of the post-museum playful institution now? Around what campfire should such a story be told, or such an exhibition displayed? It is the campfire of a non-instrumentalised creativity and a purposeless meaningful searching – one that allows for a queer, non-commonsensical (de-)identification between subject and object. Or, as an astronaut in a collage produced for *Living Arts* magazine on the occasion of *Living City* said, 'I'm happy because I have learned to be creatively non-productive'.<sup>102</sup>

1. Johan Huizinga's *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture* was first published in Dutch in 1938 and in English in 1949.
2. Huizinga in fact rejected a psychoanalytic approach to play, but his analysis still holds with a psychoanalytic conception of the conscious and the unconscious.
3. Roy Kozlovsky, 'Adventure Playgrounds and Post-War Reconstruction' in Marta Gutman and Ning de Coninck-Smith (eds.), *Designing Modern Childhoods: History, Space, and the Material Culture of Children. An International Reader*, New York 2007, p.171.
4. Christopher Reeves, 'Singing the Same Tune? Bowlby and Winnicott on Deprivation and Delinquency' in Judith Issroff (ed.), *Donald Winnicott and John Bowlby: Personal and Professional Perspectives*, London 2005, pp.71–100.
5. Kozlovsky 2007, p.178. The London Free School playground was one such post-war site that provided an interesting connection between play, destruction and art, serving as the location for a number of performances during the 1966 *Destruction in Art Symposium*. See Kristine Stiles, 'Survival Ethos and Destruction Art', *Discourse*, vol.14, no.2, Spring 1992, p.84.
6. William Golding's 1954 novel *Lord of the Flies* is exemplary of this tendency to use children and play to consider wider social and political issues.
7. See Jonathon Green, *All Dressed Up: The Sixties and the Counterculture*, London 1999.
8. See Mark Donnelly, *Sixties Britain: Culture, Society and Politics*, New York 2005, p.59.
9. It has not been ascertained whether Henderson actually showed these particular images at the ICA, but he exhibited his work at the Institute in 1954 and 1961 and was a crucial part of the ICA's early programme at the time he was taking pictures of children playing near his home in Bethnal Green. As the art historian Victoria Walsh has revealed, Henderson's photographs need to be understood in relation to both his grounding in European modernism, especially surrealism, and his wife Judith Henderson's work as a sociologist and ethnographer working in the East End. Walsh has also drawn the connections between Henderson's work and the development of ideas concerning the importance of the vitality of the 'street' in the work of his architect friends Peter and Alison Smithson, who used his images in their famous presentation as part of CIAM 9 (Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne). It should also be noted that the photographer Roger Mayne, who became well-known for his images of life on Southam Street, London, including many images of children playing, photographed Henderson in his home on Chisenhale Road and exhibited at the ICA in 1956. See, Victoria Walsh, *Nigel Henderson: Parallel of Life and Art*, London 2001, pp.49–55.
10. Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture*, London 1970, p.141.
11. Such topics were represented at the ICA's *Aspects of Form* symposium accompanying the 1951 exhibition *Growth and Form*. See Lancelot Law Whyte (ed.), *Aspects of Form: A Symposium on Form in Nature and Art*,

London 1951.

12. See Julian Stallabrass, 'The Idea of the Primitive: British Art and Anthropology 1918–1930', *New Left Review*, September–October 1990, pp.95–115.

13. Anton Ehrenzweig, 'The Unconscious Meaning of Primitive and Modern Art', lecture presented at the ICA, September 1949, Tate Archive TGA 955/1/7/12.

14. Anton Ehrenzweig, 'Unconscious Form-Creation in Art', *British Journal of Medical Psychology*, no.21, 1948, pp.185–214.

15. David Thistlewood, 'Herbert Read's Organic Aesthetic: [I] 1918-1950' in David Goodway (ed.), *Herbert Read Reassessed*, Liverpool 1998, pp.215–32.

16. David Goodway, 'The Politics of Herbert Read' in David Goodway (ed.), *Herbert Read Reassessed*, Liverpool 1998, p.189.

17. Read quoted in *ibid*.

18. Herbert Read, unpublished speech made on the occasion of the opening of the exhibition *40,000 Years of Modern Art*, Institute of Contemporary Arts, February 1948, Tate Archive TGA 955/1/12/10.

19. Jasia Reichardt, 'Cybernetics, Art and Ideas' in Jasia Reichardt (ed.), *Cybernetics, Art and Ideas*, London 1971, pp.11–17.

20. For a discussion of the reception of *Cybernetic Serendipity* see Rainer Usselman, 'The Dilemma of Media Art: Cybernetic Serendipity at the ICA London', *Leonardo*, vol.36, no.5, 2003, pp.389–96. For a sense of the way in which *Play Orbit* was represented in the media as an exhibition for children see <http://www.britishpathe.com/video/play-orbit-exhibition>, accessed 8 August 2014.

21. See ICA Exhibitions Committee Meetings, April 1968, Tate Archive TGA 955/3/1/1/3.

22. See Usselman 2003, pp.391–2. Usselman indicates that there were contemporary critics, such as Michael McNay writing for the *Guardian*, who pointed to the less playful connections inherent within the exhibition. However, these critical voices were in the minority.

23. In the catalogue there is, for example, a section on the golliwog with no critical commentary. See Jasia Reichardt (ed.), *Play Orbit*, exhibition catalogue, Institute of Contemporary Arts, London 1969, p.59.

24. Usselman 2003, p.390.

25. See Claudia Di Lecce, 'Avant-Garde Marketing: "When Attitudes Become Form" and Philip Morris's Sponsorship' in Christian Rattemeyer and others, *Exhibiting the New Art: 'Op Losse Schroeven' and 'When Attitudes Become Form' 1969*, London 2010. *When Attitudes Become Form* travelled to the ICA in September 1969 and, although it did not originate the notion of corporate sponsorship for exhibitions, the ICA played a role in developing sponsorship relationships. In fact, the ICA can be considered a crucial venue in this respect, with Shell appearing as a regular advertiser and sponsor on the back of the ICA bulletins from the mid-1950s.

26. Jasia Reichardt, 'Non-Games', *Studio International*, March 1968, pp.110–11.

27. Reichardt 1969, p.8.
28. Michael Punt, 'Play Orbit: A Play on the History of Play', *Technoetic Arts: A Journal of Speculative Research*, vol.6, no.2, 2008, p.140.
29. Ibid., p.135.
30. Ibid., p.142.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid., p.145.
33. Ibid., p.135.
34. Reyner Banham, 'The New Brutalism', *Architectural Review*, no.118, 1955, pp.354–61.
35. See Paul O'Neill, *The Culture of Curating and the Curating of Culture(s)*, Cambridge, Massachusetts 2012.
36. Bruce Altshuler, 'A Canon of Exhibitions', *Manifesta Journal*, no.11, 2010–11, pp.5–12.
37. Punt 2008, p.147.
38. For a discussion of McLuhan's invocation of metaphors of a 'pre-modern' world see Michael MacDonald, 'Empire and Communication: The Media Wars of Marshall McLuhan', *Media, Culture & Society*, vol.28, no.4, 2006, pp.505–20.
39. Peter Cook, 'Living City', *Living Arts*, no.2, 1963, p.70.
40. Theo Crosby, 'Editorial', *Living Arts*, no.2, 1963, p.1.
41. Cook 1963, p.101.
42. See Simon Sadler, *Architecture without Architecture*, Cambridge, Massachusetts 2005.
43. In Archigram's re-configuring of the city as a place, not of efficient architectural planning but of messy experience, there are clear connections with the project of the Situationist International (SI). For the SI, play was an important strategy of disruption and they drew upon Huizinga's work. See Simon Sadler, *The Situationist City*, Cambridge, Massachusetts 1998, pp.5, 105.
44. Richard Hamilton, 'Interview with Morland', 1976, Tate Archive TGA 955/1/14/3.
45. See Alistair Grieve, *Victor Pasmore*, London 2010. p.74.
46. *an Exhibit* was re-staged in the exhibition *Modern British Sculpture* at the Royal Academy of Arts, London, in 2011 and for *Richard Hamilton at the Institute of Contemporary Arts*, in 2014.
47. Brenda Poole, letter to Derrick Knight, 5 August 1954, Tate Archive TGA 955/1/8/2/16.
48. Film seminar proposal left with Brenda Poole by Magda Cordell, undated, but mentioned in a letter from Poole to Cordell dated 11 August 1954, Tate Archive TGA 955/1/8/2/23.
49. See Ken Johnson, 'Magda Cordell McHale, 86, Futurist Thinker, Is Dead', *New York Times*, 17 March 2008, [http://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/17/arts/design/17mchale.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/17/arts/design/17mchale.html?_r=0), accessed 8 August 2014.

50. Lawrence Alloway, 'The Development of British Pop', in Lucy Lippard (ed.), *Pop Art*, New York 1966, pp.27–68.
51. Andrew Wilson, *Richard Hamilton: Swinging London 67 (f)*, London 2011, p.84.
52. Ibid, p.10.
53. Ibid, pp.10–11. Wilson draws attention to the fact that Monroe had become politicised through her support of her husband Arthur Millar during the McCarthy era witch-hunts.
54. See *The Hornsey Affair*, Harmondsworth 1969, p.171.
55. Lee Miller, 'The Human Head', *Vogue*, April 1953, excerpt reprinted in Anne Massey, *Institute of Contemporary Arts 1946–1968*, London 2014, p.86.
56. New recordings form a specific part of the programme in 1951 and specific interest in reproducibility persists through to the ICA's videotheque in the 1980s and 1990s.
57. See Ben Cranfield, 'Students, Artists and the ICA: The Revolution Within', in Bryn Jones and Mike O'Donnell (eds.), *Sixties Radicalism and Social Movement Activism: Retreat or Resurgence?*, London and New York 2010, pp.111–32.
58. See unpublished transcript of a speech given by Herbert Read in October 1948 at a gala fundraiser for the ICA, Tate Archive TGA 955/1/8/2/2.
59. Herbert Read, 'Memorandum to ICA Staff', c.1959, Tate Archive TGA 1/1/11/3.
60. See Patrick Elliott, 'Presenting Reality: An Introduction to Boyle Family', in *Boyle Family*, exhibition catalogue, Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh 2003, pp.15–16. This project actually started at Boyle's and Hills's home-cum-studio where participants were randomly chosen and blindfolded before firing a dart at the map.
61. Herbert Read, *Art and Industry: The Principles of Industrial Design*, London 1934.
62. Ibid., p.101.
63. Ibid., p.131.
64. Herbert Read interviewed by Victor Willing, 'What Kind of Art Education?', *Studio International*, no.881, 1966, p.136.
65. William Morris, 'Useless Work Versus Useless Toil', 1884, reprinted in Vassiliki Kolocotroni, Jane Goldman and Olga Taxidou (eds.), *Modernism: An Anthology of Sources and Documents*, Chicago 1998, pp.27–31.
66. Herbert Read, 'Atrophied Muscles and Empty Art', *New Scientist*, no.391, 14 May 1964, pp.429–30.
67. See Stephen A. Mitchell and Margaret J. Black, *Freud and Beyond: A History of Psychoanalytic Thought*, New York 1995, p.113.
68. D.W. Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, Harmondsworth 1971, p.76.
69. Adam Phillips, *Winnicott*, 1988, London 2007, p.7.
70. See D.W. Winnicott, *Home is Where We Start From*, 1986, London 1990, p.39–54.



71. See 'Playing: A Theoretical Statement' and 'Playing: Creative Activity and the Search for the Self' reprinted in Winnicott 1971, pp.44–75.
72. Ibid., p.15.
73. Ibid., p.63.
74. Ibid., p.6.
75. See in particular 'The Location of Cultural Experience' in *ibid.*, pp.113–21.
76. Ibid., p.74.
77. Ibid., p.75.
78. Ibid., p.74.
79. Phillips 2007, pp.138–52.
80. Winnicott 1971, p.63.
81. Winnicott 1990, p.41.
82. Banham 1955, p.356.
83. For a discussion of the philosophical status of the fragment and its relationship to Romanticism and contemporary art see Peter Osborne, *Anywhere or Not at All: Philosophy of Contemporary Art*, London 2013, pp.58–62.
84. For a discussion of the curatorial in relation to the ICA see Ben Cranfield, 'Between Consensus and Anxiety: Curating Transparency at the ICA of the 1950s', *Journal of Curatorial Studies*, vol.1, no.1, 2011, pp.83–100.
85. Winnicott 1971, pp.13–14.
86. Douglas Crimp, *On the Museum's Ruins*, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London 1993, p.54.
87. Ibid., p.56.
88. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, 1966, New York 2002, p.xvi.
89. Crimp 1993, p.58.
90. Read 1934, pp.96–7, 108–9.
91. Norman Potter, 'Herbert Read: Word and Object: In response to Robin Kinross' in Goodway 1998, pp.163–76.
92. See Ben Cranfield, 'Not Another Museum: The Search for Contemporary Connection', *Journal of Visual Culture*, vol.12, no.2, 2013, pp.313–31.
93. See Elena Crippa, 'The Double Legacy of the First International Surrealist Exhibition', *Manifesta Journal*, no.11, 2010–11, pp.19–27.
94. See Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics*, London and New York 1995.
95. See Beth Lord, 'Foucault's Museum: Difference, Representation, and Genealogy', *Museum and Society*, vol.4, no.1, 2006, pp.1–14.
96. Callum Storrie, *The Delirious Museum: A Journey from the Louvre to Las Vegas*, London 2006.
97. Ibid., pp.7–16.
98. Banham 1955, p.355.

99. Again, there are echoes here of the Situationist International and especially the practice of the *dérive*. See Guy Debord, 'Theory of the Dérive', in Libero Andreotti and Xavier Costa (eds.), *Theory of the Dérive and other Situationist Writings on the City*, Barcelona 1996, pp.22–7.

100. See Ben Highmore, 'Hopscotch Modernism: On Everyday Life and the Blurring of Art and Social Science', *Modernist Cultures*, vol.2, no.1, 2006, pp.70–9. The Smithsons used Nigel Henderson's images of children playing, mentioned at the outset of this article, in their 'CIAM Urban Re-identification Grille', 1953.

101. *Together*, dir. Lorenza Mazzetti, London 1956.

102. Cook 1963, pp.84–5.

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