

Image as Method:
Nigel Henderson and the Art of Research

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Abstract

This thesis argues that the work of the British artist Nigel Henderson (1917-85) generated materials that eschew fixed attribution and are incompatible with the conventions of museological codification and display. In post-war London, Henderson advanced a mode of practice that was indeterminately collaborative, authorially complex, photographically replicative, and replete with readymade elements. This form of work was not oriented towards the production of finite artistic forms; rather, it sought destabilising and disruptive ways of looking at and thinking about the modern world. This thesis proposes that the artist's work during this period should be reconceived as a kind of research practice. Comprehending it as such, I argue, not only allows the most processual, provisional, and obscure elements of his output to be analysed and valued, but it also challenges rationalized and positivistic understandings of research itself.

This thesis takes as its focus highly ephemeral traces of Henderson's practice that have an uncertain status in the present, which are divided between the archive at Tate and the holdings of the Nigel Henderson Estate. Rather than relegating these items – which comprise photographic negatives and photographically replicated positive prints – to the role of archival documentation or elevating them to the position of artworks destined for a collection, I argue that they should be mobilised methodologically as research materials that are irreconcilable with such classifications. Furthermore, I argue that the research function of Henderson's practice cannot be understood unless the interstitial position of this photographic work is sustained. My handling of these materials is informed by Gregory Sholette's notion of dark matter,¹ and my conception of research work draws upon John Roberts' theorisations of artistic labour and the avant-garde.²

This thesis is structured by the four most significant sites in which, I claim, Henderson's practice emerged as a mode of research in post-war London: the art school, the private interior, the exhibition, and the photographic negative itself. Crucially, I demonstrate the value in reconceiving of these as dynamic research scenes in which the images Henderson mobilised can function methodologically. By tracing the transition of his practice across these different zones of activity, I reveal the ways in which it operated in tandem and tension with modes of labour in other fields. In doing so, I demonstrate how the artist's investigative practice remained obfuscating and inchoate and, therefore,

critically misaligned with more regimented and recognised forms of research work, which could be instrumentalised in industrial, commercial, academic, or governmental drives towards progress and prosperity in Britain after the Second World War.

Ultimately, this thesis positions Henderson's research practice across the inverted interface of the photographic negative, revealing how his work functioned through the alternative temporalities and spatialities of photographic technology. I argue that photographic negativity served as the material, technological and conceptual basis of this form of research, fostering its strategies of latency, displacement, self-elision, and dissociation. In conclusion, I claim that the knowledge generated by the artist's work was itself inversional, offering a darkened lens through which to perceive a negative image of modernity. This concluding analysis invokes Theodor Adorno's method of negative dialectics to argue for a negative kind of knowledge production.³ However, I argue that the curatorial presentation of the traces of Henderson's practice within museological contexts – which conventionally seeks to resolve the uncertainty of his photographic work and sees his negatives converted into positive form – suppresses their capacity to function methodologically as research materials and to generate knowledge negatively.

¹ Gregory Sholette, *Dark Matter: Art and Politics in the Age of Enterprise Culture* (London; New York: Pluto Press, 2011).

² John Roberts, *The Intangibilities of Form: Skill and Deskilling in Art After the Readymade* (London; New York: Verso, 2007); John Roberts, *Revolutionary Time and the Avant-Garde* (London: Verso, 2015).

³ Theodor W. Adorno, *Lectures on Negative Dialectics: Fragments of a Lecture Course 1965/1966*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, English edition (Cambridge: Polity, 2008); Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton (London; New York: Routledge, 1973).

Declaration

This thesis represents partial submission for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the Royal College of Art. I confirm that the work presented here is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis. During the period of registered study in which this thesis was prepared the author has not been registered for any other academic award or qualification. The material included in this thesis has not been submitted wholly or in part for any academic award or qualification other than that for which it is now submitted.

Signed: Rosie Ram

Dated: 30th September 2021

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Preface



Figure 1. The Kings Head, Landermere Quay. Photo: Rosie Ram.



Figure 2. Tate Britain, London. Photo: Rosie Ram.

This thesis emerges from my experiences of working between two sites. The first is a private house called the Kings Head [fig. 1], the earliest parts of which derive from a sixteenth-century former inn, which is located down a dirt track in the rural backwater of Landermere Quay near Thorpe-le-Soken in East Anglia. The second is Tate Britain [fig. 2], a national museum dedicated to British art, which overlooks the Thames at Millbank in Southwest London and was constructed in the late nineteenth century in a position previously occupied by a Millbank Penitentiary. Today, both sites house materials relating to the work of the British artist Nigel Henderson, who was born in St John's Wood in London in 1917 and who died at the Kings Head in 1985. In 1992, Tate acquired 25 boxes and four folders of material from the artist's relatives, which formed the foundation of what is now known as 'the Nigel Henderson archive' within the institution.¹ This was supplemented in 2010 by the acquisition a further 10 boxes of items from the Henderson family.² In addition, the collection at Tate contains 22 works in photography and collage that are attributed to Henderson.³ Beyond this museological archive and collection, the majority of the remaining residues of his practice – those which have yet to be acquired by a public institution, such as Tate, or sold privately on the market – are retained at the King's Head, where the artist lived from 1954.

After Henderson died, the property was taken on by his youngest son and daughter in law, Stephen and Lis Henderson. In 2014, I was invited by Stephen to catalogue the surviving items at the Kings Head that relate to his father's work, and which are now owned collectively by members of the family who together comprise the Nigel Henderson Estate. When I arrived at Landermere Quay to begin this work, I was met by a wealth of largely unclassified materials without a formalised ordering system. The bulk of these materials are gathered in a purpose-built storeroom, which is crowded with various kinds of collage, assemblage, photography, silkscreen prints, ceramics, textiles, found objects and images, manuscripts, exhibition materials, mechanical equipment, and publications, as well as other miscellaneous fragments and forms of ephemera.⁴ Significantly, there is no official division between archive and collection at the Kings Head, no splitting between the traces of the artistic process and the final artistic product. I therefore refer to the material that is kept there as the 'holdings' of the Nigel Henderson Estate. As well as eschewing the hierarchy implied by the division of archive from collection (in which the latter conventionally claims supremacy over the former),

the term 'holdings' gestures to the informal and provisional maintenance of the material at the property, unsupported by an official framework or institutional structure.

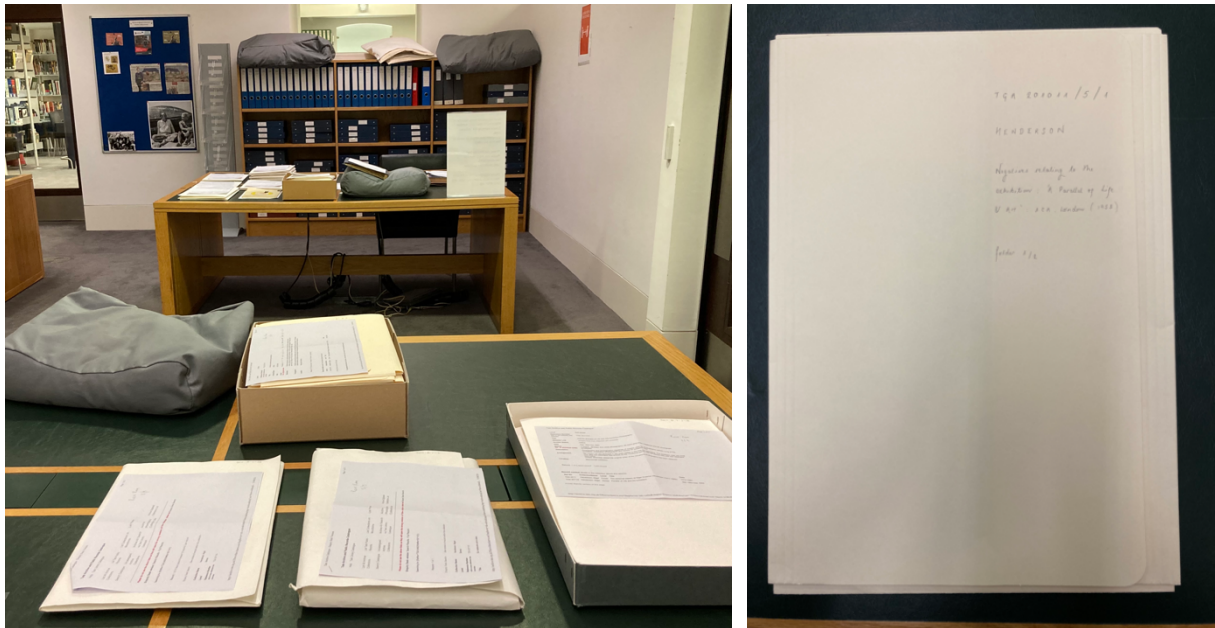


Figure 3. Left: The Reading Rooms at Tate Britain, London. Right: Material from the Nigel Henderson archive at Tate. Photos: Rosie Ram.

The experience of working with the disorderly residues of Henderson's practice at the Kings Head is markedly different from encountering the materials relating to his work within the regimented spaces of the museum [fig. 3]. To view the 'Nigel Henderson archive' at Tate Britain, it is necessary to make an appointment to visit the Reading Rooms and to request the required items in advance. Browsing the online catalogue reveals the extent to which this material has been codified by the institution, partitioned into series and sub-series, and affixed to unique reference numbers, sometimes accompanied by brief catalogue notes. On arrival at the Reading Rooms, the requested items emerge from the archival store in solander boxes and acid-free folders, lightly labelled in pencil with archival codes. Latex gloves are provided for the handling of the photographic works.⁵ Inside the archive, the identity of each piece is stabilised and its position within this form of museological ordering is secured. This is also the case for the collection at Tate, where the parts of Henderson's output that are deemed to be artworks are stowed among the museum's most prized possessions. Within the collection, each piece is affixed to a label or labels which affirm, first and foremost, the artist's name, followed by the work's title, date and medium. For pieces to enter the museum – whether as purchases, gifts, or loans – it is necessary for such details to be defined.⁶ A provenance must also be provided, and an economic value estimated.

Through this acquisitional procedure, artworks are assimilated into the museological history of British art, becoming constituents of the national collection.



Figure 4. Left: The Kings Head. Right: Material inside the Kings Head. Photos: Rosie Ram.

In contrast, at the Kings Head there are no official protocols of categorisation or classification, and hence the identity of each item is less certain [fig. 4]. This sees notions of authorial attribution, originality, medium-specificity, and form remaining unsettled. Henderson's work can be navigated differently there, without adhering to predetermined taxonomies or hierarchical divisions. Of course, the material at the Kings Head is not entirely detached from the processes of art-historicisation and canonisation. Certain items have been subjected to a partial and somewhat piecemeal integration into histories of post-war British art. Some have been loaned to temporary exhibitions, from which they have returned bearing traces of their curatorial presentation. And many of the photographs have been reproduced in publications. Moreover, when I began working at the Kings Head, my approach to the material had already been conditioned by the status of specific objects in the collection at Tate, and the ordering of the museum's archive around 'key' aspects of his output, which contextualise and support the position of the pieces that are owned by the institution.

Notwithstanding the impact of this art-historicisation process, there remains a flexibility at the Kings Head that allows alternative relationships to be mapped and remapped between materials. Groupings can emerge based on visual correspondence, while both similarities and disparities between items are amplified by their close spatial proximity within the small space of the storeroom. Practically, the lack of a set structure at the Kings Head makes the holdings more challenging to manage. Yet, encountering

the traces of the artist's work in this uncoded state is generative because the material remains open to multiple and changeable readings. Moreover, the position of the storeroom in relation to the house itself serves as a critical reminder of the partiality of even these holdings, when understood in terms of the lived reality of Henderson's practice. There are still many residues of his work that cannot be relocated to the storeroom, which remain materially integrated into the fabric of the property itself.⁷

Crucially, because the holdings at the Kings Head have yet to be assimilated into the museum or offered on the market, their value remains undefined. For the most ephemeral materials – which primarily comprise found and photographically replicated images that eschew the logic of fixed attribution – these are expected to remain at the house indefinitely, because they are unlikely to be deemed historically or economically precious enough to be acquired. Yet, the artist's painstaking retention of such uncertain materials, indicates a different logic of valorisation at play, which demands an alternative approach to deciphering the role and status of these more obscure items. Among a pile of papers found at the Kings Head, is a scrappy sheet of handwritten notes titled 'IMAGE' [figs. 5], which offers a key to rethinking the classification of his work. Underneath this heading, Henderson has jotted down some incisive – if fractured – thoughts. Here, the artist begins by citing the art critic David Sylvester's phrase 'multi-evocative' image.⁸ Henderson goes on to explain that, for him, the term stands for 'a punchy visual matrix' that could trigger 'a number of associated ideas' and suggest 'possible organisms not yet in the catalogue of creation.' Henderson continues that the multi-evocative image serves as 'a sort of quintessential sign' and 'an intuition of organic order'. It might be, he writes, 'an "ambiguous" art image interpreting known things' or 'a known thing rendered ambiguous by technical fault or manipulation.'⁹

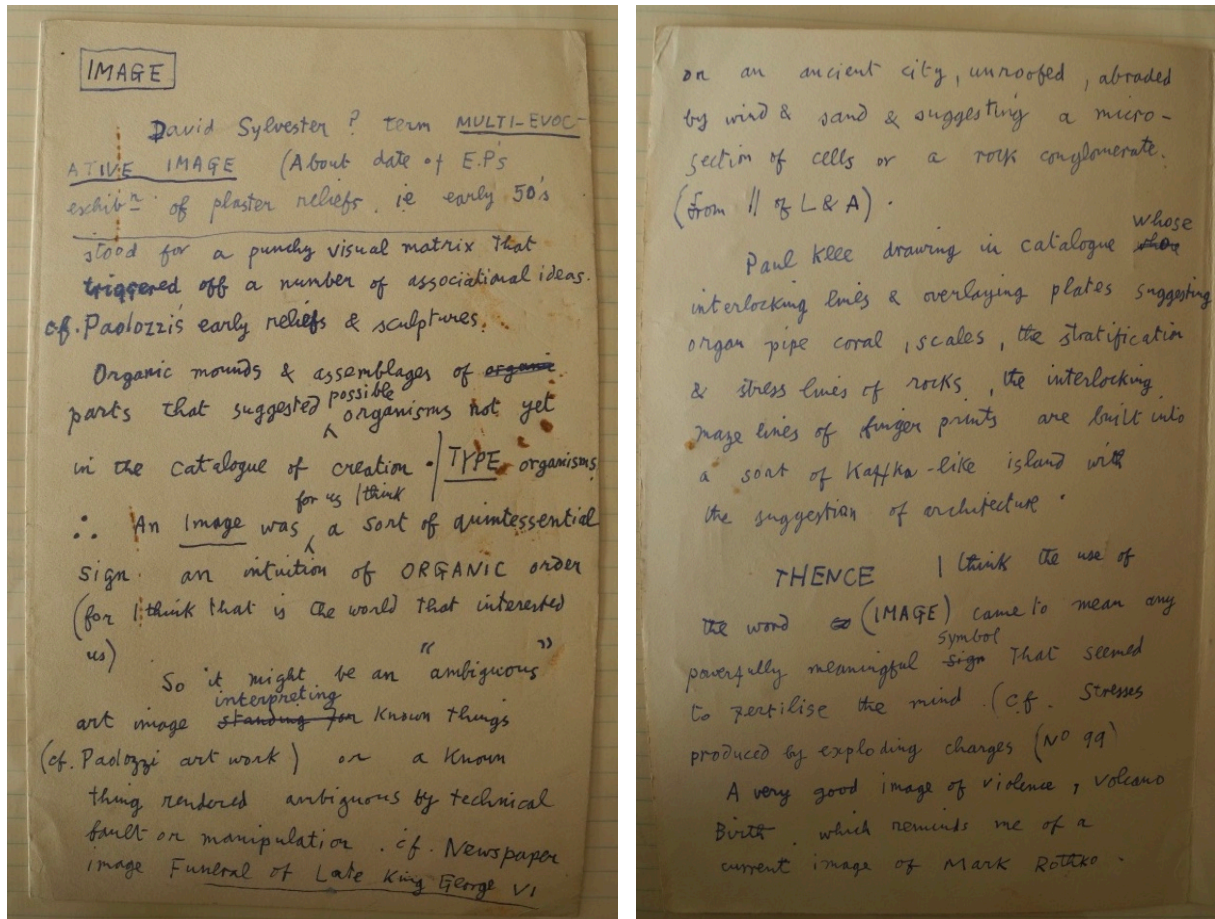


Figure 5. Nigel Henderson, manuscript titled 'IMAGE', undated, Nigel Henderson Estate. Showing recto and verso. Photo: Rosie Ram.

The terminologies the artist brings into play on this loose sheet – multi-evocative, visual matrix, associative ideas, intuition, organic order, and ambiguity – gesture to the notions of equivocality, polyvalency, correspondence, and contingency that determined the mobilisation of images within Henderson’s work, and which permeate the residues of his practice at the Kings Head. What is more, these writings indicate the potential for such materials to depart from the established logic of classification and to offer other ways of looking at and thinking about the modern world, outside the predetermined ‘catalogue of creation’. This gathering of terms offers a lexicon with which to begin to approach the material at the Kings Head, and to interrogate its uncertainty. More specifically, it indicates an artistic practice that was rooted in the possibilities for images – particularly those found in the world and photographically replicated – to disrupt the existing frameworks and hierarchies of knowledge.

This lexicon of terms and the modes of artistic work to which they gesture are critical for understanding the problematic relationship of Henderson’s practice with conventional

forms of museological codification. While I was attempting to catalogue Henderson's work for the Nigel Henderson Estate – traveling regularly between the two very different contexts of the Kings Head and Tate Britain – I became ever more aware of how difficult it is to maintain the critical uncertainty of this kind of practice within the systematised confines of the museum. In many ways, the ambiguous, the intuitive, the organically ordered, and the not yet known are characteristics that are incommensurate with the tenets of museological categorisation and classification, which serve as the acquisitional entry criteria to the archive and the collection of the institution. It was only through a process of researching Henderson's practice outside the museum – and thereby activating the residues of his work not as archival documents or as artworks within a collection, but rather as more processual and provisional research materials – that I was able to sustain their unresolved identity and status. This experience has informed my reading of Henderson's practice as constituting a form of research itself. This thesis, therefore, is located at the point at which my own academic research meets Henderson's artistic research across the interface of the highly ambiguous visual materials that comprised his practice.

¹ 'The personal papers of Nigel Graeme Henderson (1917-1985)', Tate, TGA 9211.

² 'Further papers of Nigel Graeme Henderson (1917-1985)', Tate, TGA 201011.

³ Works attributed to Henderson in the collection at Tate include a piece titled *Untitled (Study for Parallel of Life and Art)*, dated 1952, which is jointly attributed to Henderson and Eduardo Paolozzi. Tate, T12444.

⁴ Throughout the house there are drawers, cupboards, mantelpieces, walls and shelves populated with further remnants relating to Henderson's practice, thus blurring the boundary between the historic traces of his work and everyday life at the Kings Head.

⁵ Access to the material that is deemed most vulnerable to damage or deterioration is restricted. In the case of Henderson's photographic negatives, for example, positive proxies in the form of contact sheets or digital images are offered in their place.

⁶ If authorship is unknown, this is commonly resolved by the term 'anonymous' to name this authorial absence. Similarly, if a date of origin cannot be confidently pinpointed, a 'circa' estimate, decade or date range will be provided to overcome this chronological uncertainty.

⁷ This includes, for instance, traces of his wallpapers and tiles that remain embedded throughout the house.

⁸ See David Sylvester, *About Modern Art: Critical Essays, 1948-96* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1996), 45. Sylvester used the phrase 'multi-evocative sign' in an article on Paul Klee for *Les Temps Modernes*, published in January 1951.

⁹ Nigel Henderson, manuscript titled 'IMAGE', undated, Nigel Henderson Estate.

Introduction



Figure 6. *Vital Fragments: Nigel Henderson and the Art of Collage*, Tate Britain, London, 2019. Photo: Tate (Oliver Cowling) 2019.



Figure 7. *Vital Fragments: Nigel Henderson and the Art of Collage*, Tate Britain, London, 2019. Photo: Tate (Oliver Cowling) 2019.

Vital Fragments: Nigel Henderson and the Art of Collage opened at Tate Britain in London on 2 December 2019.¹ The one-room display featured a selection of collage works by Henderson, combining pieces from the collection and archive at Tate with materials borrowed from Pallant House Gallery in Chichester and from the holdings at the Kings Head [figs. 6 & 7]. As a co-curator of *Vital Fragments*, I returned to the gallery space many times throughout the three-month period that the artist's work remained on show there, until 13 March 2020. On each visit, I found myself drawn towards a pair of free-standing, steel-framed, Perspex-hooded vitrines, which my co-curators and I had positioned together on the floor in the centre of the gallery, in parallel with a sequence of large, wall-mounted collages [fig. 7]. The contents of these two vitrines had been arranged to show how Henderson's interest in collage extended beyond the two-dimensional artworks that hung on the surrounding walls; in fact, as we suggested in our accompanying captions and exhibition booklet, he applied collage-like techniques to the interiors he decorated and to the exhibitions he organised, especially in the period immediately following the Second World War, from 1949 to 1956.

The first of these two vitrines featured a pair of photographs showing the densely decorated interior of 46 Chisenhale Road in Bethnal Green [fig. 8], where the artist and his wife Judith Henderson had lived with their young children from 1945 until 1954.



Figure 8. Vitrine within *Vital Fragments: Nigel Henderson and the Art of Collage*, Tate Britain, 2019. Photo: Tate (Oliver Cowling) 2019. The two photographs of the dresser are seen in the upper left and upper centre.

These two photographs capture the shelves of the family's kitchen dresser, which had been adorned with an intricate arrangement of photographic images, miniature collages and sculptures, homemade toys, ambiguous ephemera, and household ornaments. At the

Kings Head, we had discovered two of the items that appear on the shelves – a small photo-collage, initialled NH and dated 1949, and a photographic print, unsigned and undated, showing a pair of sculpted eyes – both of which we placed inside the vitrine alongside the photographs in which they appear [fig. 8].



Figure 9. Vitrine within *Vital Fragments: Nigel Henderson and the Art of Collage*, Tate Britain, 2019. Photo: Tate (Oliver Cowling) 2019.

The second vitrine included four photographs of the collaborative exhibitions on which Henderson worked in the 1950s [fig. 9]. Two depict the disorientating hang of *Parallel of Life and Art*, which was exhibited at the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA) in Mayfair in 1953, and was a project that Henderson pursued collaboratively with fellow artist Eduardo Paolozzi, architects Alison and Peter Smithson, and engineer Ronald Jenkins. When it opened at the ICA that September, *Parallel of Life and Art* confronted viewers with more than 122 photographically reproduced and resized images extracted from highly heterogenous sources. Although the contents of the exhibition were chosen collaboratively by the group, it was Henderson who retained these images as a databank of photographic negatives, a number which are now held in the archive at Tate.² The two further photographs seen in this vitrine depict the desolate installation *Patio and Pavilion*, which was presented as part of the group exhibition *This is Tomorrow* at the Whitechapel Art Gallery in August 1956. *Patio and Pavilion* was made by the same protagonists as *Parallel of Life and Art*, only this time excluding Jenkins.



Figure 10. Top left & centre: Nigel Henderson, photographs of the interior of 46 Chisenhale Road, 1953. Top right & bottom left: Nigel Henderson, photographs of *Parallel of Life and Art*, ICA, 1953. Bottom centre & right: Nigel Henderson, photographs of *Patio and Pavilion*, Whitechapel Art Gallery, 1956. Nigel Henderson Estate. Photos: Nigel Henderson Estate.

Across the sequence of six black and white photographs that we presented in these vitrines [fig. 10], internal elements – printed pictures, graphic illustrations, symbols, and abstract markings – could be glimpsed that reappeared and were echoed elsewhere in *Vital Fragments*. Identical and comparable versions of the images and patterns that populated the environments within the six photographs could also be seen dispersed and integrated throughout the collage works that occupied the walls and plinths of our monographic display. Even more specifically, the trio of collages that we had hung closest to the pair of vitrines in question had been made by Henderson for *Patio and Pavilion* and appeared in the photographs of the installation, embedded within the dilapidated landscape that the collaborators had constructed in 1956 [these three collages are seen hanging in *Vital Fragments* in figs. 6 & 11, and installed in *Patio and Pavilion* in fig. 10, bottom centre & right]. Furthermore, tracking across the sequence of the six photographs themselves, additional visual reiterations and resonances could be observed: images and patterns from the oddly ornamented interior at 46 Chisenhale Road reappeared in the crowded hang of *Parallel of Life and Art*, internal elements from which could also be seen entrenched in the ramshackle scene of *Patio and Pavilion*.

Our instinct as we planned the Tate exhibition, had been to associate the work evident within these six photographs with the activity of collage-making. Indeed, the logic that seemed to govern the organisation of the pictures, symbols, and markings in Henderson's house and in his collaborative exhibitions appeared to align with the founding principles of collage: the selection and extraction of readymade elements, and the insertion of these into incongruent settings, employing methods of *détournement* and eliciting effects of *dépaysement* to unnerving effect.³



Figure 11. *Vital Fragments: Nigel Henderson and the Art of Collage*, Tate Britain, London, 2019. Photo: Tate (Oliver Cowling) 2019.

However, the type of artistic work indicated within and across these six photographs differed markedly from that articulated by the framed collages that dominated our monographic display. Elevated upon the walls and plinths of the museum – and each closely coupled with a caption specifying the artist's name, followed by the work's title, date, and medium – these framed collages communicated a kind of artistic labour akin to painting or sculpting [fig. 11]. And in doing so, they conformed to the dominant definition of artistic work within the museum, which is predicated upon an idea of the artist as someone – typically white, Western, and male – who labours alone to create the enduring totality of an artwork that is associated with his eyes and hands alone, and which can be preserved for posterity with its provenance secured.

Returning repeatedly to the pair of vitrines within *Vital Fragments*, I was intrigued by the ways in which the work evident within and across the six photographs appeared incompatible with the prevailing idea of artistic work inside the museum, and within the *Vital Fragments* display itself. Contrastingly, Henderson's photographs of the interior of 46 Chisenhale Road and of the collaborative exhibitions, *Parallel of Life and Art* and *Patio and Pavilion*, appeared to evidence a kind of artistic endeavour that drew upon the compositional logic of collage and the reiterative character of photography as methodologies for mobilising disparate pieces of visual material within and across these very different zones of activity. Together, these pictures indicated an interest in organising, photographing, reorganising, and re-photographing transient configurations, but not in consolidating these into a final, fixed artistic form. Unsurprisingly, the arrangements seen in the photographs no longer exist today. Instead, we are left with the incomplete traces that are retained in the partial views provided by Henderson's camera and in the scattering of surviving elements that can be found dispersed throughout the archive and collection at Tate and across holdings at the King's Head.

Over the course of my repeated visits to *Vital Fragments*, I became increasingly aware of the presence of this more searching and uncertain mode of artistic work within the display, which we had inadvertently evidenced across the six photographs inside our vitrines. In this multi-sited and intermedial form of practice, photography and collage appeared to become methods for looking and thinking – and then, for relooking and rethinking – thus privileging perception and cognition over the creation of finite artistic forms. Indeed, this activity did not appear to be oriented towards the production of specific artworks but might better be conceived as an investigative mode of work akin to a kind of processual research practice. Moreover, I was struck by the status we had afforded this alternative, inquiring type of artistic labour. By positioning the six photographs under the hoods of the vitrines, we had invited viewers to read these grainy prints as archival documentation and, therefore, as supplementary or secondary to the valorised artworks that loomed large upon the walls and plinths of the monographic show, each of which could be more confidently attributed to Henderson alone.

One of these works was a collage titled *Rocket Landscape* from 1960, which we had exhibited close to the two vitrines containing the six photographs, and opposite a third vitrine that was populated with some of the ephemeral items that Henderson had

collected over his career, such as matchboxes, playing cards, toys, and packaging [*Rocket Landscape* is seen hanging on the left in fig. 12].



Figure 12. *Vital Fragments: Nigel Henderson and the Art of Collage* at Tate Britain, 2019. Photo: Tate (Oliver Cowling) 2019.

Revealingly, *Rocket Landscape* was constructed on the reverse of a photographic panel that had been exhibited as part of *Parallel of Life and Art* at the ICA in 1953, identified in the catalogue as ‘Section of a Thrombosed Pulmonary Artery. X19’ and attributed to ‘E. Victor Wilmott, F.I.B.P., F.R.P.S.’⁴ [figs. 13 & 14]. While the individually authored collage faced outwards at Tate Britain, illuminated by spotlighting on the gallery wall, its photographically reproduced, authorially layered, and collaboratively mobilised counterpart hung in its shadow. The hidden presence of ‘Section of a Thrombosed Pulmonary Artery’ within *Vital Fragments* exemplifies the lack of visibility and value that museological curating conventionally affords materials that cannot be elevated to the position of the attributed artistic work, and which do not conform to the logic of the collection. Observing *Rocket Landscape* suspended on the wall at Tate [fig. 12], hung above the vitrines containing more ‘documentary’ and ‘archival’ materials, raises the question of what it might mean to invert the hierarchy imposed by this recto-verso designation, which deems ‘Section of a Thrombosed Pulmonary Artery’ of lesser artistic significance than the singularly authored collage created on its counter side.



Figure 13. Left: Nigel Henderson, *Rocket Landscape*, 1960. Right: Counter side of *Rocket Landscape* showing 'Section of a Thrombosed Pulmonary Artery' from *Parallel of Life and Art*, ICA, 1953. Nigel Henderson Estate. Photos: Nigel Henderson Estate.



Figure 14. Nigel Henderson, photograph of *Parallel of Life and Art*, ICA, 1953. Tate, TGA 9211/5/2/58. Photo: Tate (negative reproduced as digital positive).

Artistic dark matter and archival shadows

The questions of visibility and value and the absences and presences of artistic work raised by the example of *Rocket Landscape* within *Vital Fragments* are interrogated by Gregory Sholette in *Dark Matter: Art and Politics in the Age of Enterprise Culture* (2011). For Sholette, dark matter names a ‘shadowy social productivity’ that ‘haunts the very notion of a proper artistic canon with its exemplary practices and necessary acts of exclusion’.⁵ He defines dark matter as the surplus artistic labour that is necessary for but excluded from the celebrated sphere of the art world, from the museological canon, and from the art market’s ecology of wealth and power. Dark matter remains invisible:

‘to those who lay claim to the management and interpretation of culture – the critics, art historians, collectors, dealers, museums, curators, and arts administrators. It includes makeshift, amateur, informal, unofficial, autonomous, activist, non-institutional, self-organized, practices – all work made and circulated in the shadows of the formal art world’.⁶

Crucially, Sholette does not conceive of the producers of artistic dark matter as occupying fixed positions or inhabiting ‘a sharp divide’.⁷ Rather, he writes, ‘formal and informal creative practitioners form a continuous spectrum of positions with semi-fixed and often shifting patterns of paid and unpaid artistic labor.’⁸ Those creating dark matter are not always engaged in activism or explicitly radical practices. Instead, Sholette describes their efforts as comprising ‘disjointed acts of insubordination’ that ‘do not necessarily knit together as sustained politics’.⁹ What they have in common, he suggests, is that ‘either by choice or circumstance’ they display a ‘degree of autonomy from the critical and economic structures of the art world by moving instead in-between its meshes.’¹⁰ Sholette’s theorisation of dark matter offers an incisive means with which to begin analysing the aspects of Henderson’s work that seemed simultaneously present and absent in *Vital Fragments*. Whether emerging on the verso of *Rocket Landscape* or in the photographs encased by the vitrines, drawing upon Sholette’s conception, these less visible elements might be understood as the dark underside of Henderson’s practice.

For Sholette, the archive – both as a concept and an institutional reality – is critical for locating dark matter. Dark matter is, he writes, ‘an antagonistic force simultaneously

inside and outside, like a void within an archive that itself is a kind of void.¹¹ Having been excluded from the exhibitionary and economic spaces in which art is valorised and made visible, dark matter is consigned to a 'subaltern' archive.¹² Sholette argues, 'Dark matter, hidden social production, missing mass, shadow archive – all these metaphors are at best a means of visualizing that which cannot be seen: the presence/absence of a vast zone of cultural activity'.¹³ When museums acquire the material remnants of this previously excluded form of labour, the archival status of dark matter becomes more than metaphorical. This can only happen, Sholette argues, once the work itself no longer poses a threat to the institution. Then, the museum internalises the residues of opposition, although this material may be 'chaotic and messy and very much at odds with the codes and laws that order the institution within which it is housed'.¹⁴ In doing so, the museum demonstrates:

'a capacity to exert power "all the way down," into the finest of details and historical shadows. [...] we might read this minor, generally unnoticed supplement to the proper historical canon as an internal mark or bruise alluding to a far larger corpus of excluded cultural production.'¹⁵

The museum bears 'this mark of difference in order to legitimate its very dominance'.¹⁶ Once acquisitioned, artistic dark matter becomes 'an internally exiled exclusion' inside the institution, inscribed within its 'ideological architecture as a necessary but mute presence'.¹⁷ There, dark matter exists, Sholette argues, 'like a crypt or tomb that harbors meaning through a kind of negation (deathly remains) for the jurisdiction of the household above it'.¹⁸ The insubordinate impetus of dark matter thereby becomes, he claims, 'both a presence and absence within the material and symbolic economy of art'.¹⁹

While Sholette centres his analysis on more radical practices, he acknowledges that dark matter is not only incubated by overtly political endeavours. Rather, in his conception, the shadowy surplus of subaltern labour encompasses a breadth of creative activity that 'refuses to be productive for the market' however 'diffusely and ambiguously'.²⁰ His writing thus offers a paradigm through which to interrogate those darker materialities of Henderson's practice that are more difficult to perceive within the museum, despite their institutional internalisations. For instance, his photographic negatives – which, as this thesis shall demonstrate, were a pivotal strand of his output – are submerged in the archive at Tate and cannot readily be surfaced in their negative

state. Many are quite literally frozen within the archival cold storage. In the Reading Rooms, accessing such negatives is largely prohibited; guidance states they should be viewed as positive proxies. And on the museum's website, they are universally published as positive images, thus suppressing their negative function.

The presence of pieces from Henderson's practice within the collection at Tate and the very fact that so many of his works could be exhibited as part of *Vital Fragments*, indicates that his artistic output did not comprise dark matter in its entirety. And yet, the marginalisation of the material remnants of certain elements of his work and the entombment of the evidence of these other kinds of artistic activity in the archive, may be elucidated using Sholette's theorisation of internalised exclusions and absent presences. To illustrate this, we can turn briefly to another of the surviving traces of *Parallel of Life and Art*, which appears to operate as one such subaltern void, relegated to the archival depths of the museum.

Three years after *Parallel of Life and Art* opened at the ICA, Henderson embedded an image from the exhibition – a photograph showing a cast of a disfigured child – into a collage he made for *Patio and Pavilion* at the Whitechapel Art Gallery [figs. 15 & 16].²¹



Figure 15. Left: Nigel Henderson, photograph of *Parallel of Life and Art*, ICA, 1953. Tate, TGA 9211/5/2/71. Photo: Tate (negative reproduced as digital positive). Right: Image used for *Parallel of Life and Art*, ICA, 1953, listed in the catalogue as 'Excavated figure, Pompei. F. Romano, Naples'. Tate, TGA 9211/5/2/10. Photo: Tate.



Figure 16. Left: Nigel Henderson, photograph of *Patio and Pavilion*, Whitechapel Art Gallery, 1956, Nigel Henderson Estate. Photo: Rosie Ram. Right: Nigel Henderson, *Collage for Patio and Pavilion (cycle of life and death in a pond)*, 1956, Tate, T13303, Photo: Tate.

This latter piece, titled *Collage for Patio and Pavilion (cycle of life and death in a pond)* (1956), is now in the collection at Tate where it sits securely titled, framed, glazed, and attributed to Henderson's name alone, despite its collaborative mobilisation within the exhibition. Conversely, the photographically reproduced image of the excavated figure that had been used in *Parallel of Life and Art* and that reappears in *Collage for Patio and Pavilion (cycle of life and death in a pond)* is afforded a more subsidiary status inside the archive, where it remains largely unseen. Furthermore, access to Henderson's negatives showing the panel installed is restricted; these can more readily be viewed as positive proxies or as positive digital renderings on the museum's website. Like the hidden interface between *Rocket Landscape* and the 'Section of a Thrombosed Pulmonary Artery', these images from *Parallel of Life and Art* become the shadowy underside of Henderson's practice, submerged beneath the surface of the museological space that shapes the dominant definition of art, narrates its history, and determines its cultural and economic value.

Collaboration, complex labour, and the practice of research

In contrast to the individualised kind of artistic work connoted by the collages that occupied the walls and plinths of *Vital Fragments*, the alternative conception of artistic labour evident within our vitrines was associated with distinctly collaborative

endeavours. Both *Parallel of Life and Art* and *Patio and Pavilion* were collaborative exhibitions, and Henderson had worked with Paolozzi at 46 Chisenhale Road to paper the interior of the house in c. 1952, thus providing the haphazardly patterned backdrop to the intricate displays.²² Yet, these joint endeavours did not foster forms of artistic authorship in which the singularly named artist was neatly subsumed into a stable group identity. Rather, the two exhibitions and the interior generated a kind of authorial instability that was due, in part, to the inability of these projects to be consolidated into finite artistic forms. The ambiguous kind of authorship engendered within these sites was made yet more convoluted by the integration of readymade elements, such as ‘Section of a Thrombosed Pulmonary Artery’ and ‘Excavated figure, Pompei’. Additionally, Henderson’s photographs of the interior and the exhibitions superimpose a further authorial layer onto these scenes, creating a dialogue between the collaborative work of collating the materials and his more individualised work of capturing the photographic images. Looking at these photographic images, then, it proves difficult to disentangle the various threads of collaborative and individual contributions, readymade elements, and layers of photographic replication, that made up their production.

The theorisation of art’s ‘complex labours’ offered by John Roberts in *The Intangibilities of Form: Skill and Deskilling in Art After the Readymade* (2007) offers another germane framework for my analysis. In this text, Roberts argues that collaboration, collective authorship, the use of readymade elements, and mechanical reproducibility constitute the ‘complex labours’ of art that generate its ‘intangibilities of form’.²³ Roberts claims that, since the early twentieth century, the complexities of artistic labour have increased through the integration of readymade elements and mechanical reproduction, which stage a concatenation ‘between artistic labour and non-artistic labour, artistic hands and non-artistic hands’.²⁴ For Roberts, the readymade and mechanical reproducibility free the artist’s hand from artisanal labour thereby allowing artistic authorship ‘to incorporate both the *non-artistic hands of others* and the development of mechanical/ technical and executive artistic skills.’²⁵ Crucially, Roberts argues that authorship is not obliterated by this transformation; rather, the readymade and mechanical reproduction become sites ‘where authorship is remade, and the hand repositioned.’²⁶ Neither is artistic skill annihilated by the readymade and mechanical reproducibility, he argues. It is instead expressed in ‘the craft of reproducibility and the craft of copying without copying,’²⁷ which ‘become focal-points for the redefinition of skill

within a socially expanded understanding of the circuits of authorship.²⁸ Roberts posits a dialectic of deskilling and reskilling in art to theorise the exchange between artistic and non-artistic labour that is enacted via the readymade and mechanical reproducibility, and the concomitant expansion of artistic authorship.²⁹

In tandem with this theorisation of the readymade and mechanical reproducibility, Roberts argues that artistic collaboration necessitates ‘the discussion of art to overlap freely with a discussion of labour’.³⁰ In a special issue of *Third Text* (2004) on ‘art and collaboration’, he writes that ‘collaboration is the means whereby the labour *in* the artwork is made conspicuous and critical.’³¹ While Roberts acknowledges that all artistic labour is inherently collaborative at some level due to its subjection to the social division of labour, he goes on to contrast this universal kind of collaboration with what he terms ‘collective collaboration’ in art,³² in which collaboration is enacted as ‘a *self-conscious* process of production’ whereby ‘the socially produced character of art is made explicit *in* the form of the work.’³³ Through collective collaboration, Roberts writes, ‘art’s place within the social division of labour is made transparent’.³⁴ In such instances, he claims, ‘the skills and competences of the individual are distributed and redirected directly through teamwork, group learning and access to the collective intellect.’³⁵ Accordingly, he asserts, ‘Group discussion and sharing skills and ideas across disciplines produces a direct and unambiguous enlargement of the powers of authorship.’³⁶ For Roberts, collective collaboration, therefore, provides ‘an experimental space in which the scrutiny of art’s cultural form can be maintained – irrespective of prevailing social conditions.’³⁷

Building upon this theoretical position, Roberts argues that collaborative, technologised and authorially complex modes of practice are hallmarks of the artistic avant-garde. In his writing, he employs the term ‘avant-garde’ to name the ‘possibility of art’s continuing self-realization under the instrumentalizing forces of the commodity-form and the art institution.’³⁸ For Roberts, ‘historic avant-gardes are not simply “movements” in the old art historical sense; they are loose confederations of collaborators and co-researchers, which in some instances, for short periods of time, conjoin to form units of group production.’³⁹ In *Revolutionary Time and the Avant-Garde* (2015), Roberts posits a theory of the avant-garde as an unfolding, ‘non-official, heterodox, illicit, denatured, dissensual research programme’.⁴⁰ Indeed, he conceives of the avant-garde as a ‘congregation of *adisciplinary* research programmes.’⁴¹ The research work of the avant-garde operates, he writes, as ‘a multiple, atemporal sequence

of actions, strategies and events, determined by, and “out of joint” with, the sphere of commodity relations and its heteronomous identities’.⁴² It serves as a ‘suspensive’ category of labour,⁴³ which maintains a ‘residual placeholder’ for the autonomy of art while operating under the inescapable aegis of capitalism.⁴⁴ This research work is oriented, Roberts argues, towards questions of ‘artistic authorship, productive labour and free labour, artistic form, and artistic and cultural emancipation’.⁴⁵

While Henderson did not expressly identify his practice in post-war London as being ‘avant-garde’ or of comprising a comprehensive ‘research programme’, Roberts’ theoretical proposition provides a cogent framework within which to interconnect and analyse the collaborative, authorially ambiguous, readymade, and photographically replicative aspects of his practice. By invoking this notion of research, Henderson’s work can be interrogated not as a means of producing finite artistic forms, but instead – to use a dictionary definition of ‘research’ – as the ‘detailed study of a subject, especially in order to discover (new) information or reach a (new) understanding’.⁴⁶ Critically, this definition allows new questions to be asked of the artist’s work, concerning its mode of study, the subject of its analyses, the information it sought to discover, and the understandings towards which it reached. In addition, by foregrounding this idea of research, collage and photography can be reinterrogated as research methodologies. What is more, these questions are best directed not at individual artworks, but rather at the interrelationality between more ephemeral and replicative forms, which suggest a searching and unsettled kind of practice.

Roberts’ writing therefore allows a new approach to be taken to the images and pieces of pattern that were reiterated throughout *Vital Fragments*, which evidenced a kind of work that departed from the dominant definition of artistic labour maintained within the museum. Whereas my co-curators and I had cast these migratory elements as fragmentary forms, Roberts’ theoretical perspective provides a means by which they can be reconceived as units of visual data, circulating via concatenated chains of named and unnamed practitioners, artistic and non-artistic hands, in a collaborative process of creative inquiry without a clearly defined beginning or end. Rather than being oriented towards the production of individualised artworks, I would argue that this mode of practice should be comprehended as an extended exploration into alternative ways of looking at and thinking about the modern world, which occupies the conceptual space of art as a position from which to generate ‘non-official, heterodox, illicit, denatured’ and

‘dissensual’ forms of knowledge, to invoke Roberts’ terms. By reconceiving of Henderson’s practice in post-war Britain as a kind of collaborative and photographically mediated research work, dominant definitions of collaboration and artistic labour can also be called into question, as can conventional understandings of the relationship between art and technologies such as photography.

Indeed, when read as research, Henderson’s practice provides an incisive opportunity to probe the definition of collaboration in art, due to its departure from the idea of collaboration as a means of producing jointly attributable artworks, whereupon the names of multiple artists are openly combined, or the individual’s name is seamlessly replaced by that of the group. Predominantly, contemporary studies of artistic collaboration focus on examples of two or more artists working together to execute individual artworks, which can be equally attributed to their names;⁴⁷ or, alternatively, they centre upon instances in which collaborating groups of artists fuse to create a ‘collective persona’ or a ‘meta-artist’ whose name subsumes those of the individual artists.⁴⁸ Charles Green has termed this phenomenon ‘the third hand’,⁴⁹ whereby the collaborators’ identities merge to create a new authorial position, thus staging an ‘alteration of artistic identity from individual to compositive subjectivity’.⁵⁰ In contrast to this enlargement of artistic identity an alternative trend has emerged in recent decades, whereby participatory and socially oriented artistic practices operating within the public sphere perform an overt relinquishment of authorship. This has led to a situation in which, Claire Bishop argues, ‘the status of the artist’s intentionality (e.g. their humble lack of authorship) is privileged over a discussion of the work’s artistic identity. [...] artists are praised for their conscious authorial renunciation.’⁵¹ Consequently, the contemporary discourse on artistic collaboration concentrates, primarily, upon the tensions between the political and social implications of collaborative identity and intention, the ethics of artistic authorship, and the aesthetics that result from these more interactive ways of working.⁵²

Conversely, by analysing Henderson’s practice in post-war London through a paradigm of artistic research, his work offers a case study in which collaboration was not primarily rooted in stable, self-stated groupings of practitioners who jointly authored artworks under their individual names or under a consistent group name that served as an authorial proxy for its members. Instead, his methodological deployment of collage and photography meant collaboration operated, principally, at the level of the image

rather than at the level of artistic identity or authorial intention. Throughout the 1950s, Henderson worked collaboratively within ever-shifting configurations of named and unnamed practitioners, including artists and non-artists, to an extent that his own authorial status – and his relationship with other practitioners – often becomes obscured, layered, subtracted, and blurred. Indeed, throughout this thesis, Henderson’s name serves as a placeholder for authorial complexity itself. Moreover, by grounding his method in a repository of found images, it becomes clear that there was a further form of distanced collaboration inherent in the work’s material basis. His output thus allows collaboration to be interrogated materially and technologically, through the pictorial and pattern data and the photographic technologies that mediated his collaborative interactions across multiple sites. These more complex, extended kinds of collaboration, which are not obviously or consistently named as such, can only be analysed by meticulously following the materials that comprised this research practice to reveal their more fleeting interconnections with other practitioners beyond the predetermined groupings that are familiar from the literature, and which largely derive from autobiographical accounts and statements of collaborative intent. Not only can more transient forms of collaboration be traced by concentrating on the material residues of Henderson’s practice, but these less clearly defined instances of collaboration can be re-evaluated as a kind of research work in their own right.

What is more, foregrounding a notion of research in relation to Henderson’s post-war activities permits conventional conceptions of artistic labour to be troubled, not least because it allows his practice to be interconnected across multiple sites, none of which adhere to the conventions of the artist’s studio. Caroline A. Jones argues that the post-war period witnessed a shift in the constitution of artistic work and a concomitant alteration to the conception of artistic identity, which can be mapped onto changes to the primary site of artistic production: the artist’s studio. Jones asserts that the idea of the studio has been critical for forging a lionized image of the modern American artist as ‘solitary, white, male, and free [...] autochthonic and alone.’⁵³ The trope of the artist’s studio serves, Jones argues, as a guarantor of the artwork’s value as an ‘object created (authorized) by an isolated, heroic artist-genius.’⁵⁴ However, she claims that, since the 1960s, the studio has also provided a staid convention for artists to rally against, which has seen it transform ‘from an isolate sanctuary of creativity to a bustling workshop indexed to postwar industry’.⁵⁵ As Jones concedes, however, this transformation at the level of artistic production has done little to alter the enduring ‘romance of the studio’,

and the ideal of individualised labour that this trope connotes. At the level of museological acquisition or art market valorisation, she argues, the image of the solo artist is maintained because the ‘auratic mechanisms of modern art’ are ‘recuperated endlessly by the market and mass culture, where the construction of authorship is crucial to commodity exchange.’⁵⁶ This observation further elucidates the relative neglect of Henderson’s work, which did not, in the main, emerge from the traditional setting of the artist’s studio but which can instead be understood as research practice enacted through circulating image data dispersed across multiple sites.

Crucially, in 1950s London, the primary locations of Henderson’s practice were sites in which other individuals – both artists and non-artists – were actively engaged in work, and with whom he worked in alignment, exchange, and divergence. His example therefore raises questions about the nature of artistic work in comparison with other forms of labour in the post-war world. Helen Molesworth claims that in the decades after the Second World War, artistic practice increasingly centred upon a ‘concern with the problematic of artistic labor.’⁵⁷ As well as reflecting a transformation in the West from industrial to post-industrial societies, Molesworth cites a confluence of factors as contributing to this post-war alteration to the constitution of artistic work, including the belated reception of Duchamp, changes to the academic training of artists, and adaptations of the studio model.⁵⁸ Significantly, like Jones, Molesworth concedes that there is a persistent disjunction between the redefinition of artistic labour enacted at the level of production and the popular conception of artistic work that permeates the primary sites of art’s reception. She writes that, despite changes in practice and discourse, ‘the romantic myths of the artist as outcast, the artist as lone genius’ still holds sway ‘in the popular imagination.’⁵⁹ Julia Bryan-Wilson offers a further analysis of the changing constitution of artistic work after the Second World War. In the late 1960s and early 1970s in New York, Bryan-Wilson observes a development in which ‘both artists and critics began to identify themselves as art workers’, thereby engendering a ‘polemical redefinition of artistic labor.’⁶⁰ She cites this as a turning point at which ‘*art work* is no longer confined to describing aesthetic methods, acts of making, or art objects – the traditional referents of the term – but is implicated in artists’ collective working conditions, the demolition of the capitalist art market, and even revolution.’⁶¹

While I am not claiming that Henderson’s work actively addressed a ‘concern with the problematic of artistic labor’ or that he consciously identified as an ‘art worker’ in order

to stage a 'polemical redefinition of artistic labor', his practice can nonetheless be brought into dialogue with these discourses on the changing conception of artistic work after the Second World War. This is thanks to his lack of interest in manual mimetic skills and in the production of finite artistic forms, and his orientation instead towards an open-ended, processual mode of investigation, which occupied the category of art whilst interacting with other kinds of labour outside the conventional studio. Additionally, Henderson's work provides an important counterpoint to instances in which artists have critiqued their labour in more explicit, intentional ways. In contrast, his output can be studied in relation to questions of artistic labour because of the problems that the material remnants of his practice pose for the museum today, due to their lack of adherence to the dominant definition of attributable artistic work. Moreover, by analysing Henderson's output through a lens of research, notions of artistic 'labour', 'work' and 'practice' can be differently conceived. For Molesworth and Jones, their adoption of the words 'labour' and 'work' allows artistic activities to be placed in proximity with industrial and post-industrial modes of production. However, when associated with an idea of research, such terms take on connotations of intellectual labour and the work of perceptual and cognitive analysis. Furthermore, while the term 'practice' is conventionally used to describe all the preliminary and preparatory endeavours that artists pursue to enrich their ultimate production of artworks; when associated with the notion of research, the idea of practice can be reoriented towards the generation of new knowledge within the conceptual space of art.

Finally, by adopting this paradigm of artistic research to interrogate Henderson's post-war work, a new perspective can be brought to bear within the discourse on artistic research itself, its emergence in the post-war period, and its popular deployment within the present moment. In *Technocrats of the Imagination: Art, Technology, and the Military-Industrial Avant-Garde* (2020), John Beck and Ryan Bishop trace contemporary conceptions of artistic research back to the post-war period in the West when collaborations between artists, scientists, technologists, and engineers proliferated within government organisations, universities, corporations, and think tanks. After World War II, the authors argue, the imperative in America was to maintain a democracy grounded in the impartial logic of scientific rationality and structured by bureaucratic principles of management and efficiency. To ensure that the subjects of this democracy did not lapse into homogenised conformity or fall foul of authoritarianism, notions of creativity, collaboration, interdisciplinarity and

experimentation were promoted as virtues, both ‘necessary and desirable for the progressive development of a modern industrial state’.⁶² Enterprise and innovation were similarly encouraged in the pursuit of progress and prosperity. Consequently, thinking derived from the European avant-garde and brought ashore by émigrés fleeing the war, was soon subsumed, they argue, into an ‘expertise driven intellectual economy’ and an education system powered by ‘competition and specialization’.⁶³

Critically, Beck and Bishop observe a resurgence of enthusiasm in avant-garde thinking and practice in corporate America today, where neoliberalism has embraced its ‘revolutionary ambitions’.⁶⁴ Beck and Bishop claim that the once radical figure of the ‘artist-as-researcher’ is now entirely complementary with a deregulated labor market, even serving as an ideal ever-flexible worker and lateral thinker.⁶⁵ Similarly, Dave Beech proposes that, in this contemporary context, the artist ‘no longer appears as exemplary of an exceptional type of nonalienated labour but has come to signify the typical worker of post-Fordism.’⁶⁶ This demonstrates, Beck and Bishop argue, ‘the ongoing struggle between the idea of an avant-garde and the appetite capital exhibits in its willingness to feed upon it.’⁶⁷ Roberts’ notion of the avant-garde as an ongoing research programme is ‘especially pertinent’, they write, ‘given the rise of the art-as-research paradigm and its deployment by the neoliberal university, global art museums, and the tech sector’.⁶⁸ Correspondingly, Pamela M Lee analyses the instrumentalisation of avant-garde practices in America since the Second World War and the resurgence of interest in such work today. Critically, Lee asks whether this might be indicative of a kind of disciplinary imperialism in the drive of science and technology to conquer new terrains. ‘Can we speak’, she asks, ‘of an impulse by scientists to gain ground on the visual and aesthetic domain as a different intellectual territory to explore, perhaps even exploit, in ways of content, resource material, and creativity?’⁶⁹ In this context, Lee argues, art is susceptible to colonisation by other, non-art fields.⁷⁰

Comparably, Sholette analyses the colonising force of contemporary ‘enterprise culture’, which he identifies as emerging in tandem with neoliberal economics over the latter part of the twentieth century. He argues that neoliberalism voraciously pursues ‘new enclosures’ by instrumentalising and extracting value from ever more resources, ‘including intellectual and artistic ideas’.⁷¹ Enterprise culture implements ‘enforced creativity’,⁷² Sholette asserts, whereby workers are required ‘to be constantly creative, to think like an artist: “outside the box.”’⁷³ He continues, ‘universal demands for

imagination and innovation inevitably places added value on forms of “creativity” previously dismissed as informal or non-professional.⁷⁴ Sholette argues that in post-war and contemporary economics, the artist emerges as a fetish figure whose creativity, adaptability and ‘unorthodox cultural labor practices’ are adopted as models for the entrepreneurial and ever-flexible worker, offering a rich resource of extractable value.⁷⁵ Set against this backdrop, he proposes that his study of dark matter is pertinent ‘for anyone who believes artistic production should retain some degree of autonomy from the market, or that cultural work is more than just instrumental labor, or most urgently of all that is it the historic mission of art to fearlessly engage in social dissent.’⁷⁶ Although Henderson did not overtly ‘engage in social dissent’, his work nonetheless offers an opportunity to question how artistic research might ‘retain some degree of autonomy from the market’ and serve as ‘more than just instrumental labor’, to paraphrase Sholette. Furthermore, by interrogating Henderson’s practice through a lens of artistic research, his work offers a critical counterpoint to the professionalisation and instrumentalisation of avant-garde forms of investigation after the Second World War, and their assimilation of into neoliberal knowledge and enterprise economies.

The photograph as meta-image and remediating tool

Victoria Walsh’s writing provides another critical foundation for analysing the question of artistic research that is raised by the remnants of Henderson’s work in 1950s London, as typified by the uncertain materials that interlinked the interior of 46 Chisenhale Road, and the collaborative exhibitions *Parallel of Life and Art* and *Patio and Pavilion*. Crucially, Walsh demonstrates that photographic image-making was the key to Henderson’s post-war practice and to his collaborative endeavours during this period. Walsh’s understanding of Henderson is rooted in her touring exhibition and its catalogue, *Nigel Henderson: Parallel of Life and Art* (2001), a book that remains the only major monograph dedicated to the artist.⁷⁷ In this text, Walsh analyses the central strands of Henderson’s output: his photographic experiments; photographs of the East End; collaborative exhibitions; collages; and his efforts in co-founding the silkscreen printmaking enterprise, Hammer Prints Ltd, on which he worked with Eduardo and Freda Paolozzi and Judith Henderson. Importantly, Walsh shows how Henderson turned towards collaborative and technologised methods of experimentation in the 1950s, which drew heavily upon pre-war, avant-garde precedents. Most critically for my

purposes, Walsh also identifies the conception of the ‘image’ as the locus of Henderson’s collaborative and individual practice during the post-war period. In the foreword to her book, Peter Smithson emphasises the significance of this thinking, writing that the notion of the ‘image’ served as a ‘condensation of meaning’ for Henderson and his collaborators at this time, and thus provides ‘the key to the period.’⁷⁸

In her subsequent essay, ‘Reordering and Redistributing the Visual: The Expanded “Field” of Pattern-Making in *Parallel of Life and Art* and Hammer Prints’ (2013), Walsh identifies Hammer Prints Ltd as a critical component of the ‘experimental cross-media work’ Henderson and Paolozzi pursued together in the 1950s.⁷⁹ The silkscreen-printing enterprise sought, she claims, to ‘overthrow the existing visual order (and the distinction between fine and decorative arts) based on classical aesthetics and its concomitant hierarchy of cultural value.’⁸⁰ For Walsh, the artists’ work on Hammer Prints was connected directly with *Parallel of Life and Art* and *Patio and Pavilion*. Indeed, these three endeavours comprised:

‘the same collaborative project to develop new orders of the visual and new symbolic habitats that would retrieve the concept and practice of art from the conservative stranglehold of the establishment and return it not only to the public space of culture, but also the private everyday space of the domestic interior.’⁸¹

Walsh demonstrates that photography was critical for interconnecting these three projects. And she identifies Henderson as the hybridised ‘artist-photographer’ who made such interconnecting possible.⁸² She states: ‘what is often forgotten in art historical accounts of Henderson’s role is the fact that he was not *just* a photographer [...] but rather as the critic and friend David Sylvester was later at pains to emphasise, an “artist-photographer”’.⁸³ Together with his collaborators, Henderson pursued a photographically mediated and ‘processual method’ of individual and collective ‘editing’, Walsh argues, which was designed ‘to discover whether a pattern of connections at a cognitive, rather than purely visual level, would effectively and creatively emerge.’⁸⁴

Crucially, she asserts that the photographs Henderson took of *Parallel of Life and Art* should not be considered as straightforward forms of archival documentation. Instead, Walsh highlights the ‘aesthetic and strategic value’ Henderson afforded these images.⁸⁵

Rather than serving as faithful records of the show, they ‘held a different primary function consistent with the logic of the exhibition itself.’⁸⁶ As she elucidates, the photographs operated as an extension of the processes of replication and layering staged by the exhibition, with each providing a ‘meta-image’ through which further patterning and correspondences could be studied.⁸⁷ Walsh’s conception of Henderson’s photographs as functioning both visually and cognitively offers a pertinent means to begin interrogating their deployment within an intermedial research methodology. Moreover, her notion of his photography as generating ‘meta-images’ is critical for understanding the value of these images not merely as documentation but rather as analytical devices.

Walsh and Claire Zimmerman extended this research through their co-curated display at Tate Britain, *New Brutalist Image, 1949-55* (2014) and a subsequent co-written article, ‘New Brutalist Image 1949-55: “atlas to a new world” or “trying to look at things today”’ (2016).⁸⁸ Together they interrogate the potential of the photographic image to operate as a purely visual form of communication, a ‘non-textual’ language that ‘lies somewhere between syntax and lexicon.’⁸⁹ Photography speaks, they argue, ‘through visual cross-relationships’ created via ‘juxtaposition’ and ‘layering’.⁹⁰ As a language, they claim, the photographic image operates ‘neither as indexical document nor as fetishized object, but rather relationally.’⁹¹ In the post-war period, photography thereby provided practitioners with a ‘remediating tool’ with which to ‘synthesize the rampant disjunctions of contemporary culture’ and ‘overcome disciplinary and practice boundaries across art, architecture, design, and everyday life’.⁹² Furthermore, Henderson’s hybridised position as artist-photographer provided a critical nexus for such intermedial interactions. Clearly, not only did his aptitude for photography contribute to his own output, but his photographic images fostered an extended dialogue between other practitioners through photography’s non-verbal, purely visual language.

Extending Walsh’s and Zimmerman’s analyses, this thesis asks how Henderson’s distinctive deployment of photography might be reconceived as constituting part of a research practice. Furthermore, by foregrounding the photographic mediation intrinsic to this form of work, a further dimension can be added to my questions concerning the intersections between conceptions of artistic research, collaboration, and labour, which become inflected by Henderson’s use of photographic technologies. Daniel Palmer argues that photography is an inherently collaborative practice and that, counterintuitively, individual photographers provide especially pertinent case studies of photographic

collaboration.⁹³ He proposes: ‘if we move beyond the authorship of individual images and consider photography as a social and communicative activity, which unfolds over time, it turns out that most photography is collaboratively authored at some level.’⁹⁴ By analysing the specificity of photographic collaboration, Palmer seeks to demonstrate that ‘collaboration has not only been a latent potential within the history of photography, but [...] artists who have explored this potential have often done so unknowingly’.⁹⁵ Fundamentally, Palmer argues that ‘the photographic act is composed of multiple agents, and that the artist who conceptualizes the release of the shutter is only one’.⁹⁶ Building upon Palmer’s position, Henderson’s photographic practice can be analysed as an inherently collaborative mode of research in which the specific qualities of the photographic medium fostered a distinctive use of replicated images and patterns, which served as mobile pieces of visual data for meta-level photographic analysis within an extended, collaborative process of investigation.

By locating Henderson’s research practice in post-war London within the technologies of photography, the implications of photography for notions of artistic labour can also be interrogated. Beech argues that the trope of the artist-genius was able to flourish ‘when the handicraft elements of artistic production [were] displaced from the studio and industrialised’.⁹⁷ However, by casting light onto ‘the unacknowledged dependence of the artist on the industrialisation of handicraft’,⁹⁸ this trope might be dismantled. In order to move beyond the romantic idea of art’s ‘anticapitalist objection to industrial production, mechanisation and automation’,⁹⁹ Beech argues that the ‘the discourses of the machine, the robot and AI’ must be properly addressed in relation to the politics of artistic labour.¹⁰⁰ Beech grounds this analysis on the premise that ‘humans are incapable of making art without technology’,¹⁰¹ and, therefore, that art is ‘always produced by cyborgs’.¹⁰² As he states, ‘To say that the artist was always a cyborg is to recast the romantic view of the genius (as an expressive, creative authorial soul)’; instead, artistic work is exposed as being ‘dependent on forms of labour it abjures’.¹⁰³ Situating the locus of Henderson’s investigative practice in post-war London within photographic machineries and materialities, rather than attributing this work to his intentionality or identity, permits an understanding of artistic research as a highly technologised practice. Importantly, this approach does not substitute the idea of the heroic artist-genius with the heroic artist-genius-researcher, but instead demonstrates the problems that technologised modes of research poses for traditional conceptions of the artist and their labour.

A moment of uncertainty in post-war Britain

Revealingly, a lexicon of terms associated with research punctuates the discourse encircling Henderson's work in post-war London. In particular, such terminologies frame his interactions with the Independent Group (IG) at the nascent ICA.¹⁰⁴ The IG is the name given to a fluctuating cohort of artists, designers, architects, and theorists who assembled around a series of meetings convened at the ICA between 1952 and 1955. It is significant that the literature on the IG suggests that the discourse surrounding the production and presentation of contemporary art was becoming newly aligned with ideas of group research and collectivised cognitive labour. This is dramatized in the first major scholarly study of the group, *The Independent Group: Postwar Britain and the Aesthetics of Plenty* (1990), which identifies the work of the IG as centring upon a form of discursive research, enacted through a 'free flow of conversation' and the 'continuity of ideas'¹⁰⁵. Here it is argued that, unlike their artist counterparts in 1950s America, the practitioners affiliated with the IG did not meet postwar competition through the macho confrontation of paint hitting canvas. Instead, they formed a 'research unit.'¹⁰⁶ Acting as the 'inner research department'¹⁰⁷ of the ICA, they pooled visual sources and shared ideas through group discussions, events, and the testing of new modes of display.

In Jacquelynn Baas' introduction to the catalogue, she refers to the IG as a 'milieu of young professionals', whose careers had been placed at a disadvantage by the war.¹⁰⁸ She notes that they were 'professional rather than academic in outlook, prodigiously urbane.'¹⁰⁹ Baas details the technical training of various members. They were, she suggests, creative labourers rather than aesthetes, who typically had 'unprivileged, "street-smart" backgrounds.'¹¹⁰ Henderson, however, having come from an upper-middle-class family and enjoying both social and academic privilege, does not readily conform to Baas' characterisation. *The Aesthetics of Plenty* is caught between two positions: on the one hand, it lionises the practitioners affiliated with the IG as highly individualistic, iconoclastic rebels, thereby conforming to the trope of the artist genius; while, on the other hand, it departs from such conventions by emphasising their collectivised, discursive, and research-centred approach to working in the broader field of contemporary culture. Yet, *The Aesthetics of Plenty* stops short of directly analysing the activities of the IG as a kind of artistic research practice. Instead, the group's discussions are positioned as preliminary endeavours, fuelling the advancement of the

practitioners' individual careers in, for instance, the more conventional media of painting or sculpture.

Published five years later, Anne Massey's monographic study of the IG, *The Independent Group: Modernism and Mass Culture in Britain, 1945-59* (1995), examines the group in relation to wider developments in modern art, design, and consumer culture.¹¹¹ Massey seeks to localise the IG within the particular context of the ICA and the broader context of mid-century Britain, and to emphasise the 'nebulous' nature of the group rather than reify it as an 'historical entity'.¹¹² Massey's assessment is concerned, principally, with the group's analysis of modern culture and its redefinition of modernism at the ICA.¹¹³ She is critical of previous IG scholarship for neglecting the specificity of the ICA, and for having portrayed the ICA as a passive vessel for the group's ambitions. Massey aligns her approach, not with the field of fine art or its canonical histories, but 'in relation to developments in British Cultural Studies'.¹¹⁴ In doing so, she frames the work of the IG as a labour of 'cultural analysis',¹¹⁵ through which participants sought to rework modernism in their discussions and dissemination of ideas. In her later assessment of IG members' collaborative work, Massey depicts the group as a 'think-tank'.¹¹⁶ She frames their collaboration as intellectual and dialogic. Their interactions depended upon, she argues, an 'interplay of ideas' and a sharing of 'disciplinary interests'.¹¹⁷ Like *The Aesthetics of Plenty*, Massey's account is suggestive of a notion of group research, yet she too stops short of interrogating this mode of cognitive and creative work in relation to the broader question of what constitutes artistic practice.

Extending Massey's analysis of the emergence of the IG from the ICA, Ben Cranfield further interrogates the role of the institution in the group's construction. Crucially, in "'Not Another Museum": The Search for Contemporary Connection' (2013), he analyses the knot of terms that comprise the ICA's title: institute, contemporary, arts.¹¹⁸ For Cranfield, the term 'institute' oriented the ICA away from the museological privileging of historical posterity and towards a contemporary concern for production. As Cranfield notes, "'institute" implied research, education and professionalisation' in postwar Britain, where the term 'had taken on particular significations of re-skilling for industry and democratic education'.¹¹⁹ By invoking these connotations, the ICA intended, he argues, 'to open up a space in between multiple forms of media, where producers could innovate, using the language of the laboratory and the idea of experimentation'.¹²⁰ Furthermore, by focusing on the contemporary, the ICA tasked itself with holding a set

of opposing perspectives in play, whereby ‘contradiction and tension became the condition and concern of the contemporary, as an inchoate bracketing of interrelated and often incompatible desires for relevancy, technocracy and criticality’.¹²¹ The term ‘arts’ then added a ‘declaration of plurality’ that, contradictorily, ‘spoke at once of a utopia of categorical synthesis and the material conditions that made such synthesis impossible’.¹²² For Cranfield, the early formation of the ICA manifested a rupture between ‘productive modernism, represented by the Bauhaus’ and ‘rarefied modernism, institutionalised by the modern art museum and the private gallery.’¹²³ The IG spoke into this rupture, as both a ‘discursive interruption and contribution’,¹²⁴ he argues, and ‘as a rhetorical and structural response to the question of the contemporary, as a statement of lack within the structure of an art discourse centred upon the museum’.¹²⁵

Ben Highmore also associates the emergence of the IG with an idea of research. In his book, *The Art of Brutalism: Rescuing Hope from Catastrophe in 1950s Britain* (2017), Highmore identifies those affiliated with the IG, including Henderson, as key protagonists in the development of a mode of practice that he names as ‘brutalism’.¹²⁶ For Highmore, the term brutalism serves as ‘a historical device with a heuristic orientation’ allowing a complex constellation of cultural practices to be discussed, which history has otherwise ‘failed to name and fix’.¹²⁷ Highmore argues that the IG (and the ICA more generally) was brutalism’s research and development arm’.¹²⁸ Moreover, he aligns the content of the meetings of the IG with the ‘curricula of Cultural Studies and contextual studies’.¹²⁹ For Highmore, brutalism operated at an ‘interstitial moment’ in post-war Britain,¹³⁰ which was characterised by conflicts and contradictions. To adapt to the rapidly shifting terrain of the post-war world, he argues, brutalist practitioners, such as Henderson, had to relinquish disciplinary traditions. And in the absence of these traditions, Highmore claims, ‘something more flexible and responsive emerges, something that doesn’t have a predetermined agenda but takes its mood and modalities from “the sequence of situations,” which can’t be known in advance.’¹³¹

The literature framing Henderson’s work thus indicates a short period of generative uncertainty in post-war Britain and, critically, a moment that saw a shift in the constitution of artistic labour and its subject matters, and a concomitant disruption to the disciplinary traditions of art itself. Revealingly, both Massey and Highmore align the formation of the IG with the emergence of the new discipline of Cultural Studies in Britain, suggesting that the work being carried out did not yet have a disciplinary

domain. Roberts proposes that the research of the avant-garde occupies a position of ‘adisciplinarity’ and proceeds via ‘disciplinary disinvestment’,¹³² and the brief moment of disciplinary disruption in post-war Britain – as elucidated by the literature on the IG, the early ICA and brutalism – can be seen as a critical opening for this kind of work.

Importantly, although Henderson is frequently cited as a ‘core member’ of the IG, this is a mischaracterisation of his partial and peripheral relationship to the group and his stated ambivalence towards its programme of meetings.¹³³ Emphasising his oblique position, Henderson describes the IG ‘Think Tank’ as having been ‘of little interest to me personally’.¹³⁴ Rather, he identifies his intermittent contributions as having drawn upon, primarily, his knowledge of pre-war avant-garde practitioners. As argued by Massey, the IG has become mythologised in histories of post-war British art, where members of the group are often lauded as the ‘fathers of pop’ or the progenitors of post-modernism.¹³⁵ Crucially, the hagiography of the IG has bolstered the reputations of certain protagonists, such as Richard Hamilton and Paolozzi, who have both promoted and been promoted by its heroizing status. Their interactions with the IG are celebrated as having contributed to the developments of their solo careers, generating individually attributable artworks in painting and sculpture, which can be smoothly assimilated into museological collections or acquire market value. In contrast, Henderson’s more authorially ambiguous and materially and technologically distributed work, has not readily lent itself to acquisition or purchase, and hence retains some of the uncertain energies that catalysed IG discussions. It is important to note, however, that his equivocal position was afforded by certain privileges, not least his upper-middle class status and the provision of housing through his wife’s work in Bethnal Green and her subsequent inheritance of the Kings Head at Landermere Quay.

In contrast to his more careerist peers, Henderson adopted an explicitly self-deflationary and anti-professional stance. In an interview conducted towards the end of his life, he ruminated,

‘Perhaps I’m not ‘a real artist?’ Who am I to say? I like the No-man’s land I work in just because people *are* uncertain as to what value to place upon it. My value is just whatever value I may have or people may choose to find. I only feel an artist from time to time [...] one of the many things that make

me doubt myself is my relative indifference to Art. I can't make a *study* of it.¹³⁶

This scepticism towards the professionalisation and academicization of 'Art' (capitalised to suggest its disciplinary tradition) and the lingering question of whether he himself was a 'real artist' are pertinent for considering the uncertain position of Henderson's work in relation to the question of how his practice might constitute a kind of artistic research. This uncertainty is generative, I would argue, because – when placed in proximity to the literature on the IG, the nascent ICA, and brutalism – it speaks to an inchoate moment in Britain in which artistic practice and collaborative research activities were becoming newly aligned before the disciplinary tradition of 'Art' or the emergent discipline of cultural studies could name and claim such an alignment. The term 'research' typically connotes the production of knowledges that conform to predetermined disciplinary categories, yet the literature on the IG gestures to a moment when such categories were in flux. Moreover, Henderson's admission that he cannot make a *study* of art elucidates the impossibility of assimilating artistic research into the established conventions of 'Art'. His work therefore provides a germane case study through which to analyse the problematic relationship between art and research.

Methodological images and research scenes

The terms from the literature that encircle Henderson's work in post-war Britain – research unit, inner research department, research institute, think tank, laboratory, research and development, and so on – suggest a turn towards more investigative modes of artistic practice at a moment of disciplinary uncertainty. Revealingly, notions of research are invoked almost universally and instinctively by these authors to name this collectivised and discursive kind of work, although the definition of artistic research itself and its implications are never explicitly addressed in their texts. Nor is Henderson's peripheral but critical position fully accounted for in relation to these research terms, which imply a kind of professionalisation or academicization of this work. What would it mean to foreground the various ideas associated with research that surround his practice during this period? Bringing the photographs from the *Vital Fragments* vitrines back into focus, phrases such as research unit, research department, research institute, think tank, laboratory, and research and development, seem to

implicate a kind of work that is somehow too technically precise, too systematic, too bureaucratic, too clinical, even, to characterise the messy, haphazard and obstinately obscure deployment of collage and photography that connected 46 Chisenhale Road, *Parallel of Life and Art* and *Patio and Pavilion*. The artist's work across these settings appears to challenge a rationalized understanding of research itself.

If Henderson's work within and between these contexts can be named as research, it was research of an odd kind. The units of visual data deployed were unlikely pictorial details from unknown sources or abstract pieces of pattern filled with disruptive designs. Such photographically replicated materials migrated throughout his practice in unpredictable and apparently illogical ways. They appear incongruent, estranged, or unmoored within the settings in which they were mobilised, and in turn they make these environments unsettling themselves. Citing the art critic David Sylvester's coinage of the term, Henderson characterised these pictorial details and pieces of pattern as 'multi-evocative' images, pointing to their ability to trigger manifold, ambiguous meanings and to operate in highly polyvalent and contingent ways.¹³⁷ Crucially, as I have demonstrated, these materials pose problems for the conventions of museological acquisition, codification, and display. They remain unattributable and their photographically reiterative character disrupts the logic of classification and the stability of origin points and provenance. They therefore retain a sense of uncertainty that allows them to be brought to bear on questions of artistic collaboration beyond the binary of individual and group authorship and on conceptions of artistic labour that do not privilege the production of artworks. Moreover, by applying a notion of research to these equivocal images, they can be interrogated not as preparatory materials or fragments from artistic forms, but rather as analytical devices, as ways of looking at and thinking about the modern world.

To investigate the research functions of the images that Henderson deployed, these highly ephemeral materials must be returned to their sites and conditions of production, reproduction, or use. Consequently, this thesis is structured by four examples of such images, which are mapped onto the contexts in which they were made or mobilised. My approach to these materials is informed by Mark Fisher's writing in *The Weird and the Eerie* (2016).¹³⁸ For Fisher, 'the weird is that *which does not belong*. The weird brings to the familiar something which ordinarily lies beyond it'.¹³⁹ He writes, 'the weird is a particular kind of perturbation. It involves a sense of *wrongness*: a weird entity or object

is so strange that it makes us feel that it should not exist, or at least it should not exist here.¹⁴⁰ According to Fisher, the weird elicits feelings of being out of place or suspended disconcertingly between places. He argues that '*the between* is crucial to the weird.'¹⁴¹ In Henderson's work during the 1950s, the repetition, extraction, distortion, and reinsertion of incongruent imagery between the interior of his house and his collaborative exhibitions imbue these materials with a sense of being both unsettled and unsettling. They demonstrate a kind of processual weirdness, I would argue, in which the state of being out of place becomes their methodological charge.

Fisher uses the analogy of the threshold to characterise the weird¹⁴² His notion of the threshold – as a strange point of passage between different realities, times, and spaces – offers a means to reconsider Henderson's reiterated images as thresholds into or interfaces between the contexts in which he mobilised them, and as mechanisms through which to navigate his practice today. At the start of my four chapters, I use highly ephemeral pieces of visual data as thresholds, to move from the present into the past and into the sites in which Henderson's research practice took shape. Drawing upon images from the archive at Tate and from the Kings Head that have an uncertain status in the present, I localise these materials within the settings from which they derived or within which they were mobilised in post-war London, including the art school where Henderson was employed, the interior of his house, the exhibitions on which he collaborated, and the photographic negative itself. In doing so, I reconceive of these sites as unusual research scenes. Crucially, this approach eschews a structure governed by chronology or biographical trajectory. Moreover, it does not centre upon 'key' artworks from the artists' oeuvre, but instead operates through the strange silt of Henderson's work. This methodology might be loosely described as curatorial, as a 'way of linking objects, images, processes, people, locations, histories, and discourses', as articulated by Maria Lind for whom curating 'involves not just representing but presenting and testing'.¹⁴³ These notions of linking and testing are especially critical for my inquiry. By returning these images to their sites and conditions of mobilisation and closely attending to their interactions therein, they can be meticulously re-linked to these scenes and re-tested as research materials capable of generating new knowledge.

My first chapter begins with a photographic negative – now held in the archive at Tate – showing a shard of a silkscreen-printed abstract pattern, which was produced while Henderson was teaching Creative Photography in the department of Industrial Design

at the Central School of Arts and Crafts in London between 1951 and 1954. At this time, Paolozzi was teaching Textile Design in the department of Textiles, where he created such silkscreen-printed patterns in collaboration with the theorist and technician Anton Ehrenzweig. My analysis of Henderson's photographic negative calls into question the work that these practitioners performed on the premises of the school, and it uncovers hidden interactions between practices within the building. Furthermore, this chapter exposes the uncertain status of photography at this time. Using Henderson's negative as a dark, inverted entryway into this site, I investigate the work he was pursuing in his pedagogic darkroom in the basement of the building, which has remained fundamentally neglected in the literature. Most critically, I analyse how the art school provided a set of conditions for the development of interactive, cross-departmental research practices, which drew upon the Bauhaus notion of the art school as a laboratory for experimentation, while departing from the post-war impetus to instrumentalise such avant-garde modes of creativity in order to rebuild Britain.

The second chapter starts with a small, unattributed cutting – discovered at the Kings Head – depicting a pair of sculpted eyes transfixed in a silent stare. These eyes are taken from an image of an Etruscan funerary vase that was used in *Parallel of Life and Art*. Yet, this smaller version is not the print that was featured in the exhibition; rather it is a carefully cropped iteration that appears on the shelves of Henderson's dresser at 46 Chisenhale Road in a series of photographs from 1953. The image of the sculpted eyes offers an entryway into an investigation of the various practices of visual analysis that were performed within the house, which Henderson and his *Parallel of Life and Art* collaborators used as a context to collate and 'scrutinise' visual data in advance of the ICA exhibition. Furthermore, this chapter probes the interaction between Nigel and Judith Henderson at 46 Chisenhale Road, which was conditioned by her participation in the covert, socio-anthropological programme, Discover Your Neighbour. By situating his visual practice within her 'field station' of clandestine observation, I investigate the impact of her academic training upon his own research methods and, crucially, the divergences of their approaches.

My third chapter begins with a photograph – found among Henderson's possessions at the Kings Head – that was shot by the German photographer Hans Namuth in 1950, and which shows the American abstract expressionist painter Jackson Pollock in his Long Island studio. This picture appeared pinned to the wall in *Parallel of Life and Art*,

ensconced within a constellation of highly heterogenous imagery. It thus offers an entryway into the exhibition and into an analysis of the confrontation between painting and photography that was staged by the hang. In this chapter, I investigate how *Parallel of Life and Art* provided a context for the research methods that Henderson and his collaborators had developed at the Central School and at 46 Chisenhale Road to be named as art, while at the same time being activated as a negation of artistic tradition. By placing the Namuth-Pollock image in parallel with Henderson's self-stated title of 'Artist and Photographer', this chapter interrogates the dialogue between the darkroom experiments that he inserted surreptitiously into the hang and the photographically replicated images that surrounded them. In doing so, I question the ways in which his contributions to the exhibition challenged the conventions of painterly skill and form and the status of the artist's hand after the advent of photographic image-making.

The final chapter opens with a distorted photograph of a male bather, which Henderson had made by converting a Victorian lantern slide into a photographic negative. This bather appears in an article on Henderson's photographs in the Royal College of Art's journal *Ark* in 1956 and it comes from a series of distorted bather images that resurfaced reiteratively in the artist's work throughout the 1950s. Versions can be glimpsed on his dresser at 46 Chisenhale Road and in the hang of *Parallel of Life and Art* at the ICA in 1953. This chapter argues that the extended proliferation of pictures from *Parallel of Life and Art* throughout Henderson's post-war practice is indicative of the fact that he retained these images as a databank of dark, translucent, and inverted photographic negatives. In this chapter, I identify the negative as the most critical site of the artist's spatially and temporally dispersed research practice. I argue that the negative served as the material, technological, and conceptual basis of this form of work. Moreover, I suggest that *Parallel of Life and Art* can be connected with *Patio and Pavilion* through a photographic interpretation of the latter exhibition. Examples of Henderson's 'found' slides of bathers and their negative counterparts are now stored in the archive at Tate. This chapter considers the status of these materials within the museum, and questions why Henderson's negatives are almost universally published as positive images, thus concealing their form and function as negatives within his research practice.

Significantly, Fisher connects collage with his conception of the weird because the cut of collage disrupts the normal conventions of time and space. He writes that the 'notion of

things “cut out” of their proper place [...] has an affinity with the modernist technique of collage.’¹⁴⁴ His writing, therefore, offers a means to begin analysing the weirder, more spatially and temporally disparate kind of collage that was evident across the photographs within our *Vital Fragments* vitrines. As Fisher argues, the experience of weirdness in art may be due to newness.

‘Modernist and experimental work often strikes us as weird when we first encounter it. The sense of *wrongness* associated with the weird – the conviction that this *does not belong* – is often a sign that we are in the presence of the new. The weird here is a signal that the concepts and frameworks which we have previously employed are now obsolete.’¹⁴⁵

Crucially, he associates the weird with ‘strange loops’ and ‘tangles in cause and effect’ that generate ‘confusions of ontological level’.¹⁴⁶ This ontological weirdness is triggered, he argues, when ‘something that was at a supposedly inferior ontological level threatens to climb up out of its subordinated position and claim equal status with the level above’¹⁴⁷ Fisher’s conception of a weirdness engendered by such confusions in ontological level provides a cogent paradigm in which to place the interlayering of found images, photographic reproductions, installation photographs, negatives and positives that populated and encircled the interior at 46 Chisenhale Road, *Parallel of Life and Art* and *Patio and Pavilion*, and which now reside among the residues of Henderson’s work at Tate and at the Kings Head. Drawing upon Fisher’s writing, this thesis asks how the failure of these materials to fully belong within the museum – their sense of weirdness or wrongness within the collection or the archive – might be read not as a failure on the part of the materials to reach the proper position of artwork or documentation, but rather an indication that the museological concepts and frameworks available to house and display such materials might be insufficient.

¹ *Vital Fragments: Nigel Henderson and the Art of Collage* (Tate Britain, 2 December 2019 – 13 March 2020) was co-curated by Mark Hallett, Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art and Rosie Ram, Royal College of Art, with Zuzana Flaskova, Tate Britain. The project also benefited from the guidance and support of Elena Crippa, Tate Britain. This display was produced as a collaboration between Tate and the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art. See: <https://www.tate.org.uk/visit/tate-britain/display/vital-fragments-nigel-henderson-and-art-collage>, accessed 9 September 2021.

² For example, these negatives can be found in a file titled: 'Folder of POLAA [Parallel of Life and Art] Exhibition Papers', Tate, TGA 9211/5, and another titled: 'Negatives [appear to be related to the exhibition 'A Parallel of Life and Art', Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA), London, 1953]', Tate, TGA 201011/5/1.

³ Elza Adamowicz, *Surrealist Collage in Text and Image: Dissecting the Exquisite Corpse*, Cambridge Studies in French 56 (Cambridge, UK; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 24.

⁴ Nigel Henderson, Ronald Jenkins, Eduardo Paolozzi, Alison and Peter Smithson, *Parallel of Life and Art* (London: Institute of Contemporary Arts, 1953).

⁵ Gregory Sholette, *Dark Matter: Art and Politics in the Age of Enterprise Culture* (London; New York: Pluto Press, 2011), xvi.

⁶ Sholette, 1.

⁷ Sholette, 41.

⁸ Sholette, 41.

⁹ Sholette, 188.

¹⁰ Sholette, 4.

¹¹ Sholette, 4.

¹² Sholette, 7.

¹³ Sholette, 45.

¹⁴ Sholette, 9.

¹⁵ Sholette, 70.

¹⁶ Sholette, 9.

¹⁷ Sholette, 70.

¹⁸ Sholette, 9.

¹⁹ Sholette, 9.

²⁰ Sholette, 188.

²¹ This image was listed in the *Parallel of Life and Art* catalogue as '29. Excavated figure, Pompei. F. Romano, Naples'. See Henderson et al., *Parallel of Life and Art*.

²² Michelle Cotton, ed., *Nigel Henderson & Eduardo Paolozzi: Hammer Prints Ltd, 1954-75* (Colchester, Essex: Firstsite, 2013), 10.

²³ John Roberts, *The Intangibilities of Form: Skill and Deskilling in Art After the Readymade* (London; New York: Verso, 2007), 19.

²⁴ Roberts, 5.

²⁵ Roberts, 2.

²⁶ Roberts, 150.

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- ²⁷ Roberts, 98.
- ²⁸ Roberts, 5.
- ²⁹ Roberts, 5.
- ³⁰ John Roberts, 'Collaboration as a Problem of Art's Cultural Form', *Third Text* 18, no. 6 (1 November 2004): 564.
- ³¹ Roberts, 564.
- ³² Mapping the development of this collective collaboration, Roberts charts a trajectory from the pre-war 'laboratories' of Constructivism and the industrially aligned 'workshops' of Productivism, to the post-war examples of the sociability of Warhol's Factory in America and the collectivised approach to conceptual work embodied by Art & Language in Britain. Roberts, *The Intangibilities of Form*, 123–27.
- ³³ Roberts, 'Collaboration as a Problem of Art's Cultural Form', 557.
- ³⁴ Roberts, 557.
- ³⁵ Roberts, *The Intangibilities of Form*, 123.
- ³⁶ Roberts, 123.
- ³⁷ Roberts, 'Collaboration as a Problem of Art's Cultural Form', 559.
- ³⁸ John Roberts, *Revolutionary Time and the Avant-Garde* (London: Verso, 2015), 57.
- ³⁹ Roberts, 122.
- ⁴⁰ Roberts, 117.
- ⁴¹ Roberts, 47.
- ⁴² Roberts, 257.
- ⁴³ Roberts, 15.
- ⁴⁴ John Roberts, 'Art and Its Negations', *Third Text* 24, no. 3 (1 May 2010): 293.
- ⁴⁵ Roberts, *Revolutionary Time and the Avant-Garde*, 16.
- ⁴⁶ 'Research', in *Cambridge Dictionary*, accessed 26 May 2021, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/research>.
- ⁴⁷ Cynthia Jaffee McCabe, 'Introduction', in *Artistic Collaboration in the Twentieth Century* (Washington, D. C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1984), 13–14; Ellen Mara De Wachter, *Co-Art: Artists on Creative Collaboration* (London; New York: Phaidon Press Limited, 2017).
- ⁴⁸ Susan Sollins and Nina Castelli Sundell, *Team Spirit* (New York: Independent Curators Incorporated, 1990), 7.
- ⁴⁹ Charles Green, "Group soul: Who owns the artist fusion?" in *Third Text: Art and collaboration*. 18: 6 (2004): 596.
- ⁵⁰ Charles Green, *The Third Hand: Collaboration in Art from Conceptualism to Postmodernism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001). x.

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- ⁵¹ Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells* (London: Verso, 2012), 23.
- ⁵² See, for instance, Claire Bishop and Grant Kester's lively debates on the aesthetics and ethics of collaboration in *Artforum*. Claire Bishop, 'The Social Turn: Collaboration and Its Discontents', *Artforum*, February 2006, 179-185, followed by Grant Kester's letter to the editor and Bishop's reply, May 2006, 22-23.
- ⁵³ Caroline A. Jones, *Machine in the Studio: Constructing the Postwar American Artist* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 57.
- ⁵⁴ Jones, 371.
- ⁵⁵ Jones, 345.
- ⁵⁶ Jones, 2.
- ⁵⁷ Helen Molesworth, *Work Ethic* (Baltimore; University Park: Baltimore Museum of Art: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), 25.
- ⁵⁸ Molesworth, 38.
- ⁵⁹ Molesworth, 34.
- ⁶⁰ Julia Bryan-Wilson, *Art Workers: Radical Practice in the Vietnam War Era* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 1.
- ⁶¹ Bryan-Wilson, 1.
- ⁶² John Beck and Ryan Bishop, *Technocrats of the Imagination: Art, Technology, and the Military-Industrial Avant-Garde* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2020), 45.
- ⁶³ Beck and Bishop, 18.
- ⁶⁴ Beck and Bishop, 11.
- ⁶⁵ Beck and Bishop, 179–80.
- ⁶⁶ Dave Beech, *Art and Postcapitalism: Aesthetic Labour, Automation and Value Production* (London: Pluto Press, 2019), 8.
- ⁶⁷ Beck and Bishop, *Technocrats of the Imagination*, 192.
- ⁶⁸ Beck and Bishop, 185.
- ⁶⁹ Pamela M Lee, *Think Tank Aesthetics: Midcentury Modernism, the Cold War, and the Neoliberal Present* (Cambridge, Massachusetts; London, England: The MIT Press, 2020), 22.
- ⁷⁰ Lee, 47.
- ⁷¹ Sholette, *Dark Matter*, 48.
- ⁷² Sholette, 7.
- ⁷³ Sholette, 7.
- ⁷⁴ Sholette, 7.
- ⁷⁵ Sholette, 38; Sholette draws upon the writing of Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello in *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Gregory Elliott (London: Verso, 2018).

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- ⁷⁶ Sholette, *Dark Matter*, 117.
- ⁷⁷ Victoria Walsh, *Nigel Henderson: Parallel of Life and Art* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2001).
- ⁷⁸ Peter Smithson quoted in Walsh, 7.
- ⁷⁹ 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 (1 August 2013): 'Abstract', 222.
- ⁸⁰ Walsh, 240.
- ⁸¹ Walsh, 226.
- ⁸² Walsh, 'Abstract', 222.
- ⁸³ Walsh, 236.
- ⁸⁴ Walsh, 234.
- ⁸⁵ Walsh, 235.
- ⁸⁶ Walsh, 235.
- ⁸⁷ Walsh, 235.
- ⁸⁸ Victoria Walsh and Claire Zimmerman, 'New Brutalist Image 1949–55: "Atlas to a New World" or, "Trying to Look at Things Today"', *British Art Studies*, no. 4 (28 November 2016), <https://doi.org/10.17658/issn.2058-5462/issue-04/vwalsh-czimmerman>.
- ⁸⁹ Walsh and Zimmerman.
- ⁹⁰ Walsh and Zimmerman.
- ⁹¹ Walsh and Zimmerman.
- ⁹² Walsh and Zimmerman.
- ⁹³ Daniel Palmer, *Photography and Collaboration: From Conceptual Art to Crowdsourcing* (London; New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017).
- ⁹⁴ Palmer, 15.
- ⁹⁵ Palmer, 173.
- ⁹⁶ Palmer, 172.
- ⁹⁷ Beech, *Art and Postcapitalism*, 64.
- ⁹⁸ Beech, 65.
- ⁹⁹ Beech, 62–63.
- ¹⁰⁰ Beech, 62–63.
- ¹⁰¹ Beech, 64.
- ¹⁰² Beech, 64.

¹⁰³ Beech, 64.

¹⁰⁴ The Institute of Contemporary Arts was founded in 1946 by Geoffrey Grigson, Roland Penrose, Herbert Read, Peter Gregory, E.L.T. Mesens and Peter Watson. Initially, its existence was somewhat peripatetic, using temporary and hired spaces. From 1950, it occupied more permanent premises at 17-18 Dover Street.

¹⁰⁵ Graham Whitham, 'Chronology', in *The Independent Group: Postwar Britain and the Aesthetics of Plenty*, ed. David Robbins (Cambridge, Mass; London: MIT Press, 1990), 24.

¹⁰⁶ Whitham, 20.

¹⁰⁷ Whitham, 24.

¹⁰⁸ Jacquelynn Baas, 'Introduction', in *The Independent Group: Postwar Britain and the Aesthetics of Plenty*, ed. David Robbins (Cambridge, Mass; London: MIT Press, 1990), 8.

¹⁰⁹ Baas, 8.

¹¹⁰ Baas, 8.

¹¹¹ Anne Massey, *The Independent Group: Modernism and Mass Culture in Britain, 1945-59* (Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press; St. Martin's Press, 1995).

¹¹² Massey, 112.

¹¹³ Massey, 2.

¹¹⁴ Massey, 3.

¹¹⁵ Massey, 2.

¹¹⁶ Anne Massey, 'Creative Collaboration: The Lasting Impact of the Independent Group', in *This Was Tomorrow*, by Ralf Beil and Uta Ruhkamp (Cologne: Wienand Verlag, 2017), 133.

¹¹⁷ Massey, 129.

¹¹⁸ Ben Cranfield, "'Not Another Museum": The Search for Contemporary Connection', *Journal of Visual Culture* 12, no. 2 (1 August 2013): 313–31.

¹¹⁹ Cranfield, 320.

¹²⁰ Cranfield, 320.

¹²¹ Cranfield, 315.

¹²² Cranfield, 325.

¹²³ Cranfield, 327.

¹²⁴ Cranfield, 315.

¹²⁵ Cranfield, 326.

¹²⁶ Ben Highmore, *The Art of Brutalism: Rescuing Hope from Catastrophe in 1950s Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017).

¹²⁷ Highmore, 25.

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- ¹²⁸ Highmore, 109.
- ¹²⁹ Highmore, 267.
- ¹³⁰ Highmore, 20.
- ¹³¹ Highmore, 16.
- ¹³² Roberts, *Revolutionary Time and the Avant-Garde*, 116.
- ¹³³ Walsh, *Nigel Henderson*, 8–9.
- ¹³⁴ Nigel Henderson quoted in Walsh, 142.
- ¹³⁵ Massey, *The Independent Group*.
- ¹³⁶ Nigel Henderson quoted in Frank Whitford, *Nigel Henderson: Paintings, Collages & Photographs* (Cambridge: Kettle’s Yard Gallery, 1977) n. p.
- ¹³⁷ Nigel Henderson, manuscript titled ‘IMAGE’, undated, Nigel Henderson Estate.
- ¹³⁸ Mark Fisher, *The Weird and the Eerie* (London: Repeater Books, 2016).
- ¹³⁹ Fisher, 10–11.
- ¹⁴⁰ Fisher, 15.
- ¹⁴¹ Fisher, 28.
- ¹⁴² Fisher, 57.
- ¹⁴³ Maria Lind, ‘Active Cultures: Maria Lind on the Curatorial’, *Artforum*, October 2009, 103.
- ¹⁴⁴ Fisher, *The Weird and the Eerie*, 21.
- ¹⁴⁵ Fisher, 13.
- ¹⁴⁶ Fisher, 45.
- ¹⁴⁷ Fisher, 54.

Chapter one: Creative Photography as research work at the Central School of Arts and Crafts, 1951-54



Figure 17. Nigel Henderson, photograph showing shard of silk screen print, c. 1951-54. Tate, TGA 201011/3/1/79/2. Photos: top: Rosie Ram (negative as negative); bottom: Tate (negative reproduced as digital positive).

In the archive at Tate is a black and white photographic negative imprinted upon plastic film, measuring 115 x 155mm [fig. 17]. This negative is kept frozen in the museum's cold storage facility and must be thawed out overnight before being viewed. The inverted image that appears on the negative depicts a rectangular cutting of a silkscreen-printed pattern, cropped to show a small portion of the design, roughly hewn around its edges, and torn at one side. Thick lines curve across and bisect the cutting, accompanied by dots and crosses that extend and ornament the patterning articulated by these lines. Three small, circular symbols punctuate the print: one has a spotted edge and encircles a rudimentary, five-pointed star; another is densely blotted with ink; and the third has a partially dotted border and contains a cross at its centre. The negative is attributed to Nigel Henderson and stowed among a portion of his archive at Tate that is broadly categorised 'Photographs and negatives'.¹ The museum has given this negative the somewhat faltering title 'Photograph showing artwork, possibly by Eduardo Paolozzi'.² The piece of silkscreen print is thus granted the status of 'artwork' and the photographic image is consigned to a comparatively documentary function. Extending this logic, Paolozzi's possible authorship of the object depicted seems to supersede Henderson's relationship to its photographic image. Furthermore, on Tate's website this negative is flipped into positive form [fig. 17, bottom]. Its role as a negative is thereby concealed and the darker and more translucent processes of photography are obscured. Frozen inside the museum, the negative becomes a kind of spectre, present but unseen. Yet, Henderson's translation of the patterned paper into photographic form and, moreover, its primal inversion into negativity, seems to stage a more complex interaction between the silkscreen print and the technologies and morphologies of photography.

Importantly, Henderson appears to have sustained an active working relationship with such silkscreen-printed patterns. In the holdings at the Kings Head, there remain countless rolls, loose sheets, and cuttings of paper populated with similar designs to that presented by his negative image [fig. 18]. On first encountering these printed papers among the uncoded traces of Henderson's practice, I found them largely rolled or folded; most were cut, torn, or marked; and none were signed, framed, or glazed. Executed in a broad spectrum of designs and colourways, and numbering upwards of 100 pieces in total, their volume and variety seemed remarkable. Moreover, their ragged materiality – they are strewn with fingerprints, jagged incisions, and ink stains – suggested rapid and experimental production, as well as ongoing, creative use.



Figure 18. Silkscreen-printed sheets discovered at the Kings Head, dating from c. 1950-55. Nigel Henderson Estate. Photos: Rosie Ram.

Some of the designs feature rectilinear arrangements of grids, dots, and dashes; others are populated by chunky, semi-geometric blocks; and a number include biomorphic motifs and frenetic outbursts of tangled, abstract lines. Although characteristic of Paolozzi's hand, their abundance among the holdings of Henderson's practice gestures toward a more collaborative function for these objects.

Recent scholarship has thrown new light onto the collaborative origins of these printed patterns. Beth Williamson's research, for instance, has elucidated how these designs were conceived and produced while Paolozzi was working as a Textile Design tutor in the School of Textiles at the Central School of Arts and Crafts in London, where the artist had gained employment in 1949.³ Williamson has analysed the role of the technician and art theorist Anton Ehrenzweig in the development of such silkscreen prints, while he was concurrently employed as a Fabric Printing tutor in the School of Textiles at the Central School. In the textiles workshops, Ehrenzweig taught Paolozzi how to superimpose printed patterns by using multiple silkscreens positioned at different orientations, thereby creating layered compositions.⁴ Between 1950 and Paolozzi's departure from the Central School in 1955, he and Ehrenzweig produced a wealth of silkscreen prints together, often using the facilities after hours.⁵ In the literature, therefore, it is broadly acknowledged that these prints cannot be understood as the work of Paolozzi alone, and that Ehrenzweig's role in their production should not be thought of as 'merely' technical.⁶ Rather, critics have observed an affinity between Paolozzi's mark-making and Ehrenzweig's concurrent writing on the interrelationship of order and chaos within creative practice.⁷ Thanks to this affinity, Judith Collins writes, 'Paolozzi and Ehrenzweig quickly established a strong practical and theoretical relationship' at the Central School.⁸ Similarly, Williamson describes the two practitioners as having 'truly collaborated' at this time.⁹

However, Henderson's photographic negative depicting the shard of silkscreen-printed pattern appears to assert – or insert – the role of another form of artistic work operating within and around the development and deployment of these distinctive patterns in post-war London, which extends beyond the specificity of what Collins terms 'the Ehrenzweig-Paolozzi partnership' at the Central School.¹⁰ Henderson's negative image argues for a distinctively photographic element to the complex labours and authorial circuits surrounding these prints. What is often overlooked in the literature on the origins of these designs, is Henderson's proximity to Paolozzi and Ehrenzweig's

collaboration at the Central School, as well as the specific institutional context and conditions of the school itself in framing and fostering these kinds of creative interactions. Mark Crinson describes the silkscreen prints as evidencing a collaboration between Paolozzi and Ehrenzweig that operated 'both at an intellectual level and in terms of physical cooperation'.¹¹ Yet, he only mentions the Central School in passing, despite this having been the formative context for their cooperation. And despite acknowledging the importance of Henderson's 'photographic interpretation' of the silkscreen-printed patterns,¹² Crinson neglects to mention that Henderson was working with them at the Central School at precisely the time these patterns were being created.

In fact, Henderson had joined the faculty of the school in 1951 as a Creative Photography tutor in the School of Industrial Design, where he remained until 1954. The negative that captures the cutting of print from the Central School and converts it into photographic form seems to insist upon the proximity and exchange between practices within the post-war institution. Suspended between Paolozzi's and Ehrenzweig's experiments in Textile Design and Fabric Painting and Henderson's work in Creative Photography, the negative might be read as an interface between their activities and as a miniature arena for intermedial interaction. Across the darkly translucent surface of the image, creative labour transfers from the manual production of the abstract pattern, through its mechanical reproduction via the technology of the silkscreen, to the cropping, framing and extraction of the picture via the photographic lens, to the production of the photographic negative in its tonally inverted form. The resultant material is one in which the work of silkscreen print-making and photographic image-making are interlaced, entering into an exchange that is captured in the tension between the printed object and its photographic image.

As discussed in my introduction, John Roberts conceives of the artistic avant-garde as comprising temporary congregations of 'co-researchers', whose work involves collectivised and collaborative strategies, authorial complexity, the integration of readymade elements, the technologisation of skill, and a departure from the traditions of artistic form. In post-war London, Henderson's practice appears to position photography as a potential site for such a congregation of co-researchers to meet. In this chapter, I interrogate the conditions within which his photographic work took shape after the Second World War. Specifically, I consider how his approach to photography might be understood in relation to his contact with education, industry and

professionalisation through his employment at the Central School. His negative image showing the shard of silkscreen-printed pattern provides a threshold into this inquiry.

Interactions between silkscreen printing and photography

The interaction between silkscreen printing and photography that is condensed by Henderson's negative is echoed across a sequence of his photographs depicting further collaborative endeavours that he and Paolozzi pursued together while they were teaching at the Central School.



Figure 19. Nigel Henderson, Freda Elliot and Eduardo Paolozzi, photographs with silkscreen prints installed on a wooden structure and papered across walls, 1951. Tate, TGA 9211/8/15, TGA 201011/3/1/40 & TGA 201011/3/1/41. Photos: Tate (negatives reproduced as digital positives).

A series of his negatives dating from 1951, for instance, show roughly cut strips of the patterns from the Central School decorating a large, makeshift structure installed within an otherwise empty domestic interior [fig. 19].¹³ Paolozzi, the textile designer Freda Elliot (Paolozzi's future wife), and Henderson pose within and beside the structure, which is strung with wire or rope. The plaid shirts and striped pullover they have selected for the shoot mirror the grids and striations of the printed designs. In some images, the walls of the room are also partially papered, providing a patterned backdrop to their activities. Several of the carefully staged shots show Paolozzi and Elliot occupying the rudimentary structure. In other images they stand against the semi-papered walls. Across these images, photography flattens and fuses the abstract markings, camouflaging the figures within the fractured composites of pattern.

Pieces of the silkscreen prints from the Central School are also evident within *Collage Mural*,¹⁴ a monumental collage that the architects Jane Drew and Edwin Maxwell Fry commissioned Paolozzi to produce for their London office in 1952 [fig. 20].¹⁵ Having been installed that August, *Collage Mural* was photographed in situ by Henderson. His image shows it hanging above the clutter of a busy architectural office, presiding over desks littered with plans, models, and stationery, and refracting this productive disarray back at the viewer. Within the photograph, the collaged silkscreen-printed cuttings become integrated into their visual environment, providing a densely patterned backdrop for modern working life. Reflecting on the composition of *Collage Mural*, Dianne Kirkpatrick remarks, 'Henderson had in his collection several relatively small paper "modules" for such patterns.'¹⁶ She characterises these pieces of pattern as a kind of 'raw material' produced by Paolozzi but shared among his friends as 'found-objects' to be integrated into their practices.¹⁷ For Henderson, this integration was achieved through collage and photography. His photographic analysis of such collaged recombinations of the silkscreen prints is further encapsulated by a glass negative in the archive at Tate [fig. 21], which concentrates upon a section of a smaller collage by Paolozzi that is comparable to *Collage Mural*. Henderson converts the collage into photographic form, creating a flattened and inverted composite in black and white.



Figure 20. Nigel Henderson, photograph of Eduardo Paolozzi's *Collage Mural*, 1952, installed in the office of architects Maxwell Fry and Jane Drew, c. 1952. Nigel Henderson Estate. Photo: Rosie Ram.

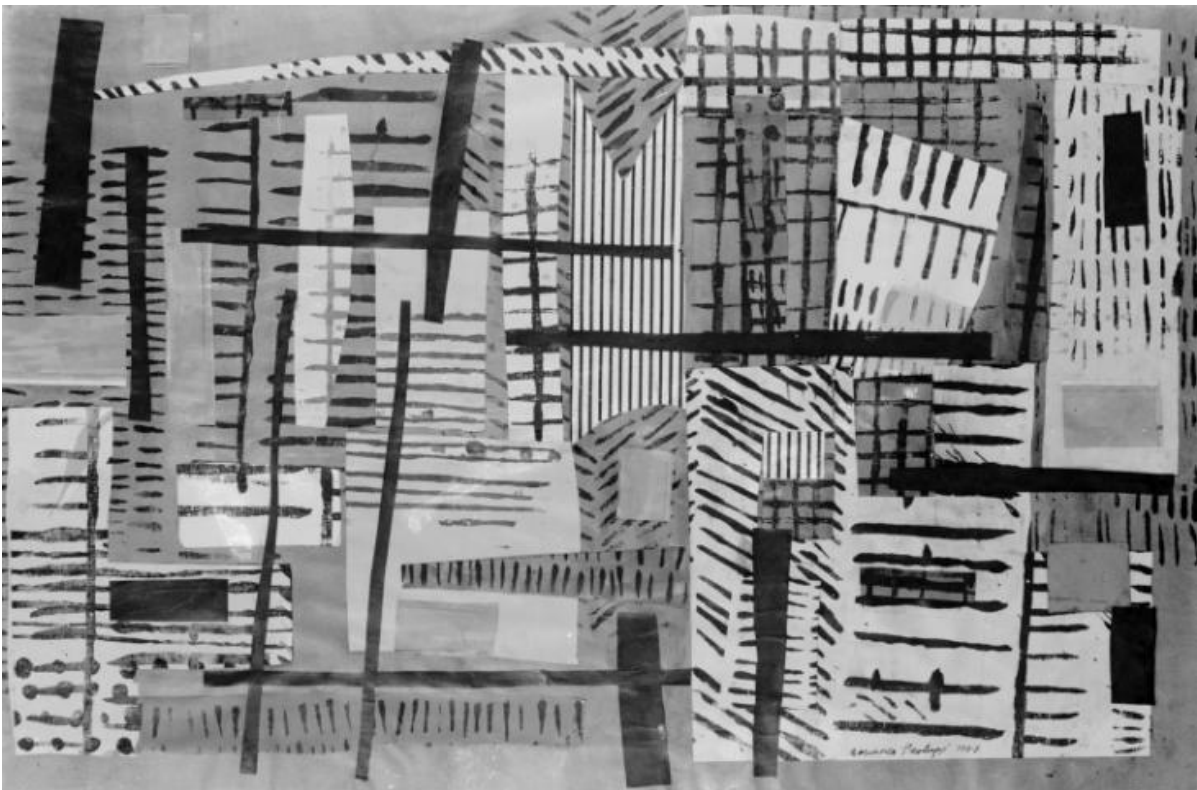


Figure 21. Nigel Henderson, 'Photograph showing a collage by Eduardo Paolozzi', c. 1949-56. Tate, TGA 201011/3/1/78/2. Photo: Tate (negative reproduced as digital positive).



Figure 22. Left: Nigel Henderson, photograph of the interior of 46 Chisenhale Road, 1953. Nigel Henderson Estate. Photo: Nigel Henderson Estate. Right: Nigel Henderson, photographs of the interior of 46 Chisenhale Road, c. 1953. Tate, TGA 9211/9/6/125, TGA 9211/9/6/127 & TGA 9211/8/4. Photos: Tate (negatives reproduced as digital positives).

The silkscreen-printed patterns from the Central School are also evident across a series of Henderson's photographs from c. 1953 [fig. 22], which show the artist's house at 46 Chisenhale Road in East London. The shots were captured after Henderson and Paolozzi had used such prints to paper the interior together in 1952. Comparable designs can be seen haphazardly plastered over the walls and ceilings, surrounding the family in a cacophony of overlapping abstract prints. Henderson's photographs capture the patterns from a series of ever-shifting angles, meticulously cropping and framing specific aspects of the interior and staging an interaction between the work of silkscreen-printed pattern-making and that of photographic image-making. Yet, where these images appear on Tate's website or published in the literature, they are typically accompanied by a caption stating that the house is 'decorated with wallpaper designed

by Eduardo Paolozzi.¹⁸ The status of the photographic image is thus superseded by that of its contents: the silkscreen-printed designs attributed to Paolozzi.

In a further collection of photographs by Henderson from the early 1950s, the same silkscreen-printed pattern that is shown on the shard of paper in the negative image with which I began this chapter, is pictured papered to the ceiling of the office of the engineer Ronald Jenkins, a founding partner at the firm Ove Arup & Consulting Engineers in Fitzroy Street, London [fig. 23]. The ceiling design was part of a refurbishment of Jenkins' office, which he commissioned and then celebrated with an open evening upon its completion in May 1952.¹⁹ An announcement for this event lists the practitioners who had contributed to the project: 'Cabinet – Victor Pasmore/ Ceiling – Eduardo Paolozzi/ Interior Design – Alison and Peter Smithson/ Occupant – Ronald Jenkins'.²⁰ Although he is not mentioned in Jenkins' list of protagonists, Ehrenzweig was another contributor, having produced the ceiling paper with Paolozzi at the Central School, where he helped the artist to achieve a complex composition of superimposed designs arranged at varying orientations. Once installed, Henderson then photographed the papered ceiling, creating decisively shot images that, Williamson argues, seem to oscillate between serving as documentation and operating as artworks in their own right.²¹ Henderson depicts the ceiling from oblique angles, tightly cropping and framing the space, contrasting interior and exterior, and playing with shadow and light.²² The subject matter and photograph enter into a state of tension, creating a confusion in ontological level, to borrow Mark Fisher's terms. Significantly, four of the five practitioners named on Jenkins' open evening announcement – all except for Pasmore – went on to develop *Parallel of Life and Art* in collaboration with Henderson the following year. As if to emphasise this link between the projects, one of his photographs of Jenkins' office includes a poster for the exhibition pinned up on display, echoing the tackboard like configuration of materials on the gallery wall at the ICA [fig. 23, bottom].

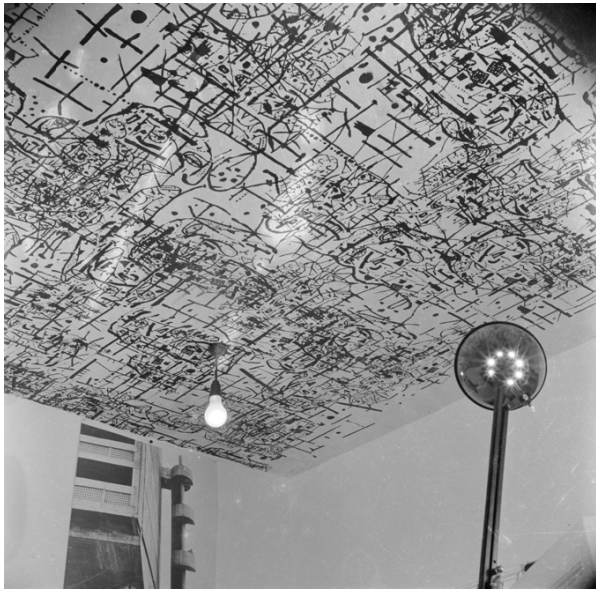


Figure 23. Top left & right: Nigel Henderson, photographs showing Ronald Jenkins' office at Ove Arup & Consulting Engineers, c. 1952-3, Tate, TGA 201011/3/1/9/6 & TGA 201011/3/1/9/7. Photos: Tate (negatives reproduced as digital positives). Bottom: Nigel Henderson, photographs showing Ronald Jenkins' office at Ove Arup & Consulting Engineers, c. 1953, Tate, TGA 201011/3/1/72/1. Photo: Tate (negative reproduced as digital positive).

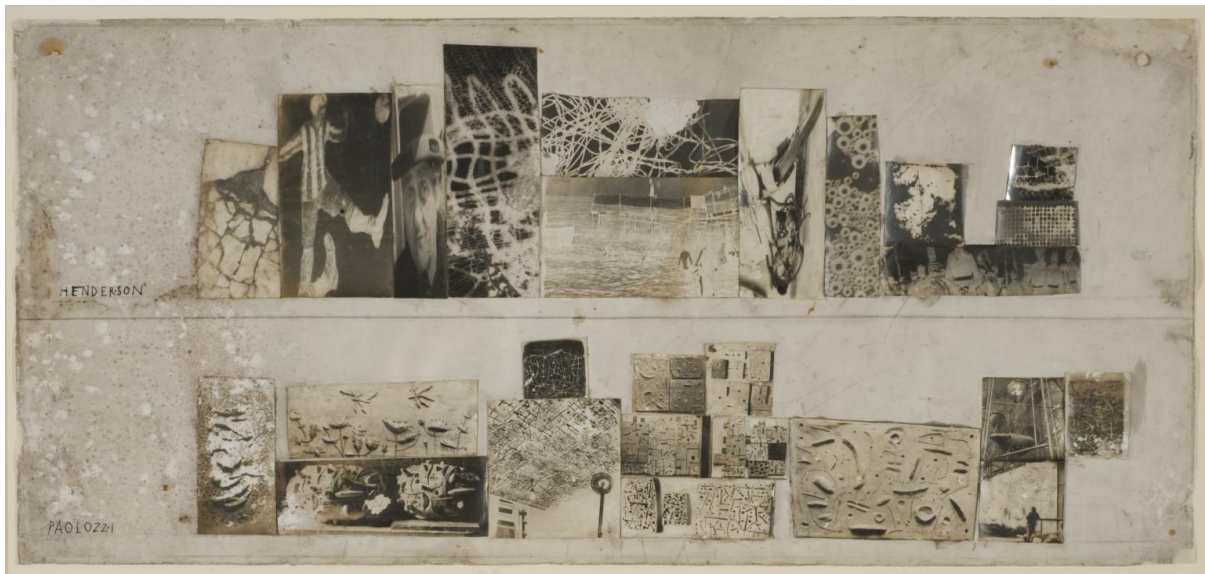


Figure 24. Nigel Henderson and Eduardo Paolozzi, *Untitled (Study for Parallel of Life and Art)*, 1952. Tate, T12444. Photo: Tate.

The interaction between the silkscreen-printed patterns from the Central School and the practice of photography is further emphasised by a study produced by Henderson and Paolozzi in advance of *Parallel of Life and Art*, which is now held in the collection at Tate [fig. 24]. Across a rectangular panel, photographic images are arranged laterally along two rows. The top is assigned to Henderson and the bottom to Paolozzi. The former row features Henderson's photographic distortions and photograms, photographs of found images, and abstract photographic experiments produced in the darkroom, the majority of which are presented in their more aberrant negative form. The latter row comprises Henderson's photographs of Paolozzi's reliefs, tiles, and sculptures, dispersed across a tilting horizontal grid. Significantly, this row includes one of Henderson's shots of the silkscreen prints from the Central School installed on the ceiling of Jenkins' office. Across the two rows, photographic technology is used to extract, amplify, and conjoin the patterning found throughout the practitioners' work in silkscreen-printing, sculpture, and photographic experimentation itself. The flattened, monochrome morphology of photographic reproduction converts this patterning into units of visual data, which can be arranged and rearranged within such modular compositions.

Subsequently, in Henderson's photographs of *Parallel of Life and Art* installed at the ICA in 1953, comparable photographically extracted patterning reverberates across the contents of the display, similarly decontextualised and divorced from explanation. Each of the pictures that populated the exhibition had been photographically reproduced in black and white, implementing a common aesthetic across the otherwise highly

heterogenous hang. Within *Parallel of Life and Art*, the abstract patterning captured by Henderson's various shots of the silkscreen prints from the Central School is echoed, for instance, in the camouflaged markings of a guillemot's egg, in the circular symbols of an ideographic script, in lines carved in mudflats captured from the air, and in the surface of a disintegrating mirror, which was positioned laterally across the ceiling [fig. 25].



Figure 25. Top left & right: Nigel Henderson, photographs showing *Parallel of Life and Art*, ICA, 1953. Tate, TGA 9211/5/2/73 & TGA 9211/5/2/58. Photos: Tate (negatives reproduced as digital positives). Bottom: Nigel Henderson, 'Photograph from *Parallel of Life and Art* exhibition catalogue, no. 74', 1953. Tate, TGA 9211/5/2/31. Photo: Tate (negative reproduced as digital positive).

Subsequently, in Henderson's photographs of *Patio and Pavilion* at the Whitechapel Art Gallery in 1956, plaster blocks can be spotted littered about the installation, imprinted with reliefs and mosaics echoing these same kinds of abstract patterning. In the section of the *This is Tomorrow* catalogue dedicated to *Patio and Pavilion*, a comparable circular symbol to that found in my opening negative image appears. Here, it is shown alongside a simple illustration of an aeroplane in flight, captioned 'the wheel and the aeroplane – for locomotion and the machine'.²³ It is surrounded by found and photographically replicated images, photographs of Henderson's collages, and photographic depictions of elements from *Patio and Pavilion*, which have been coarsely cut out and loosely re-collaged together [fig. 26].

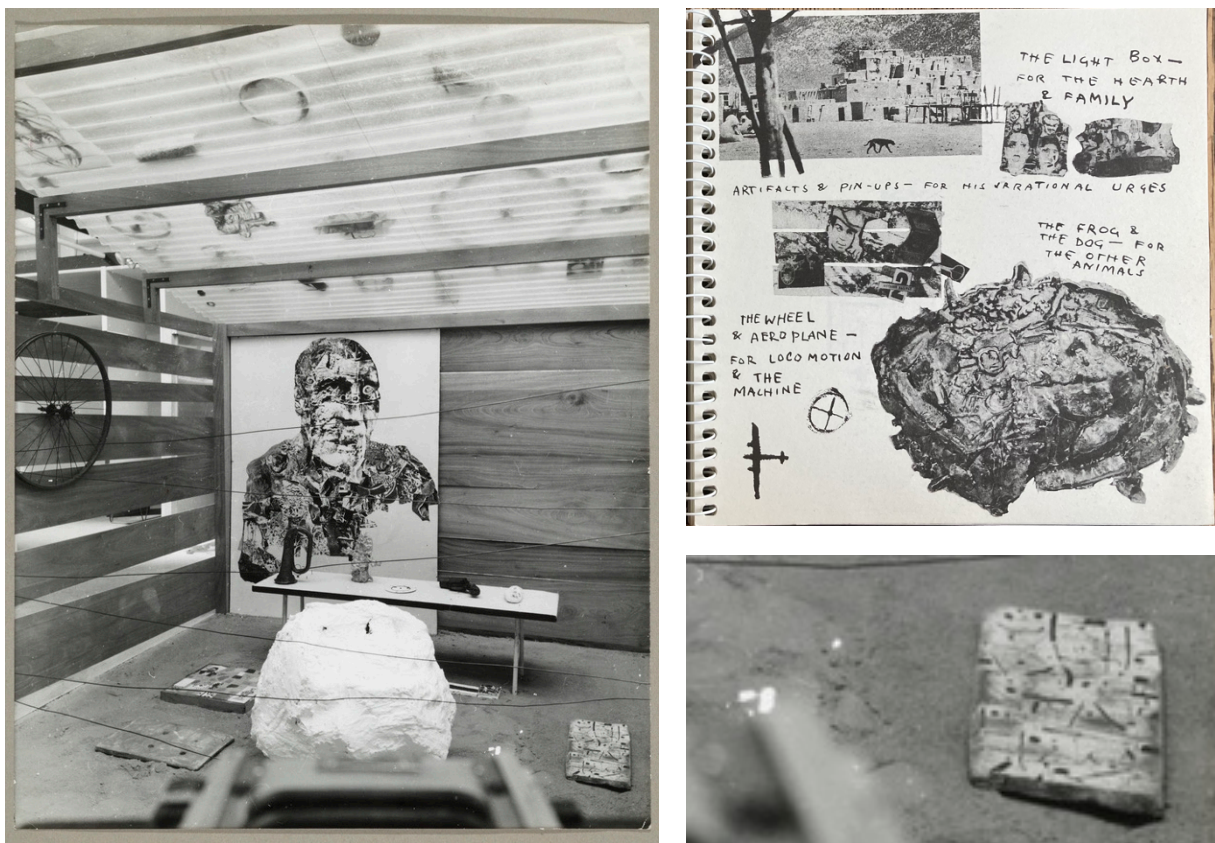


Figure 26. Left & bottom right: Nigel Henderson, photograph of *Patio and Pavilion*, Whitechapel Art Gallery, 1956. Nigel Henderson Estate. Photos: Nigel Henderson Estate. Right: Catalogue for *This is Tomorrow*, Whitechapel Art Gallery, 1956, open at the pages for *Patio and Pavilion*. Photo: Rosie Ram.

In each of these instances, photography plays a highly interactive role, engendering a complex exchange with abstracted forms of patterning derived from other modes of practice. Henderson's photographs generate visual congruences across otherwise incongruent materials. They stage reiterations of pattern and concatenations of pictorial association. Photography seems to serve as a translucent interface between his work and that of others, capturing their creative output and yet maintaining its own kind of

creativity. His photographs operate in dialogue with their subjects, in tandem with other technologies, and are superimposed translucently onto other materialities. In doing so, they seem to serve neither as artworks nor as documentation; rather, they appear processual, part of a looping of objects into images and images into objects. Collage is used to create cuts and juxtapositions that fracture these relentless object-image-object-image relays. By cutting the photographic image it becomes an object; by photographing the cut, the pieces become fused into an image again. However, this kind of photographic practice appears to adhere neither to the conventions of individually attributable artistic work nor professional labour within other fields. Consequently, it has remained critically neglected, lodged in an uncertain place between practices. In this chapter, I analyse how Henderson's position as tutor in Creative Photography at the Central School conditioned this distinctive kind of photographic work.

The Central School as a post-war Bauhaus in London

What is striking about the collaborative equation encircling the project of refurbishing Jenkins' engineering office, is how many of the practitioners were concurrently employed at the Central School. While Paolozzi and Ehrenzweig were working in the School of Textiles between 1949 and 1955, and 1948 and 1964, respectively, and Henderson was teaching Creative Photography in the School of Industrial Design between 1951 and 1954, their colleagues included the architect Peter Smithson, who was teaching Interior Design and History of Architecture in the School of Interior Design and Furniture between 1951 and 1953 (occasionally accompanied by his wife Alison, whose contribution, however, is omitted from the school's prospectuses), and the artist Victor Pasmore, who taught across multiple departments, including Industrial Design, Interior Design and Furniture, and Drawing, Painting and Modelling, between 1948 and 1953. Importantly, all these practitioners were also attending – albeit intermittently, in some cases – the meetings of the Independent Group (IG) at the ICA between 1952 and 1955. In addition, the artist Richard Hamilton, who is widely lauded as a founding IG member, was teaching Fashion Jewellery and Basic Design in the School of Silversmithing and Allied Crafts, as well as Theory of Design in the School of Industrial Design, between 1953 and 1954.

Despite the formative interconnection between the Central School and the meetings of the IG at the ICA, the art school is often just cited in passing in the scholarship on the group. In *The Independent Group: Postwar Britain and the Aesthetics of Plenty* (1990), the Central School is positioned as the birthplace of the IG, yet little detail is given regarding the institution itself or the activities of these practitioners on its premises.²⁴ Informal conversations at the Central School are mentioned as a precursor to the group's more formal meetings at the ICA, which are described by the Smithsons as a 'continuation' of discussions that started at the art school.²⁵ In comparison to the 'structured evenings' later hosted by the ICA, the Smithsons identify an 'initial, informal, Central School nucleus' that predated the group's documented formation.²⁶ Yet, within *The Aesthetics of Plenty* these more informal discussions are overlooked. In David Thistlewood's contribution, he argues that post-war art schools were vacant receptacles for the ideas developed in IG discussions. He writes,

'The work of IG members infiltrated the art schools fairly quickly [...] There had been an awkward period in the 1950s when art schools had taught neither iconography nor technique. Initiatives of many kinds were drawn into this vacuum, but among the most important [...] was the series of creative strategies first given expression by the IG'.²⁷

Thistlewood affords the IG a seminal role in the development of art education in post-war Britain, whilst neglecting the pre-existing conditions within the schools. In doing so, he contributes to what Anne Massey describes as a 'hagiological' view of the IG.²⁸

Contrastingly, in his analysis of brutalism in post-war Britain, Ben Highmore does not position the activities of practitioners at the Central School as precursory to the celebrated staging of the official IG meetings at the ICA, and nor does he frame the school as an empty receptacle for members' ideas. Instead, he describes these two sites as symbiotic, writing, 'If the ICA was a space for talk and for showing work, the Central School was where brutalism was being fashioned in a more practical manner'.²⁹ And he identifies the Central School as 'a crucial scene for nurturing brutalist practices'.³⁰ The Central School was 'materially important' for these practitioners, he writes, 'not only as a way of earning money but also as an environment that enthusiastically promoted avant-garde modernist concerns as foundational for those making textiles, building

houses, and designing furniture'.³¹ Beyond this statement, however, Highmore does not address the specificity of the Central School and the conditions of production therein.

A common omission emerges across literature on the IG and brutalism in post-war Britain, which mirrors that identified in the recent scholarship on Paolozzi and Ehrenzweig. This concerns Henderson's work as tutor in Creative Photography. His photographic practice at the school is fundamentally neglected across this scholarship, despite his photographs from the period being used almost universally to illustrate these texts. Consequently, a closer examination of the proximities, exchanges, and tensions between practices at the Central School – and the position of Henderson's photographic work within the institution as a kind of interface – seems particularly pertinent. Moreover, the school itself offers a germane opportunity to investigate questions concerning the education and professionalisation of artistic work in Britain after the Second World War in relation to my conceptualisation of artistic research.

When Henderson joined the faculty at the Central School in 1951, the Creative Photography classes had been running for just three years, since 1948, as a supplementary part of the syllabus in the School of Industrial Design, which was itself only recently established in 1947. At this time, the term 'creative photography' was – and, in fact, remains – rather loosely defined. In *Creative photography: Aesthetic trends, 1839-1960* (1962), Helmut Gernsheim grapples with the identity of this mode of practice. He argues that the creative qualities of photography differ from those of painting, and that the artistic status of the former should not be judged on the latter's terms. Gernsheim characterises their distinction as follows: 'Painting is concerned with recording the artist's experience of an event, photography with recording a selected aspect of the event itself. The camera intercepts images; the paint brush reconstructs them.'³² It is only through the photographer's interpretative skills, Gernsheim writes, that 'the creative element enters into an otherwise mechanical and reproductive technique.'³³ He continues, 'the mechanical photographer will merely reproduce, the creative photographer perceives essential qualities of form and composition and interprets effectively'.³⁴ Extending this line of argument, Gernsheim proposes that:

'The chief difference [...] between photography and the other graphic arts lies not in their creative possibilities, but in the purpose underlying their production. Photographs are made for use, paintings to be sold. The

photographer requires his pictures to be reproduced, whilst the painter's main concern is to find a buyer for his canvases.'³⁵

Significantly, writing in 1962, Gernsheim laments the lack of creative photography training and assessment in continental Europe and in Britain. He states that the available technical courses in photography fail to introduce students to the artistic possibilities of the medium, and that there is a paucity in proper professional qualifications for aspiring photographers. In contrast, he observes that in America, the 'outlook for photography is much brighter: at least thirty Colleges and Universities give courses on photography as a creative art.'³⁶ When the Central School inserted Creative Photography into the syllabus of the School of Industrial Design in 1948, therefore, the absence of a disciplinary lineage or tradition for the subject undoubtedly afforded these classes a certain degree of flexibility within the broader curriculum implemented by the post-war art school at this time.

In the Central School's prospectus from the academic year 1951-52, the Creative Photography classes are positioned within the description of the Industrial Design course, where they appear as a supplementary part of the syllabus:

'The course is normally three years' duration, the first of which is in the form of a Basic Course and includes Mechanical Drawing, Workshop Practice, Plaster Casting and Industrial Modelling, Theory of Design, and Industrial Science. Time is allowed for museum and library study and research. The second year tends to develop the student's creative powers at the same time developing technical facility and an understanding of production methods.

Further time is devoted to Product Design, Production Methods, Presentation Drawing, Creative Photography, Pattern Making, Woodwork and Prototype production.'³⁷

As this course description indicates, in the first year Henderson's Creative Photography classes would have been taught in tandem with the Basic Course, which had become a critical element of the Central School's pedagogy in the post-war period. The Basic Course at the Central School was informed by the basic design course at the Bauhaus, the *Vorkurs* that was established by Johannes Itten in the 1920s.³⁸ The Central School's

principal from 1947 to 1960, William Johnstone, adopted an approach that was heavily informed by the Bauhaus. Johnstone believed that William Lethaby, founder of the Central School in 1896, had created an institution that was ‘parent of the Bauhaus’.³⁹ And in post-war London, Johnstone set about turning the Central School into a contemporary Bauhaus equivalent, in part by founding his own Basic Course derived from the Bauhaus’ principles of basic design.⁴⁰ As a pedagogic approach, basic design encourages practitioners to make work using a common visual language. As Johnstone explains, ‘The term “basic design” was used to describe a way of teaching the grammar of design and the means of communication in a twentieth century idiom’.⁴¹ This grammar was intended to be applicable to any medium or field, ensuring that ‘all students, with certain variations in training, could adapt themselves to work in other media’.⁴² Establishing a basic design-centred pedagogy within the art school encouraged staff and students to work across practices, and to develop a kind of visual *lingua franca* in order to communicate creatively throughout the school.

Johnstone’s approach at the Central School was informed by the writings of László Moholy-Nagy, who had taught at the Bauhaus and was an ardent advocate of experimentation as a creative and pedagogic method. This is elucidated in his book *Vision in Motion* (1947), which became a key text for Henderson and many of his peers.⁴³ Significantly, Moholy-Nagy imagined the art school as a creative ‘laboratory’ in which experimentation was to be encouraged.⁴⁴ As Moholy-Nagy asserts, a ‘methodology of inventiveness provides the common denominator for experimenting, testing and handling materials and tools, for their action and reaction, for creating form’.⁴⁵ He believed that through a semi-scientific approach to creative experimentation the modern world could be radically redesigned:

‘without experimentation there can be no discoveries and without discoveries no regeneration. Although the “research work” of the artist is rarely as “systematic” as that of the scientist they both may deal with the whole of life, in terms of relationships, not of details’.⁴⁶

Moholy-Nagy valued the unpredictability of this approach. He states: ‘the less predictable the consequences [of artistic experiments], the richer they may be in their potential usefulness for a better future’.⁴⁷ Moholy-Nagy characterises the ‘research work’

of the artist within the ‘laboratory’ of the art school, therefore, as a kind of labour that is methodologically inventive, highly experimental, less systematic than a science, relational, and crucially, rooted in the unpredictability of artistic practice. Furthermore, he saw the purpose of this work as contributing to radical social reform and pioneering a utopian, revolutionary future.

Significantly, while Moholy-Nagy was teaching at the Bauhaus in Weimar and then in Dessau, between 1923 and 1928, there was not a formalised photography workshop at the school. It was not until 1929 at the Bauhaus in Dessau that a photography course was officially inaugurated within the pedagogic programme, taught by Walter Peterhans as part of the Typography, Advertising and Exhibition Design workshop. In contrast with Moholy-Nagy’s experimental attitude, Peterhans was a conservative and technically precise photographer-tutor.⁴⁸ Prior to Peterhans’ course, photography had an uncertain – and arguably more experimental – role at the Bauhaus. During Moholy-Nagy’s tenure, the popularity of photography increased steadily among students and teachers alike, who positioned themselves as amateur photographers rather than properly trained professionals or academic experts. In *Vision in Motion*, Moholy-Nagy characterises the amateur as ‘one of the hopeful promises of a future society [and] an authentic testimonial of the manifold abilities of the human being to act and react purposefully if emotionally stimulated.’⁴⁹ This amateurish enthusiasm for testing the possibilities of photography, meant that creative photography flourished in the absence of a formal framework for its presence at the school. As Laura Muir notes,

‘If the Bauhaus has proved an unwieldy historical subject, the role of photography at the school is perhaps even harder to pin down because of its unofficial status [...] the photographs themselves are similarly elusive, neither adhering to a single “Bauhaus style” nor representing the type of functional object typically associated with the established workshops.’⁵⁰

Commenting upon the uncertain status of photography at this time, Moholy-Nagy writes, ‘Photography is a new medium of expression. Since its working rules have not yet been frozen into unalterable dogma, it has experimental potentialities. Moreover, by analogy, one may find clues, may approach other media with fresh insight.’⁵¹ By integrating Creative Photography into his newly established Industrial Design department at the Central School, it seems that Johnstone was keen to harness the

experimental energy of this technologised mode of practice. At the same time, the lack of a clear definition or tradition for Creative Photography indicates that it will have retained some of the unofficial, elusive, and amateurish qualities that had catalysed its enthusiastic use at the Bauhaus before the Second World War.

Looking towards industry: the artist as ‘worker in the arts’

Significantly, the outline of the Industrial Design course in the Central School’s prospectus indicates that Creative Photography was not considered by the school to be an artistic practice per se, but rather a mode of work oriented towards industry. Having become familiar with ‘Product Design, Production Methods, Presentation Drawing, Creative Photography, Pattern Making, Woodwork and Prototype production’, students were able to engage in ‘work of a more advanced character’ in which ‘practical design problems are solved’. The outline from the prospectus continues,

‘Throughout the whole course there are factory visits, films, and lectures.

During the summer vacation second year students are found factory employment, when possible, to extend their knowledge of works procedure, and to gain further practical experience.’

Thus, Henderson’s Creative Photography classes are bracketed by more industrially oriented lessons on subjects such as mechanical production methods and making prototypes, as well as experience working in factories and a programme of regular factory visits. This direct link between art school pedagogy and industrial and commercial productivity is emphasised elsewhere in the school’s prospectuses from the period. For example, the School of Textiles organised ‘visits to textile factories and printing works’ as part of its programme of study.⁵² Similarly, the School of Interior Design, Furniture, Pottery and Stained Glass helped students to find ‘suitable offices or workshops where during the summer recess industrial practice may implement the school’s curriculum’.⁵³ The School of Silversmiths’ Work and Allied Crafts was also described as being ‘in close contact with industry’,⁵⁴ and the School of Interior Design and Furniture assisted students in securing employment over the holidays in ‘architectural offices, display studios and workshops’.⁵⁵ Students were thereby

encouraged to frame their education in relation to the requirements of industry, and to view their work as a means to creatively and collectively rethink manufacturing, commerce and production.⁵⁶

During his tenure as principal, Johnstone describes how he worked to ‘synthesize the different [departments] into a far more integrated unity’.⁵⁷ Disciplines were expected to operate symbiotically within the post-war Central School in order to deliver an educational programme tailored to each student.⁵⁸ The description of the Interior Design course, for instance, explains that the ‘course is co-ordinated with that in the furniture, textiles and other sections of the school of particular importance to interior designers’.⁵⁹ Similarly, General Design classes in the School of Textiles were offered to students from other departments, with the prospectus suggesting that ‘Students working at other crafts or subjects [...] who wish to strengthen their sense of pattern, are advised to attend the textile design class’.⁶⁰ It is likely that Henderson’s aptitude with photographic technologies will have engaged him in teaching students from departments beyond the School of Industrial Design. For instance, the School of Book Production and Graphic Design encouraged students to learn ‘photomechanical methods of reproduction’.⁶¹ Meanwhile, in the School of Textiles, ‘printing by silk screen including photographic methods’ comprised part of the course’s training.

Significantly, Johnstone extended this cross-departmental synthesis beyond the Central School itself. He describes how sending students to spend some of their time each week in an engineering or technical college meant that ‘a new instrument [was] added to their curriculum’.⁶² For example, the School of Costume taught some elements of Modern Dress Design ‘in conjunction with the students of the neighbouring Bloomsbury Technical School’;⁶³ while lectures in Process Engraving held at the nearby London School of Printing and Graphic Arts in Bolt Court were counted as part of the Central School’s Book Illustration course.⁶⁴ In the post-war period, architects Edwin Maxwell Fry, Jane Drew and Wells Coates – who had all delivered lectures at the Central School – considered setting up an experimental training course there in partnership with the Architectural Association (AA). As Johnstone remembers, ‘This scheme never came to fruition although there was a period when we collaborated with the A.A. in an interchange of students’.⁶⁵ It is unsurprising perhaps that the school also established an informal association with the meetings of the IG during this period.

Johnstone's attempts to integrate the Central School with industry and commerce and with technical training facilities beyond its walls may have been an attempt to succeed where the Bauhaus had seemingly failed: to generate economically viable products for mass reproduction. As Robin Schuldenfrei writes, despite their egalitarian aims to serve a revolutionary society, Bauhaus objects were expensive, rarefied works of art that remained available only to a small elite. As such, she reads these items as the 'material indices of the social problematic of mass reproducibility.'⁶⁶ Schuldenfrei concludes that 'the *idea* of a relationship with industry remained the Bauhaus' greatest achievement, even if it was hardly realized.'⁶⁷ In contrast, at the Central School, Johnstone appears to have been intent on making this idea of a relationship with industry a viable reality.

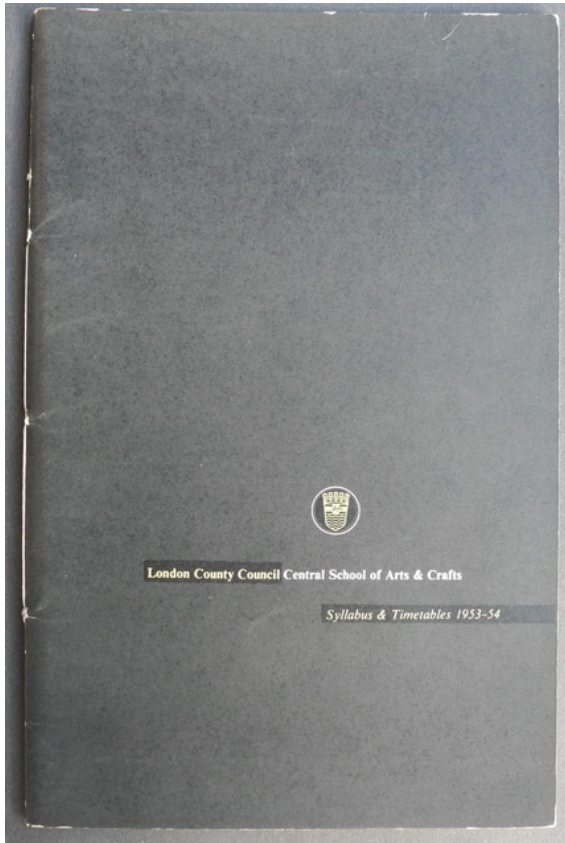


Figure 27. Left: Map from back cover of Central School of Arts and Crafts prospectus, 1950-51. Right: Plans of the Central School of Arts and Crafts, showing war damage and layout, c. 1945. Central Saint Martins Museum and Study Collection, UAL. Photos: Rosie Ram.

Johnstone's image of the school as an 'integrated unity' can be mapped onto the architectural structure of the institution. From 1908, the Central School occupied purpose-built premises on Southampton Row in Central London, with Russell Square to the north and Holborn to the south [fig. 27, left]. The building was a large complex built in the Arts and Crafts style [fig. 27, right]. From 1946 until the early 1960s, the spatial layout was approximately as follows: metalwork, metal casting, plaster casting, pottery kiln, pottery glazing, and mural painting were located in the basement; pottery, the exhibition hall, masters' common room, Principal's office, machine printing room, and lecture theatre were situated on the ground floor; silver and jewellery design, and photography were on the mezzanine; jewellery, pressure casting, drawing, mounting, engraving, the canteen, and students' common room were on the first floor; industrial design, etching, lithography, bookbinding, typography, and the library were on the

second floor; costume, theatre design, furniture, and book illustration were on the third floor; life painting and drawing, general drawing, sculpture, painting, textile design, screen printing, and weaving were on the fourth floor; and, finally, furniture design and stained glass were on the fifth floor.⁶⁸ The layout was such that scholars have claimed ‘the architecture of the school influenced the level of interdisciplinary interaction’,⁶⁹ noting that the building provided ‘liberal cross-disciplinary facilities’.⁷⁰ And, certainly, the close spatial proximity of so many creative practices appears to support such claims.

If the floorplans illustrate an organisation of space within the Central School, then timetables from the period, as documented within the prospectuses, depict a correlative partitioning of time [fig. 28]. For the staff and students at the Central School, their days and hours on the premises were segmented, managed, and made visible through these timetables. Within their temporal grids, the Central School is divided into departments, departments are split into syllabi, staff are mapped against these, and are allocated specific hours of labour inside this framework of institutional time. Johnstone is said to have personally ‘clocked-in’ staff members each morning as they arrived at the school, thereby marking the moment from which the institution began to monitor and regulate their passage through the timetables’ predetermined structures.⁷¹ Together the floorplans and timetables simultaneously align and divide the practitioners within the Central School, suspending them within the spatial and temporal structures of the school during these official hours, and mapping and monitoring their official movements within the institution.



School of Industrial Design

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Engineering Technology Prototypes		G. K. Hills <i>A. F. Hutchen</i>	G. K. Hills	G. K. Hills <i>A. F. Hutchen</i>	G. K. Hills
Foundry Practice				G. K. Hills	
Product Design	H. A. Nieboer <i>D. Scott</i>	H. A. Nieboer	<i>D. Scott</i>		R. Nicholson
Draughtsmanship	B. Archer <i>B. Archer</i>			B. Archer	
Presentation		A. Patchett		A. Patchett	A. Patchett
Industrial Science	G. K. Hills				
Woodworking Technology					J. H. Brandt
Theory of Design			R. Hamilton <i>A. E. Halliwell</i>	R. Hamilton	
Display			A. G. Collett		
Drawing/Painting					V. Pasmore
Sculpture/Modelling				R. Adams <i>R. Adams</i>	R. Adams <i>R. Adams</i>
Machine Sculpture				B. Archer	
Creative Photography		H. Lynn	N. Henderson <i>E. Dearing</i> <i>N. Henderson</i>	E. Dearing <i>N. Henderson</i> <i>E. Dearing</i>	
Plaster Casting				W. Olds	
Planning/Costing					G. K. Hills
Research & Museum of Art			Vacancy		

Day classes 10 am to 1 pm 2 pm to 4 pm except where indicated:
 Morning only * Afternoon only ^
 Evening classes 6 pm to 8.30 pm

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School of Interior Design and Furniture

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Basic Design				V. Pasmore ^m A. Patchett	W. Turnbull V. Pasmore
Colour Studies					
Interior Design	Nigel Walters	T. Dannatt	F. L. Marcus	S. Reid	F. L. Marcus J. Groag
Furniture Design	Nigel Walters C. Latimer F. Austin Nigel Walters C. Latimer	C. Latimer C. Latimer	F. Austin Nigel Walters	Nigel Walters	
Exhibition Display Design	Neville Walters Nigel Walters		R. C. Negus		R. Nicholson Nigel Walters
Woodwork Shop	A. J. Sims <i>A. J. Sims</i> F. Rubner	B. J. Seeley A. J. Sims <i>B. J. Seeley</i> F. Rubner	A. J. Sims J. H. Brandt <i>B. J. Seeley</i>	A. J. Sims <i>A. J. Sims</i>	J. H. Brandt <i>J. H. Brandt</i>
Metal Workshop		G. K. Hills <i>A. F. Hutchen</i>		A. F. Hutchen	
History of Art	T. H. Stevens ^a		T. H. Stevens ^a		
History of Furniture				Nigel Walters ^a	
Period Furniture			F. Vallely		
Furniture Production Methods				F. Rubner	
Building Construction			C. J. Phillips	V. Smith	
Upholstery				L. A. Chalmers	
Painting Practice		W. R. Yates		W. R. Yates	
Shop Design		I. Silverman			
Stained Glass	J. Baker <i>J. Baker</i>				J. Baker <i>J. Baker</i>
Pottery	R. Bateson ^a D. Billington K. L. Clark <i>D. Billington</i> R. Bateson	G. Harding Green W. R. Newland ^m W. R. Newland K. I. C. Clark	D. Billington G. Harding Green <i>D. Billington</i> W. R. K. I. C. Clark	D. Billington G. Harding Green <i>D. Billington</i> W. R. Newland	

School of Textiles

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Textile Design	M. Yonge H. Mackinnon <i>M. Yonge</i> H. Mackinnon	D. M. Batty G. Crook <i>M. Oliver</i>	D. M. Batty <i>M. Harper</i>	D. M. Batty E. Paoletti G. Crook <i>M. Oliver</i>	E. Paoletti
Fabric Printing		E. Ehrensweig	G. Crook A. Ehrensweig	G. Crook A. Ehrensweig	
Hand Weaving			M. Kirby E. Chapman <i>M. Kirby</i> E. Chapman	M. Kirby E. Chapman	M. Kirby P. Harford
Museum Study/History of Textiles				M. Kirby M. Harper	

Day classes 10 am to 1 pm 2 pm to 4 pm except where indicated:
 Morning only * Afternoon only ^
 Evening classes 6 pm to 8.30 pm

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Figure 28. Central School of Arts and Crafts prospectus, 1953-54. Central Saint Martins Museum and Study Collection, University of the Arts London. Photos: Rosie Ram.

Given the Central School's orientation towards – and emulation of – labour in factories, workshops and offices, it is pertinent to consider the proprietorial treatment of the materials produced by those on the premises at a time when the institution was turning away from the traditional image of the artist, craftsperson or designer as an individual producing unique objects, toward a focus on collective productivity in service of industry. In fact, issues of ownership, copyright and authorship are tackled within the first few pages of Central School's prospectuses from the period, which state,

'Work done in the school must be available for the purposes of the London County Council. [...] The Council reserves the right to reproduce it photographically. Work executed in material provided by the Council is the property of the Council, but students may buy their work at charges to be fixed by the Principal. Students will be required to carry out such work as may be selected or approved by the head of department. If necessary, such work will be done in collaboration with the work of other students'⁷²

The London County Council is positioned as a governing authority above the Central School itself, emphasising the relationship between the objectives of the school and those of local and national government. The Council's dominance over the individual is enshrined in this contractual retention of ownership, copyright, and photographic reproducibility. Here, the photograph is valued as a direct record of the object, with the photographic image of the object becoming its proxy. This provides further evidence that, most broadly, the Central School framed creative labour in terms of productivity, emulating elements of the regulated organisation of labour in workshops, offices, and factories. Whilst these rules did not apply directly to staff, they nevertheless depict the overarching conditions under which the faculty also worked. The Central School's proprietorial position again has echoes of the Bauhaus. As Magdalena Droste argues, the objects produced at the Bauhaus oscillate 'between being part of the identity of the school and an artist's individual work.'⁷³ Reflecting on this tension, Alina Payne observes that when Gropius established the school, 'individual authorship was denied' in order to 'give way to the collective "brand name."⁷⁴ Yet, authorship remained 'a fundamental issue for a collective of artists working for/ with an eye to industry.'⁷⁵

Importantly, the statement from the prospectus quoted above suggests that students at the Central School were not seen as merely working within the school but rather as

working for the school, creating products in service of a mode of productivity governed by the institution. At the Central School, Johnstone sought to train students to ‘relate the finest craftsmanship, with the finest design, to the most modern means of production’,⁷⁶ thereby addressing the urgent need for industrial and economic recovery in Britain after the Second World War. Students who might have previously identified themselves as craftspeople were encouraged to reorient their output toward the production of prototypes. As Johnstone explains, ‘The craftsman was to become the prototype designer’.⁷⁷ In contrast to traditional art or craft objects, prototypes lend themselves to mass reproduction, commercial viability, and company branding. This further presents the Central School as an institution modelled on industry, whose products might be reproduced, distributed, and distanced from the individual workers.

After the Second World War, the student population at the Central School grew and the faculty was consequently expanded. Johnstone used this as an opportunity to employ new teachers, many of whom were practicing artists. He selected young staff whose artistic careers were advancing, employing them on short and somewhat precarious part-time contracts, preferring them to balance their work at the school with an active professional life outside it. Artists were often placed into teaching positions in departments outside their immediate areas of expertise, meaning that they drew not on professional experience but on enthusiasm and creative experimentation. Johnstone viewed teachers at the school in comparable terms to the students, as he recalls, ‘I saw the artist/craftsman/designer, not as a professor of aesthetics, but as a worker in the arts’.⁷⁸ By orienting its outlook towards factories, offices and workshops, while simultaneously focusing its pedagogy on basic design, the post-war Central School can be seen to have invoked avant-garde, Bauhaus-derived ideals in a post-war pursuit of industrial and economic recovery. In tandem with this, it harnessed the creative enthusiasm and experimental energy of young artists seeking employment, who became ‘workers in the arts’ within the factory-office-workshop modelled institution.

Falling under the auspices of the London County Council, the Central School’s emphasis upon industry and commerce aligned the school with the government’s goals of rebuilding Britain after the devastation of the Second World War and securing its global status in a newly reconfigured world. Becky Conekin describes post-war Britain as ‘characterised by housing shortages and the continuation, and even extension, of wartime restrictions and rationing’.⁷⁹ Amid consumer shortages and an austere

economic climate, Conekin argues that the outgoing Labour government used the 1951 Festival of Britain to stimulate and celebrate production.⁸⁰ The event sought to emphasise ‘progress and modernity with science and planning evoked as the answers to the question of *how* to build a better Britain’.⁸¹ Later that year, Labour conceded power to the Conservatives, marking the dawn of what David Mellor has termed ‘Tory Futurism’.⁸² Mellor describes this as a period in which ‘consumer demand entailed a definite period of forced economic expansion and social modernisation’,⁸³ thereby stimulating technological innovation and the rationalisation of production. Although the priorities, policies, and rhetoric of these two post-war governments differed, they cannot necessarily be neatly divided. Both were focused on steering the nation towards economic recovery amidst the fragmentation of empire, promoting a more united Britain, and satiating post-war consumerism. These ambitions resonate in the Central School’s own post-war enthusiasm for aligning the work done on the premises with labour in factories, offices, and workshops, and using the creativity and experimentation of students and staff to stimulate industrial and economic recovery. In this context, the school’s invocation of Bauhaus pedagogies appears devoid of the utopian imaginings of total revolution and radical social reform. Instead, amidst the austere and shell-shocked climate of post-war London, the institution instrumentalises these avant-garde energies to address apparently more immediate needs, reorienting the Moholy-Nagy’s notions of the ‘laboratory’, ‘experimentation’ and ‘research work’ towards a plan of national reconstruction through productivity and prosperity.

However, the extended, intricate exchanges between silkscreen-printing and photography that I introduced at the start of this chapter suggest more complex modes of creative practice emerging from the interactions of those working at the Central School, which seem to depart from the kind of productivity promoted by the institution and from the broader national narratives of building a better Britain. The central preoccupation of Henderson’s negative showing the piece of Paolozzi-Ehrenzweig print is not a prototypic product that could seamlessly enter the marketplace. Instead, it is a throwaway, roughly hewn, and highly partial shard of ambiguous abstract patterning of little apparent value. Moreover, the photograph itself has an unsettled, layered, image-object status. When studied in its tonally inverted and translucent negative form, the image becomes an even more obscure kind of material. Far from presenting a bright, positive optic of progress and modernity, the negative appears to speak of darker,

inversional practices of experimentation developing within and around the Central School's overtly articulated pedagogies and priorities.

Underground experimentation: Henderson's Creative Photography darkroom



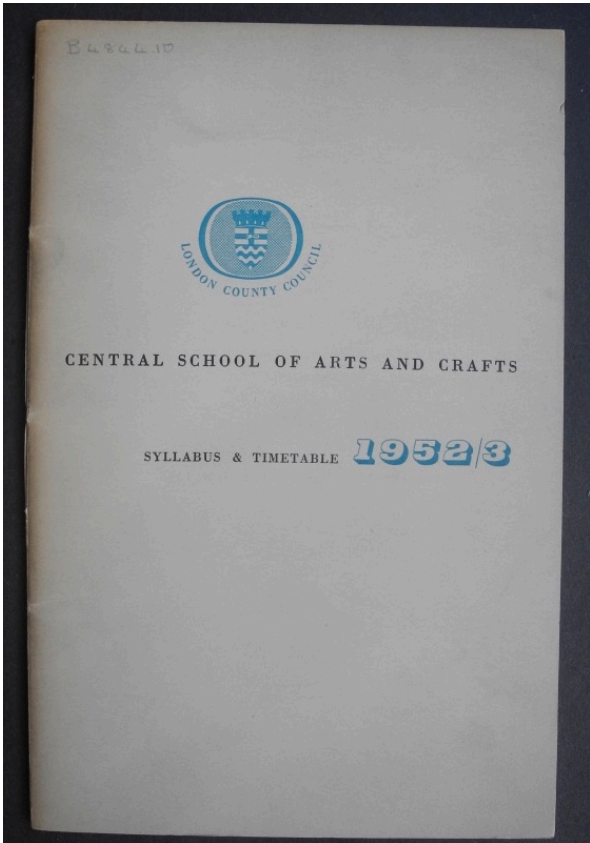
Figure 29. 'Cover Image and Front Matter', *Architectural Review* CIX, no. 653, May 1951. Photos: Rosie Ram.

Henderson was approached to join the staff of the Central School in 1951, after Johnstone had seen his photogram published on the cover of *The Architectural Review* in May that year [fig. 29]. A description is included on the inside page, stating:

"The cover is a photogram by Nigel Henderson. A photogram, it will be remembered, is a photograph made without the agency of the camera, the objects to be included being laid direct on sensitized paper; in this case all the objects are ones connected to the building trades. [...] His interest in photograms developed as a by-product of part-time employment in a photocopying agency"⁸⁴

Given the Central School's orientation of Bauhaus-derived pedagogies and the experimental 'research work' of the pre-war avant-garde towards the demand of post-war industry, Henderson's photogram must have been particularly attractive to Johnstone. The industrial products of the building trade create the artistic image, they are imbued directly with their own agency. Henderson's links with the photomechanical profession may also have suggested to Johnstone that this was a creative practitioner with his desired credentials, a 'worker in the arts' using experimental strategies and avant-garde techniques to serve the demands of industry.

Having joined the Central School after the start of autumn term in 1951, Henderson's name does not appear in the institution's prospectus until the academic year 1952-53 [fig. 30]. There, in the timetables provided, he is found teaching Creative Photography on Wednesday daytimes, from 10am until 1pm and then from 2pm until 4pm, and on Wednesday and Thursday evenings, from 6pm until 8.30pm. Significantly, on Thursdays, Paolozzi and Ehrenzweig were also working at the Central School, teaching Textile Design and Fabric Printing in the daytime slot and – as their abundance of silkscreen prints together suggest – pursuing their own projects on the premises in the evenings. Furthermore, after teaching, Paolozzi remembers that he would often 'descend into the basement to make mainly terracotta reliefs in the ceramic department.'⁸⁵ And the basement was where Henderson's Creative Photography classroom was also established in a repurposed room that served as a somewhat makeshift darkroom. As Paolozzi and Henderson both taught on a Thursday throughout the period of their employment at the school [fig. 28], their paths will have crossed in the basement during these unofficial, unobserved hours.



7 SCHOOL OF INDUSTRIAL DESIGN

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
Engineering Technology/Prototypes	G.K. Hills	G.K. Hills A. F. Hutchens	*G. K. Hills G. K. Hills	H. A. Nieboer A. F. Hutchens	G. K. Hills
Foundry Practice				G. K. Hills	
Product Design	R. T. J. Homes H. A. Nieboer	H. A. Nieboer	R. T. J. Homes		
Draughtsmanship	G. K. Hills B. Archer				
Presentation		A. Patchett A. Patchett	A. Patchett		A. Patchett
Industrial Science	G. K. Hills				
Woodworking Technology					J. H. Brandt
Theory of Design			A. E. Halliwell R. T. J. Homes W. Millar		A. E. Halliwell
		A. G. Collett			V. Pasmore
Drawing/Painting					
Sculpture/Modelling				R. Adams R. Adams	R. Adams R. Adams
Creative Photography			N. Henderson E. Dearing N. Henderson	E. Dearing N. Henderson	
Plaster Casting				W. Olds	
Planning/Casting					G. K. Hills

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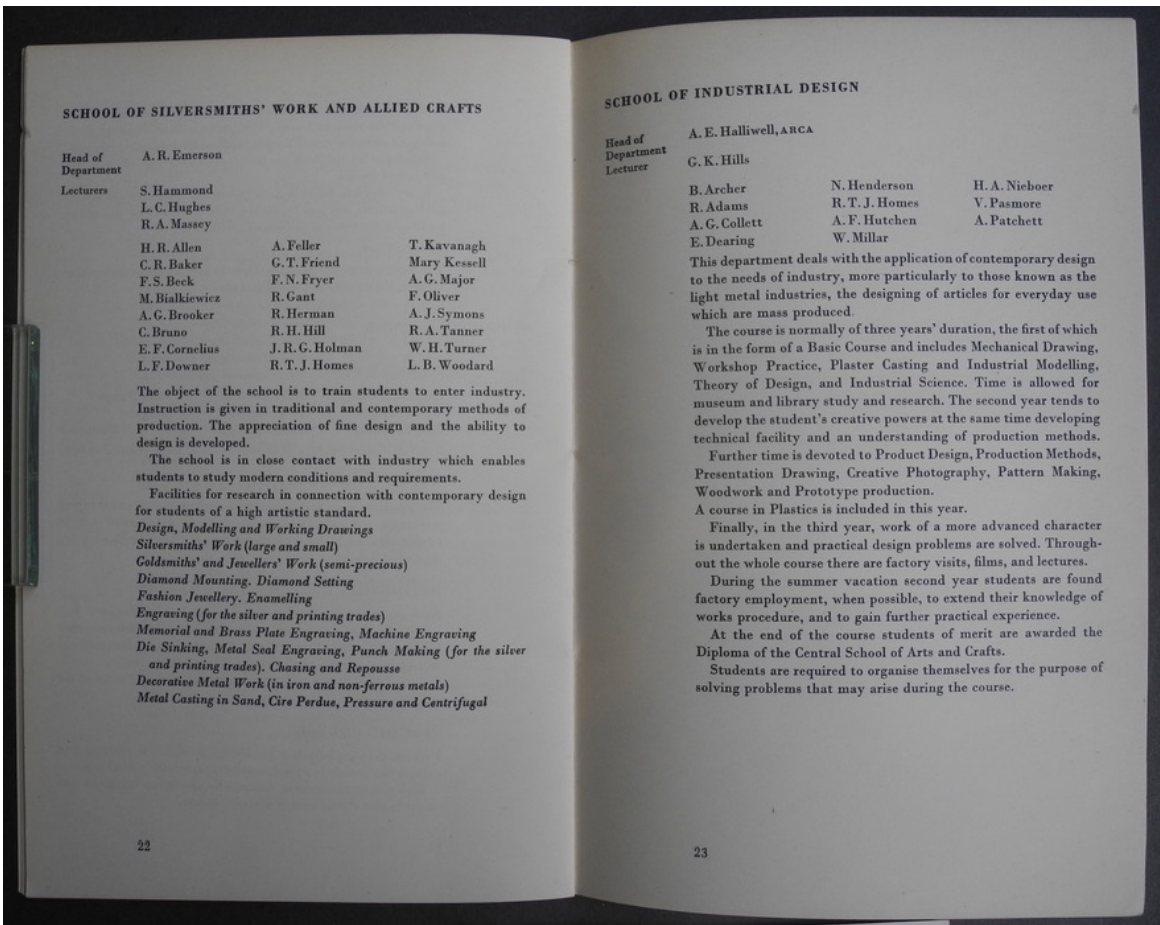


Figure 30. Central School of Arts and Crafts prospectus, 1952-53. Central Saint Martins Museum and Study Collection, University of the Arts London. Photo: Rosie Ram.

Ken Garland, a Graphic Design student at the time, attended Henderson's evening classes in Creative Photography in the School of Industrial Design, despite being enrolled in another department. Crucially, Garland recalls how Henderson drew heavily upon the writings of Bauhaus practitioners, particularly Gyorgy Kepes' *The Language of Vision* (1944) and Moholy-Nagy's in *Vision in Motion* (1947). He states,

*'The Language of Vision and Vision in Motion were bibles to us. Nigel Henderson, who was part of the ICA group, taught photography at the Central, which at the time was a kind of orphan subject, tucked away in the basement. We all used to gather down there and he'd say, "You're in graphic design and you don't even know about Moholy-Nagy?" And when I said, "What is that?" he replied, "He's a person and he wrote a book called Vision in Motion and you should get it!" I wasn't put on to that by the graphic design teacher but by Nigel.'*⁸⁶

Garland's identification of Creative Photography as an 'orphan subject' that was 'tucked away' at the school is critical for comprehending the uncertain status of Henderson's photographic practice, its interactions with other practices during the period, and its critical lack of visibility. Garland echoes this sentiment in a further quotation, in which he underlines the experimental and processual engagement with photography in Henderson's classes, which drew heavily upon the work of Kepes and Moholy-Nagy.

*'Not only did Nigel open you up to all kinds of experiments with the photographic process, he was also completely at home with the European modernism that had by-passed Britain. We had a lot of catching up to do, and it was Nigel and not our main tutors that introduced us to key texts like Kepes' *Language of Vision* and Moholy-Nagy's *Vision in Motion*.'*⁸⁷

In a book containing some notes on his work at the Central School, Henderson emphasises the importance of Moholy-Nagy's thinking, listing his name under the heading 'Suggestion of reading material'.⁸⁸ Whereas Johnstone was eager to harness the energies of the Bauhaus in his project of orienting the Central School toward the demands of industry, it seems that Henderson was invoking the work of Kepes and Moholy-Nagy to teach methods of experimentation that were focused upon creative process rather than product. His engagement with photography appears to have invoked

a statement from the opening pages of *Language of Vision*, under the heading ‘The created image’, where Kepes asserts, ‘To perceive an image is to participate in a forming process; it is a creative act.’⁸⁹ And from Moholy-Nagy’s *Vision in Motion*, Henderson appears to have gleaned an even more critical idea: ‘Superimposed upon official schooling is the more powerful unofficial education.’⁹⁰

Another quotation from Garland even more compellingly indicates that Henderson transgressed the remit he had been assigned by the Central School. Garland remembers that Henderson would continue working with students into the night in the repurposed room he had been allocated as an underground darkroom. Garland describes this ad hoc space as ‘out of harm’s way in the basement, where few students even found it.’⁹¹ Garland reflects on the kind of pedagogy Henderson pursued in this darkened zone,

‘The idea of that photography class was that students of Industrial Design could learn to photograph their own models and things – complete nonsense! Nigel was only interested in experimental photography. We used to get down there and do the most extraordinary stuff. [...] Sometimes you used to stay down there after the school was closed. I stayed there once or twice all night – all night! – you had to sort of hunker down while people came around and locked all the doors on you. Working in the darkroom needed hours and hours and hours of toying about with chemicals. [...] there was a sort of subterranean activity going on down there [...] It was in the basement somewhere.’⁹²

Garland describes Henderson’s Creative Photography classes as inhabiting a submerged space within the institution; a dark, underground laboratory that encouraged an equally ‘subterranean’ form of photographic experimentation, often taking place under the cover of night. This quotation suggests that Henderson stretched and altered the time and space he had been allocated by the school: inhabiting its premises, infiltrating its timetables, appropriating its technological facilities, and manipulating its curricula. His practice appears to have been partially concealed from the institution, operating at the edges of its official schemas and schedules, while borrowing its equipment and materials. The Industrial Design department was officially located on the second floor of the building, while photography workshops were situated on the mezzanine; yet the various recollections of Henderson’s Creative Photography classes all conform that he

taught in a more makeshift darkroom, which had been specially installed in the basement of the building. Within the clandestine zone he occupied, Henderson and his students toyed about with chemicals and engaged in forms of experimentation that evoked the unsystematic ‘research work’ advocated by Moholy-Nagy.

For Gregory Sholette, artistic dark matter names a shadowy productivity, a surplus or excess kind of labour, which overflows the official structures and grids governing the formal field of art. Those who create dark matter occupy shifting positions of paid and unpaid labour, Sholette argues, while moving in between official ‘meshes’ of art production. At the post-war Central School, these ‘meshes’ might be understood as the pedagogic structures and protocols laid out in the prospectuses. Henderson’s artistic research practice operated within these ‘meshes’, while interweaving ‘a powerful unofficial education’ through them. Moreover, drawing upon Sholette’s theorisations, Henderson’s photographic negative depicting the shard of abstract pattern might be reconceived as evidence of this kind of surplus practice, which occupied and yet evaded the official structures of the school, generating darker materialities that did not serve the dominant productivity that was mandated within the institution.



Figure 31. Left: Nigel Henderson, photograph of Sam Kaner, 1951-54, London. Tate, TGA 201011/3/1/29/10. Right: Nigel Henderson, photograph of Sam Kaner, c. 1951-54, London. Tate, TGA 9211/9/7/130. Photos: Tate (negatives reproduced as digital positives).

Further evidence of Henderson’s informal use of his Creative Photography classes at the Central School is provided in his own recollections of his interactions with his friend and collaborator Sam Kaner [fig. 31]. Kaner had been a drummer with a US Air Force dance

band during the war and, although not officially enrolled as a student at the Central School, he attended several Creative Photography classes. As Henderson remembers,

‘He was I think doing some work at the Central School of Arts & Crafts in Kingsway where I had a more or less precarious grip on some badly needed teaching [...] SK collared me. He seemed to know his Modern Art [...]. He joined my “class” (it was like Freedomville, man!) and practiced, among the curses & groans of the others, a sort of scaled down & adapted Jackson Pollockry making use of the hot plate available to keep the developer & fix up to temperature. He would splatter & shake up a clear piece of printing paper with dev [developer]. Heating it at the same time & super adding more until he’d had enough with it when he’d fix it’.⁹³

In the archive at Tate, there is a photographic negative by Henderson of Kaner standing next to a work suggestive of this kind of ‘scaled down & adapted Jackson Pollockry’, which is likely to have been taken at the Central School [fig. 31, left]. Henderson’s and Kaner’s darkroom interactions on the premises led to further experimental activities beyond its walls. Kaner introduced Henderson to the London jazz-scene, and they worked together on photoshoots for Ronnie Scott’s Orchestra. Another of Henderson’s negatives shows Kaner on a stage, posing with one of Henderson’s photographic lamps, as if suddenly exposed by a flash of lighting in the darkroom [fig. 31, right].

Revealingly, on the same roll of film at Tate as the image of Kaner with his piece of photochemical ‘Pollockry’ there are three further photographs by Henderson of *Parallel of Life and Art* in the process of being installed, depicting Paolozzi and the Smithsons surrounded by partially hung panels, posing casually amidst the creative disarray of the installation process [fig. 32]. Their ‘initial, informal’ conversations at the Central School had provided the formative context for this exhibition and the proximity of these images to the shot of Kaner further connects the experimental, unofficial modes of practice being developed at the school with the project that became *Parallel of Life and Art*. In a notebook containing pages dedicated to his teaching work at the Central School, Henderson begins by stating some ‘Immediate requirements’ for his Creative Photography classes, including ‘Soft board to use as tackboard to pin up class results’.⁹⁴ He goes on outline a possible task for some members of the class:

'Practical assignments: I suggest that out of class hours the co-operation of those with cameras is invoked to do some creative documentation [...] the results can be printed & tacked to the wall for a comparative analysis by the teacher in collaboration with the class.'⁹⁵

Here, strategies of visual display are positioned as a critical part of his pedagogic practice and his research work at the school. Students were encouraged to pin up their photographic output, and to arrange these materials on the walls for a comparative and collaborative mode of analysis, participated in by the tutor and pupils together.



Figure 32. Left: Nigel Henderson, photograph showing Alison Smithson during installation of *Parallel of Life and Art*, ICA, 1953. Tate, TGA 201011/3/1/29/6. Right: Nigel Henderson, photograph showing Peter Smithson during installation of *Parallel of Life and Art*, ICA, 1953. Tate, TGA 201011/3/1/29/7. Photos: Tate (negatives reproduced as digital positives).

Parallel of Life and Art can be read as an extension of this research methodology, expanding – and disbanding – the tackboard into a three-dimensional, spatialised display of photographic imagery open to comparative and collaborative analysis by the exhibition-makers themselves as well as visitors to the exhibition. Significantly, the negative showing the shard of silkscreen-printed pattern with which I began this chapter has pin marks puncturing its four corners, indicating that this negative image was itself tacked up onto a wall or board. Similarly, many of the copy negatives that were made in preparation for *Parallel of Life and Art* show these same puncture marks, demonstrating that these negatives were also pinned up to allow for visual analysis in their negative state [fig. 33].



Figure 33. Nigel Henderson, negatives for *Parallel of Life and Art* images. Tate, TGA9211/5. Photos: Rosie Ram.

‘War pedagogies’: camouflage, aerial bombardment, and night vision

Johnstone’s basic design pedagogy and his orientation of the art school towards the post-war demands of industry emphasised creative production, and, to a certain extent, the Paolozzi-Ehrenzweig prints conform to this priority by generating a wealth of materials for various commissions and design initiatives, such as Jenkins’ office refurbishment. Yet, Henderson’s photographic images of these prints – as typified by his negative showing the shard of abstract pattern – seem more concerned with the ‘research work’ of image extraction and visual analysis. Significantly, the problem of pattern recognition and interpretation had gained greater urgency during and after the Second World War. The conflict saw many prominent tutors from art schools across London being enlisted to engage in forms of visual research in support of the war effort, particularly in the fields of aerial bombardment and camouflage development. This was also the case in America where, by 1942, camouflage courses had been established in several art schools and universities. One of the most significant was the course at the New Bauhaus in Chicago,⁹⁶ which was headed by Moholy-Nagy, who had emigrated to America in 1937. In 1941, Moholy-Nagy developed plans for a radical experiment in industrial camouflage that would see the architecture and infrastructure of Chicago concealed and encrypted to protect the city from the threat of aerial bombardment. Moholy-Nagy worked on this endeavour alongside his fellow émigré from the Bauhaus, Kepes.

For John R. Blakinger, this is where the military etymology of the avant-garde meets the literal militarism of modern warfare.⁹⁷ In America, amidst the escalating threat of World War II, Blakinger argues that,

‘Kepes’ language of vision gained a peculiar expediency. By conceiving of our surroundings as fundamentally visual, Kepes provided a vocabulary that could make sense of a horrific new form of visual experience. Perceiving the world as codes of pictorial signals and arrays of sensory data, seeing in terms of abstract informational patterns that one might quantify and then manipulate, was to perceive like the bombardier engaged in aerial attack – or the *camoufleur* charged with defensive disguise.’⁹⁸

According to Blakinger, modern warfare ‘demanded expertise in visual culture, an approach to the image that could make sense of a strange new optical battlefield.’⁹⁹ He claims that it was the danger of aerial attack, specifically, that catalysed advancements in methods of visual analysis during and after the war. Aerial bombardment, he writes, ‘required a new set of interdisciplinary methodologies’.¹⁰⁰ Blakinger continues, ‘To properly read the aerial image was to know – and ultimately destroy – the enemy’.¹⁰¹ In wartime America, Kepes set about addressing this dismal challenge, reorienting his Bauhaus training toward military research. As Blakinger observes, ‘By applying [the principles of basic design] to the horrifying logistics of air war, Kepes similarly reduced aerial bombardment to an essential problem: one of seeing.’¹⁰²

The Central School’s enthusiasm for Bauhaus pedagogies should also be read against this historic backdrop, in which the experimental ‘research work’ of the early European avant-garde had been partly subsumed into the military-industrial project in America, and the ‘laboratory’ of the art school has been co-opted to serve similar aims in wartime Britain. In Britain, there had been a comparable pattern of proximity and exchange between arts pedagogy and what Blakinger terms ‘war pedagogy’. This approach had roots in the First World War when the Admiralty recruited staff and students at the Royal Academy to devise means of concealing naval vessels. This led to the development of ‘Dazzle’ camouflage, which used riotously zigzagging patterns to disrupt visual perception. Later, in 1938, the Air Ministry established a Directorate of Camouflage, which was based in Leamington Spa. Primarily, the camouflage workshop there comprised painters and sculptors, including several who had studied at the Slade (where Henderson himself was enrolled, between 1945 and 1947), a number from the Royal College of Art, and some from the Central School. Christopher Ironside, who had studied and taught at the Central School, was a key figure in camouflage development at Leamington Spa. The research department there featured an experimental ‘vision

chamber' and a 'moonlight vision chamber', within which camouflage designs and devices could be studied under different lighting conditions.¹⁰³

In London, a 'industrial camouflage unit' was set up by architect Ernő Goldfinger, who employed a team of surrealist painters, including Roland Penrose and Julian Trevelyan. Penrose illustrated the *Home Guard Manual of Camouflage* (1941) and Trevelyan wrote 'The Technique of Camouflage', which appeared in a special issue of *Architectural Review* in 1944.¹⁰⁴ Recognising Britain's experimental work in the development of military camouflage during the war, in 1941 the Museum of Modern Art in New York presented an exhibition titled *Britain at War*. The catalogue states, 'The practice of camouflage requires the collaboration of the military strategist, the architect and the artist.'¹⁰⁵ An engagement with ideas around camouflage, pattern recognition, and visual deception might be indicated by the experiments with the Central School prints [fig. 34] which see Freda Elliot, Eduardo Paolozzi and Henderson don outfits to match the abstract silkscreen-printed patterns. They hang these sheets onto a structure, which in some shots serves as a lookout post or pillbox and in others becomes a kind of flight craft, with the patterns laid out like maps below. Yet, their experiments suggest a more humorous, even satirical take on this camouflaging exercise. Their research would not readily offer itself to the demands of 'war pedagogy' or the machinations of the 'military industrial complex'. Instead, this pursuit – itself a hidden activity without a public stage – engages with the ideas of camouflage in more concealed, visually disruptive ways.

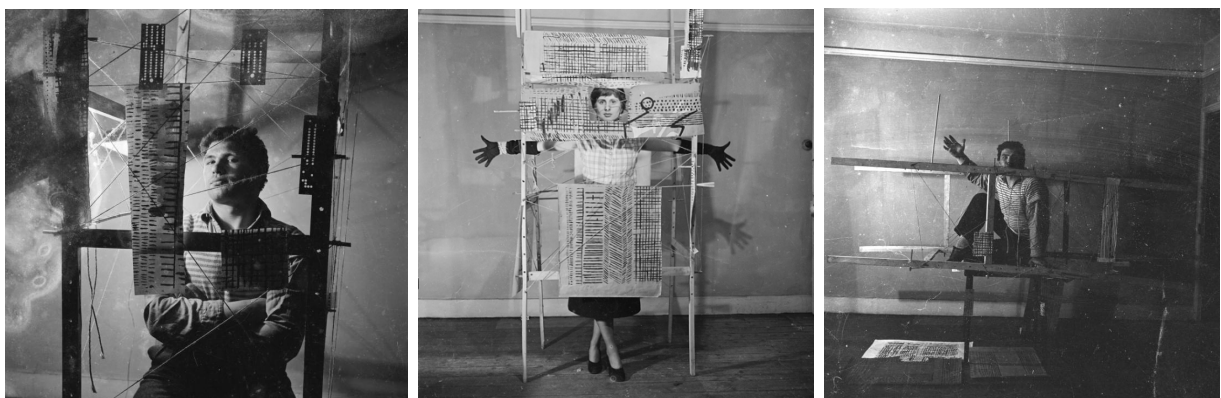


Figure 34. Nigel Henderson, photographs of Freda Elliot and Eduardo Paolozzi, 1951. Tate, TGA 9211/8/15, TGA 201011/3/1/40 & TGA 201011/3/1/41. Photos: Tate (negatives reproduced as digital positives).

Henderson's experience during the war would have primed him with an acute sensitivity to problems of pattern perception and interpretation, as well as associating these modes of vision with their most violent implications. Between 1939 and 1945, Henderson served as a pilot in the RAF Coastal Command.

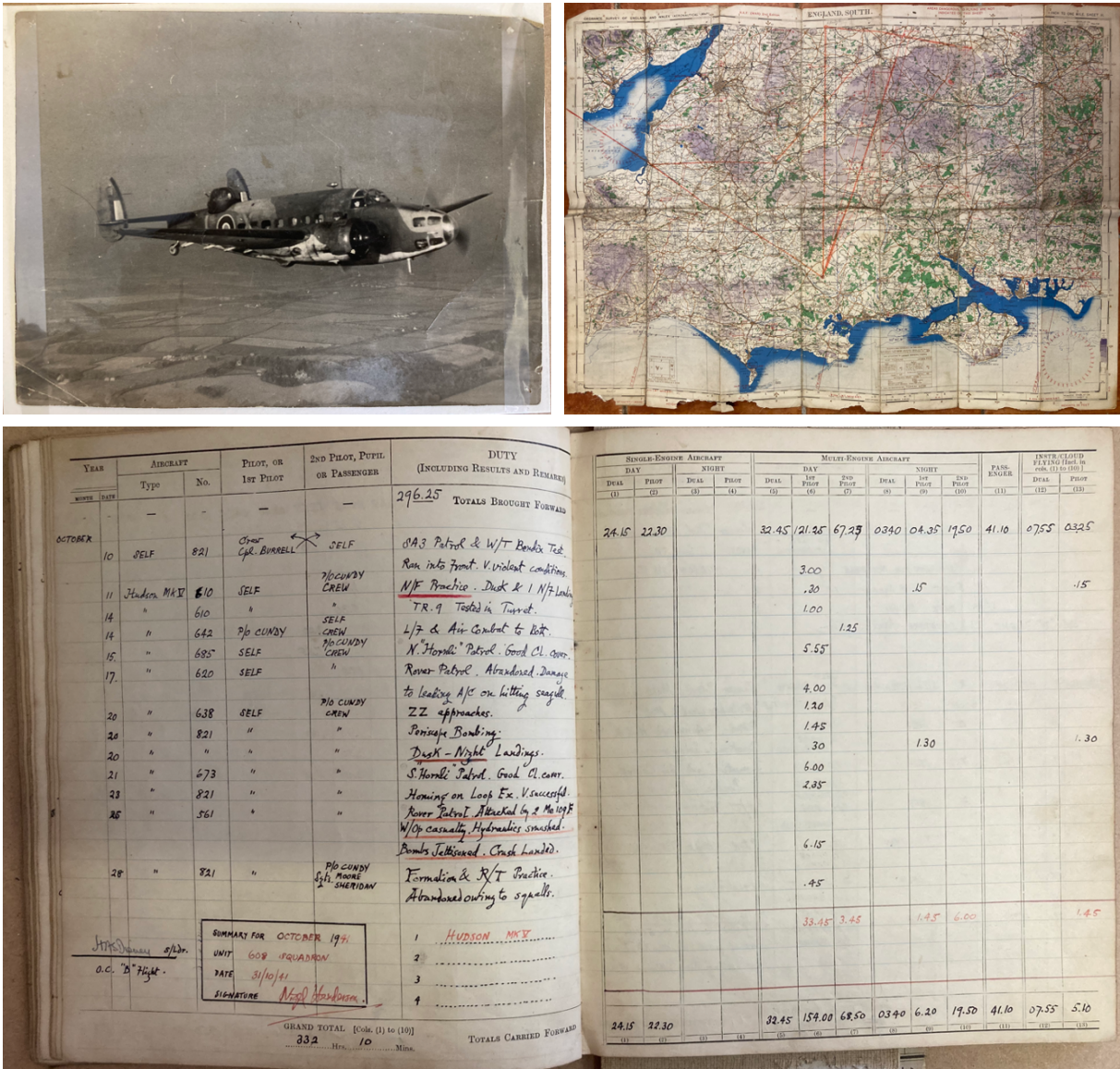


Figure 35. Top left: Photograph of Nigel Henderson flying a Lockheed Hudson, c. 1943. Top right: Nigel Henderson's wartime flying map. Bottom: Nigel Henderson's wartime flying logbook. Nigel Henderson Estate. Photos: Rosie Ram.

This experience is cited in his potted biography in the May 1951 edition of the *Architectural Review*, which earned him his post at the Central School. In a photograph in the holdings at the Kings Head, Henderson is pictured flying a Lockheed Hudson, a light bomber aircraft that was built in America and used in Britain for coastal reconnaissance, aerial bombardment, and maritime patrol [fig. 35, top right]. On the reverse of the photograph, Henderson has scrawled, 'On the right of the photograph, showing notably less pallor than his passenger, at the controls of a Lockheed Hudson (MK V?), sits Flt/Lt Nigel Henderson[.] Some of Yorkshire is spread beneath his rubber-tipped metal wings (sometime in 1943.)' The Lockheed Hudson is covered in a mottled coat of camouflage and marked with the concentric circles of the RAF roundel. Stretching out beneath the aircraft is the liling and broken grid of the English

landscape, peppered with the dots of houses and hamlets, and blotted with drifts of trees. His wartime flying map of South England tracks his trajectories against the tangled topographies beneath [fig. 35, top left].

The Henderson estate also have among their holdings the *Royal Air Force Pilot's Flying Book* that Henderson had to keep as a log of his training [fig. 35, bottom]. This book charts his increasingly traumatic and violent flying experiences. Having completed the necessary training in flying, navigation, and reconnaissance, from May 1941 Henderson's duties become increasingly combative. These entries include fighter attacks, bombing on moving targets, night duels, sea navigation and bombing, depth charging, air firing, evasive action, and periscope bombing. In October 1941, he records 'v. violent conditions' and later that same month 'Attacked by 2 Me 109 F W/Op casualty. Hydraulics smashed. Bombs jettisoned. Crash landed.' Significantly, in a letter written by the artist towards the end of his life, he likens the act of photography to the horror of aerial bombardment. He describes 'the plate camera's bombing run' as 'More like dive bombing really', remembering that he 'Used to practice on a semi-sunken cargo vessel off the little bay by Wick aerodrome'.¹⁰⁶ As he acknowledges, his photographic practice was imbued by his experiences of militarised modes of perception [fig. 36] and, by extension, the necessity of disguise and deception.



Figure 36. Air reconnaissance photographs possibly taken by Henderson during war service, 5 May 1942. Tate, TGA 9211/9/6/2 & TGA 9211/9/6/3. Photos: Tate.

As Henderson was predominantly required to conduct nocturnal bombing raids and duels, honing his visual acuity in the dark and learning to perceive images and patterns

under the veil of night, was fundamental for his survival and combative skill. This experience can be mapped onto his darkroom practice. Indeed, it becomes critical to read his negative image in its darkly translucent form like a technology of night vision that permitted perception in the darkroom [fig. 37]. Garland's recollection that Henderson would teach his Creative Photography classes at the Central School at night also gains a darker significance, bringing his practice into dialogue with the wartime 'night vision chambers' in which camouflage was tested. The horror of aerial vision, the devastating threat of being seen from the air, and the necessity to adapt to night conditions, imbues his negative with more urgent connotations. Rather than operating as an intermediary photographic material awaiting positive printing, it becomes an ulterior technology of visual perception, permitting an inversional form of pattern recognition in the dark.



Figure 37. Nigel Henderson, 'Photograph showing artwork, possibly by Eduardo Paolozzi', c.1949–c.1956, black and white photographic negative, Tate, TGA 201011/3/1/79/2. Photo: Rosie Ram.

Revealingly, on the same roll of film as the negative showing Kaner next to a suspected example of his 'scaled down and adapted Jackson Pollockry' and the photographs of Alison and Peter Smithson during the installation of *Parallel of Life and Art*, is a photograph of an architectural model by the Smithsons that they made for their competition design of Coventry Cathedral in 1952, captured by Henderson's camera [fig.

38, left]. The building is shot from the air, at a tilting angle, as if the photographer were spiralling in flight above the miniature scene. The composition echoes an angled view of Jenkins' office, most likely also taken while Henderson was teaching at the Central School [fig. 38, right]. Both images tightly crop and constrict the viewing perspective, creating dramatic pictures that depart from conventionally perpendicular portrayals of their subjects. These images resonate with Henderson's comparison of photography to 'dive bombing', imbuing his images – and, by extension, his darkroom work of developing and printing them – with further semi-concealed traces of a more militarised mode of seeing.

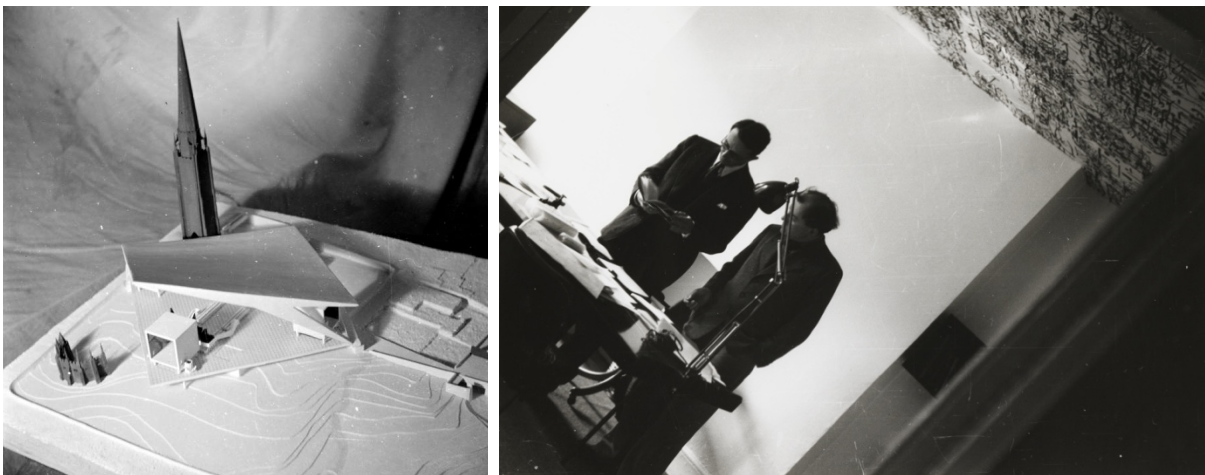


Figure 38. Left: Nigel Henderson, photograph of Alison and Peter Smithson's model of competition design for Coventry Cathedral, London, 1952. Tate, TGA 201011/3/1/29/11. Photo: Tate (negative reproduced as digital positive). Right: Nigel Henderson, Peter Smithson with Ronald Jenkins in his office at Ove Arup & Consulting Engineers, 1951. Tate. Photo: Tate.

After the Second World War, the art schools in London saw an influx of students and staff with recent military experiences. As Margaret Garlake notes, the ex-servicemen's grant scheme facilitated access to tertiary education for those whose careers had been interrupted by the war.¹⁰⁷ Henderson had himself attended the Slade immediately after the war supported by this scheme. This integration of ex-service personnel into the art schools changed the pedagogic environments. As Garlake explains, 'Mature students, all too aware of lost time, rejected authoritarian teaching and old disciplines of meticulous life drawing and tonal painting, the formal skills essential to the academic artist.'¹⁰⁸ At the same time, this influx of ex-military personnel will have inflected the schools with more militarised modes of image production and perception, as conditioned by the recent conflict. Yet, the strategies and tactics learnt by these practitioners during the conflict would have no obvious outlet within the post-war art institution. Hence, we might expect that those ideas of camouflage development and deception, secrecy and

subterfuge, might go underground within the school and be expressed in more unlikely and oblique ways, thus engendering the semi-concealed ‘research work’ that we find being enacted by Henderson and his colleagues on Central School’s premises.

Semi-concealed practices within the post-war art school

According to Garland, Henderson treated his prescribed remit at the Central School as ‘complete nonsense!’ And yet, he continued to occupy the position of tutor. Rather than entirely rejecting his role, the artist used his employment to practice his own methods of creative experimentation within the subterranean space he had carved out, sometimes under the cover of night. Elsewhere in the building, Paolozzi and Ehrenzweig were engaged in similarly clandestine activities, using the machinery and materials in the School of Textiles to generate an abundance of prints that did not serve the objectives of the institution, and which they smuggled out of the buildings to serve their own projects beyond its walls. In *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1988), Michel de Certeau argues that individuals are able to both inhabit and elude formal structures via ‘surreptitious creativities’,¹⁰⁹ which comprise subtle acts of diversion and occupation.¹¹⁰ He describes this as ‘playing and foiling the other’s game’,¹¹¹ a double-bluff made possible by the coexistence of what he terms ‘production’ and ‘consumption’.¹¹² For de Certeau, a ‘rationalized, expansionist and at the same time centralized, clamorous, and spectacular’ mode of production dominates society.¹¹³ Yet, this dominant mode of production corresponds with a mode of consumption that – far from being inert or passive – is creative and ‘devious’.¹¹⁴ This devious mode of consumption, ‘insinuates itself everywhere, silently and almost invisibly, because it does not manifest itself through its own products, but rather through its *ways of using* the products imposed by a dominant economic order’.¹¹⁵ De Certeau extends this notion of creative consumption via his conception of ‘tactics’.¹¹⁶ For de Certeau, tactics are the ways that consumers opportunistically take advantage of power structures, perceiving cracks in regimented frameworks and ‘poaching’ from them.¹¹⁷ Invoking de Certeau’s approach, the Central School can be conceived as an institution oriented towards the spectacular optics of post-war productivity, but, nevertheless, one which contained rifts and blind spots through which practitioners working within the school might fleetingly escape.

If staff and students at the Central School are envisaged as ‘workers in the arts’ within Johnstone’s factory-office-workshop modelled art school, de Certeau’s notion of ‘*la perruque*’ becomes a pertinent theoretical device to examine their more deviant modes of labour. The concept of ‘*la perruque*’ provides a means of elucidating the work they performed that was not authorised by the institution, but which nevertheless took place on the premises while they were employed there. As de Certeau writes,

‘*La perruque* is the worker’s own work disguised as work for his employer. [...] the worker who indulges in *la perruque* actually diverts time (not goods, since he uses only scraps) from the factory for work that is free, creative, and precisely not directed toward profit. In the very place where the machine he must serve reigns supreme, he cunningly takes pleasure in finding a way to create gratuitous products whose sole purpose is to signify his own capabilities through his *work* and to confirm his solidarity with other workers or his family through *spending* time in this way.’¹¹⁸

La perruque is a form of labour that is disguised by the fact that those engaging in it are employed to do work that is ostensibly similar; therefore, while performing *la perruque* they appear to be working. The products of *la perruque* are overlooked by the institutions in which they are produced as they use the same technologies, and they require only fragments and leftovers. If *la perruque* is not entirely invisible, then it is at least subtle enough for the institution to ‘turn a blind eye’. Sholette argues that artists are particularly well equipped to perform this deceptive manoeuvre, because the role of the artist is itself a ‘fictional job’; thus, ‘artists possess a sophisticated ability to mimic, exaggerate, or otherwise reshape given reality.’¹¹⁹ They are able to camouflage and conceal the more deviant aspects of their labour.

It therefore seems fitting to apply the concept of *la perruque* to the silkscreen prints made by Paolozzi and Ehrenzweig at the Central School, which borrowed the machinery provided by the school, while taking loose sheets of paper and leftover inks that were otherwise used as teaching materials. Similarly, in Henderson’s Creative Photography darkroom he did not teach students to photograph their models and prototypes, as he was primarily required to do, but instead engaged in another form of creative photography, often occupying the premises and using the facilities there long into the night. De Certeau argues that the products of *la perruque* operate within an alternative

economy. He explains that by practicing *la perruque*, ‘we can play the game of free exchange [...]; we can create networks of connivances and sleights of hand; we can exchange gifts; and in these ways we can subvert the law that, in the scientific factory, puts work at the service of the machine’.¹²⁰ Here, it is interesting to note that Paolozzi often gave away the silkscreen prints he and Ehrenzweig produced together at the Central School as gifts, as well as sharing them widely with his colleagues as part of further collaborative projects. As Williamson has written of Paolozzi, ‘In creating and gifting images [...] he makes the images themselves a kind of common currency’.¹²¹ Similarly, Henderson’s photographs of these prints were dispersed widely within a ‘network of connivances’ that spread outwards from the post-war Central School.

Given the Central School’s widespread implementation of basic design pedagogy, we might ask whether the silkscreen prints generated in abundance by Paolozzi and Ehrenzweig and further mediated by Henderson’s photography can be considered works of basic design. Certainly, these prints depict some recognisable characteristics of the application of basic design principles: architectural grids, recurrent rectilinear marks, and abstract motifs, arranged in carefully distributed compositions. Yet, on closer inspection, their patterns exhibit a more fractured aesthetic that contradicts the ostensibly ordered ‘grammar’ of the sheets: the architectural grids are broken; an excess of biomorphic motifs crowd the space; superimposed patterns interrupt one another’s logic; tiny figures are subsumed into an undergrowth of densely tangled lines; and in some places the ink fades, becoming semi-opaque and then invisible. The compositions of the prints are carefully ordered but, to invoke de Certeau, ‘The surface of this order is everywhere punched and torn open by ellipses, drifts, and leaks of meaning’.¹²²

Critics have noted that whilst these prints appear to reject a straightforwardly geometric approach to basic design, they do exhibit traits of Paul Klee’s thinking, as advocated in his *Pedagogical Sketchbook* (1925), a seminal text for Bauhaus teaching.¹²³ In particular, the prints might be read as expressing Klee’s ‘a-focalism’ or ‘aformalism’, an ‘all-over’ approach to pattern-making that scatters visual perception across a plane.¹²⁴ Basic design was treated with suspicion by some progressive practitioners affiliated with the IG and the Central School at this time, who cautioned that this pedagogy risked becoming formulaic as it was institutionalised within British art schools.¹²⁵ In light of this observation, the silkscreen print patterns produced at the Central School can be read as documenting an more dissonant implementation of Bauhaus-derived

pedagogy within the institution. They could be seen as recording a deviation from the legible visual grammar of basic design prescribed by Johnstone. The patterns that populate the prints might instead be perceived as akin to the ‘indirect’ or ‘errant’ trajectories described by de Certeau.¹²⁶ As he writes,

‘In the technocratically constructed, written, and functionalized space in which the consumers move about, their trajectories form unforeseeable sentences, partly readable paths across a space. Although they are composed with the vocabularies of established languages [...] and although they remain subordinated to the prescribed syntactical forms (temporal modes of schedules, paradigmatic orders of space, etc.), the trajectories trace out the ruses of other interests and desires that are neither determined nor captured by the systems in which they develop’.¹²⁷

Within the Central School in post-war Britain, these prints might map out the ‘partly readable paths’ of practitioners within the school. The prints – even in their formal character – thus evidence the ‘other interests and desires’ harboured by workers within the school. The disruptive quality of this labour lies not in a direct rejection of imposed structures, but in simultaneous acts of occupation and escape.

The significance of this kind of practice within the post-war art school is elucidated by Sholette’s writing on the increasing privatisation of education in modern capitalism. He argues, ‘Once life outside the factory – leisure, reproduction, sex – was organized to serve the needs of capital, enclosing and privatizing learning was inevitable, especially given neoliberalism’s thirst for new intellectual property.’¹²⁸ Reflecting on the contemporary results of this privatising trajectory, Sholette writes that universities and art schools alike have become ‘factories of knowledge where biological, social, artistic, and communicative assets are concentrated in the form of human capital, that is the minds and bodies of students and faculty.’¹²⁹ In light of this reflection, Henderson’s and his colleagues’ work at the Central School evidence a more covert kind of artistic labour, which evades this trajectory towards enclosure and privatisation. This work ‘poached’ resources from the school, while inhabiting the margins of the timetables, and creating subterranean spaces beneath the surface of the institution. Illuminated by de Certeau’s writing, this ulterior form of artistic labour appears to have occupied the structures of the institution, while at the same time evading them, both invoking and transgressing

the school's regulations and rules, applying and deviating from its pedagogy. Practitioners who were cast by the institution as 'workers in the arts' performed the cunning mimicry of *la perruque*, itself a kind of anti-professionalising and camouflaging activity.

If the abstract prints can be said to trace partly readable paths, errant trajectories and deviant lines within the dominant structures that ensconced their production in post-war London, then Henderson's photographs of these prints add a further, semi-visible layer to this aberrant activity. His images provide a photographic means of mapping the dispersed topographies of these patterns across disparate contexts, whether domestic or professional interiors or exhibitions. In each instance his photographs provide critical means of analysis, by offering carefully composed and cropped extracts of pattern, shot from ever-shifting positions. Furthermore, the negative showing the shard of silkscreen-print presents a detail of the patterning for closer scrutiny, offering a means of analysing its wayward, wandering lines. What is more, the negative inverts these markings into a darker photographic form, demanding the night vision-like perception of darkroom analysis. It is becoming clear that the kinds of research work that Henderson developed in the immediate post-war period – at the Central School and elsewhere – centred around a collaborative engagement in investigating patterning, pictorial detail, and abstraction, and he offers photography as a highly experimental means of interpretation with its own analytical and creative agency. This was not systematic nor scientific work on Henderson's part, and not oriented towards producing a single, conclusive interpretation nor resolution. Rather, rather he used photography as a methodology to interrogate the ongoing and open potential for a multiplicity of meanings, thus keeping the polyvalence and contingency of imagery in play, whereby meaning itself remains experimental. Here, the 'research work' of photography is neither production nor reproduction, but rather an interstitial, experimental, artistic interpretation, a semi-visible interface between other modes of practice.

At the start of this chapter, I asked how Henderson's artistic research might have been shaped by the conditions of production in which he worked in post-war Britain. At the Central School of Arts and Crafts, these conditions can be characterised as a pedagogy oriented towards collaboration and cross-departmental work, which was informed by the 'laboratory' model of Bauhaus experimentation and which implemented basic design as a kind of visual lingua franca to facilitate intermedial exchange. This created a fertile

breeding ground for creative interactions between staff and students at the school. However, in a world still reeling from the abject horrors of war, this was a period in which the early avant-garde's utopian imaginings of total revolution and radical social reform no longer held sway. Instead, their creative strategies were instrumentalised to serve more immediate goals, such as the impetus to rebuild industry and commerce. In this context, the notions proposed by Moholy-Nagy of 'experimentation' and 'research work' were co-opted in pursuit of national reconstruction, productivity, and prosperity, whereby the art school oriented itself toward the factory, office, and workshop. At this time, artistic education in Britain and America bore a recent connection to the visual research work mandated during the war. This aligned Moholy-Nagy's thesis of 'vision in motion' and Kepes' theory of a 'language of vision' with the military objectives of pattern perception and production, camouflage development and visual deception, thus positioning the pedagogic darkroom in dialogue with the night vision chambers established during the conflict.

Yet, the Central School of Arts and Crafts harboured more covert creative practices that both occupied and escaped its official protocols and deviated from the priorities promoted in its post-war prospectuses. In the Textiles workshops at the Central, Paolozzi and Ehrenzweig worked together after hours, borrowing the school's machinery, and poaching from the materials it provided, and practicing the professional double-bluff of *la peruque* in order to pursue the development of their own abstract, silkscreen-printed patterns. Their tangled designs trace the errant trajectories and wandering lines carved out by the practitioners themselves as they moved between the official temporal and spatial meshes of the institution, as marked out in the floorplans and imposed by the timetables within the prospectuses. The abundance of their prints discovered at the Kings Head evidences the 'excess' and 'surplus' nature of this labour. Henderson's photographs and negatives show these prints installed in a variety of professional and private contexts and integrated into other collage works. His carefully composed, decisively cropped, and obliquely angled photographs enter into dialogue with their disruptive patterning. His photography adds a more hidden dimension of creative interpretation through the covert, darkly translucent, and only partially visible presence of the negative photographic image.

While teaching Creative Photography at the Central School, Henderson worked in the subterranean 'laboratory' of his darkroom, submerged 'somewhere in the basement' of

the building. There, he departed from his remit of teaching students to photograph their models and prototypes. Instead, he encouraged those who attended his classes to engage in the 'research work' of photographic experimentation. Echoing his experience of nocturnal bombing raids during the Second World War, Henderson worked stealthily in his pedagogic darkroom, teaching students after hours under the cover of night. In the Industrial Design Department at the Central School, the photographic image was intended to be subservient to the models and prototypes it was tasked with representing. Yet, in his work within and surrounding the school, Henderson afforded photography an equal status and comparable creative capacity to its subject matter, allowing the photograph to operate as both image and object simultaneously, creating the kind of ontological disorientation elucidated by Mark Fisher's writing. The artist's photographic images enter into 'strange loops' with other forms of creative output, causing 'confusion at an ontological level'. To paraphrase Fisher, we might say that 'Each embedding [of object into photographic image] contains the possibility of a dis-embedding [of photographic image into object]' eliciting a sense that 'something that was at a supposedly inferior ontological level threatens to climb up out of its subordinated position and claim equal status with the level above.'¹³⁰

For John Roberts, the ongoing research programme of the avant-garde is 'adisciplinary', comprising a 'space of relations across practices and disciplines where artists, writers, intellectuals and technicians [...] test and probe the historical and self-normalizing conditions of the category of art'.¹³¹ Surrounded by different departments within the Central School, Henderson's 'research work' within the nascent field of Creative Photography is not necessarily 'adisciplinary' but rather suspended – generatively – at a point of confluence between more established practices, allowing him to pursue an interstitial mode of artistic work, which was only partially visible to the institution. In the context of the museum today, the surviving traces of his photographic practice at the Central School remain highly partial and marked by absences. As Henderson himself acknowledges in a letter written towards the end of his life, his early experimental photographic work was not deemed valuable enough to be properly conserved at its time of production, and he himself did not have the means to do so. The artist writes that, regarding the 'early photographic "play activity"' I'm afraid that a pretty big body of work has fared badly in my penurious charge. I simply wasn't able to afford the dry security and care they needed (& most of it has returned to the basic molecular structure, via agency of wind, water, rats & mice).¹³² This work is not, therefore,

recorded in the extant artworks from the period or in the official products of the school. Rather, it can be traced around the edges of the prospectuses and threaded through the timetables that map the temporal trajectories of practitioners within the institution.

According to Roberts, the autonomy of art is ‘the unfolding and transitive site of the conflict or tension between the emancipation from heteronomy and the forces of heteronomy. [It is] a space of differentiation and distinction, where the dominant conditions of heteronomy are tested, discarded and worked through.’¹³³ Drawing on Roberts’ theorisation, Henderson’s work within and surrounding the Central School in post-war London might be said to evidence a processual form of research as creative practice, maintaining a precarious kind of autonomy whilst ensconced by what Roberts terms ‘the forces of heteronomy’, which in this case can be conceived as the post-war art’s schools orientation towards industry and commerce. As I have demonstrated in this chapter, this research practice was grounded in a use of the photographic image as a means of interpretation, interaction, and agency, which emerged through Henderson’s work as a tutor in Creative Photography at the Central School. In my next chapter, I ask how the artist’s research methodologies of visual observation, data collection and display were conditioned by his work in another site: the house at 46 Chisenhale Road.

¹ Nigel Henderson, ‘Photograph showing artwork, possibly by Eduardo Paolozzi’, c. 1951-54. Tate, TGA 201011/3/1/79/2. This negative appears on ‘negative roll number 77’ in the Tate archive, alongside three other images that show a crudely sculpted bust of a male figure, the splayed fragments of a worn-out glove, and two stone-like forms, one covered with organic matter.

² See <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/archive/items/tga-201011-3-1-79-2/henderson-photograph-showing-artwork-possibly-by-eduardo-paolozzi>, accessed 9 September 2021.

³ Beth Williamson, *Between Art Practice and Psychoanalysis Mid-Twentieth Century: Anton Ehrenzweig in Context* (Farnham Surrey; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2015).

⁴ Paolozzi and Ehrenzweig’s collaborative interactions and the silkscreen printing practice they engaged in together is documented in Anton Ehrenzweig, *The Hidden Order of Art A Study on the Psychology of Artistic Imagination* (London: Phoenix, 1967).

⁵ As remembered by Paolozzi in ‘Sir Eduardo Paolozzi’, *National Life Story Collection: Artists’ Lives*, interview by Frank Whitford, Audio recording, May 1993, British Library, <https://sounds.bl.uk/Arts-literature-and-performance/Art/021M-C0466X0017XX-0100V0#>.

⁶ See, for example, Williamson, *Between Art Practice and Psychoanalysis*; Judith Collins, *Eduardo Paolozzi* (Farnham Surrey; Burlington, VT: Lund Humphries, 2014); Daniel Herrmann, ed., *Eduardo Paolozzi* (London: Whitechapel Gallery, 2017); Michelle Cotton, ed., *Nigel Henderson & Eduardo Paolozzi: Hammer*

Prints Ltd, 1954-75 (Colchester, Essex: Firstsite, 2013); Mark Crinson, 'Eye Wandering the Ceiling: Ornament and New Brutalism', *Art History* 41, no. 2 (15 March 2018): 318–43.

⁷ Ehrenzweig developed his thinking on order and chaos in creative practice in Ehrenzweig, *The Hidden Order of Art*; having advanced these ideas in his earlier text, Anton Ehrenzweig, *The Psycho-Analysis of Artistic Vision and Hearing: An Introduction to a Theory of Unconscious Perception* (London: Routledge & Paul, 1953).

⁸ Collins, *Eduardo Paolozzi*, 60.

⁹ Williamson, *Between Art Practice and Psychoanalysis*, 60.

¹⁰ Collins, *Eduardo Paolozzi*, 62.

¹¹ Crinson, 'Eye Wandering the Ceiling', 338.

¹² Crinson, 322.

¹³ This is thought to be the interior of Eduardo Paolozzi's empty flat in Holland Park, taken in the week of his wedding to Freda Elliot in 1951. See Cotton, *Nigel Henderson & Eduardo Paolozzi*.

¹⁴ *Collage Mural* (1952) is now in the collection at Tate, attributed to Eduardo Paolozzi, T12159.

¹⁵ Jane Drew also commissioned Paolozzi to produce comparable textile designs for her living room furnishings. Reproduced in *Architectural Review*, March 1952.

¹⁶ Diane Kirkpatrick, 'The Artists of the IG: Backgrounds and Continuities', in *The Independent Group: Postwar Britain and the Aesthetics of Plenty* (Cambridge, Mass; London: MIT Press, 1990), 211, n. 10.

¹⁷ Diane Kirkpatrick, *Eduardo Paolozzi* (London: Studio Vista, 1970), 24.

¹⁸ See, for example, <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/archive/items/tga-9211-8-4/photograph-of-justin-henderson-nigels-daughter> or <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/archive/items/tga-9211-9-6-127/photograph-showing-interior-of-hendersons-house-at-46-chisenhale-road-bow> (accessed 9 September 2021).

¹⁹ Crinson, 'Eye Wandering the Ceiling', 321.

²⁰ Reproduced in Marco Vidotto, *A + P Smithson: Pensieri, Progetti e Frammenti Fino al 1990* (Genova: Sagep editore, 1991), 13. Cited in Crinson, 'Eye Wandering the Ceiling', 321.

²¹ As Beth Williamson discusses in Williamson, *Between Art Practice and Psychoanalysis Mid-Twentieth Century*, 84.

²² Williamson, 84.

²³ *This Is Tomorrow* (London: Whitechapel Art Gallery, 1956).

²⁴ David Robbins et al., *The Independent Group: Postwar Britain and the Aesthetics of Plenty* (Cambridge, Mass; London: MIT Press, 1990).

²⁵ Robbins et al., 109.

²⁶ Alison and Peter Smithson, 'Retrospective Statements: Alison and Peter Smithson', in *The Independent Group: Postwar Britain and the Aesthetics of Plenty*, by David Robbins et al. (Cambridge, Mass; London: MIT Press, 1990), 194.

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- ²⁷ David Thistlewood, 'The Independent Group and Art Education in Britain 1950-1965', in *The Independent Group: Postwar Britain and the Aesthetics of Plenty*, by David Robbins et al. (Cambridge, Mass; London: MIT Press, 1990), 219.
- ²⁸ See Anne Massey, 'The Myth of the Independent Group: Historiography and Hagiology', in *The Independent Group: Modernism and Mass Culture in Britain, 1945-59*, by Anne Massey (Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press; St. Martin's Press, 1995), 109–27.
- ²⁹ Ben Highmore, *The Art of Brutalism: Rescuing Hope from Catastrophe in 1950s Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 118.
- ³⁰ Highmore, 17.
- ³¹ Highmore, 208.
- ³² Helmut Gernsheim, *Creative Photography Aesthetic Trends 1839-1960* (Faber and Faber: London, 1962), 16.
- ³³ Gernsheim, 17.
- ³⁴ Gernsheim, 17.
- ³⁵ Gernsheim, 19.
- ³⁶ Gernsheim, 19.
- ³⁷ Central School, 'London County Council Central School of Arts and Crafts Syllabus & Timetable 1951-1952', 1951, Central Saint Martins Museum and Study Collection, University of the Arts London.
- ³⁸ Elena Crippa et al., *Basic Design* (London: Tate, 2013), 6.
- ³⁹ William Johnstone, *Points in Time: An Autobiography* (London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1980), 211.
- ⁴⁰ Among the faculty at the Central School were several alumni, including Hans Tisdall who initially taught in the School of Textiles and later the School of Painting, between 1947 and 1962.
- ⁴¹ Johnstone, *Points in Time*, 221.
- ⁴² Johnstone, 220.
- ⁴³ As discussed in Victoria Walsh, *Nigel Henderson: Parallel of Life and Art* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2001), 22.
- ⁴⁴ László Moholy-Nagy, *Vision in Motion* (Chicago: Paul Theobald, 1947), 31.
- ⁴⁵ Moholy-Nagy, 71.
- ⁴⁶ Moholy-Nagy, 31.
- ⁴⁷ Moholy-Nagy, 340.
- ⁴⁸ Suzanne E. Pastor et al., *Photography and the Bauhaus* (Tucson, Arizona: Center for Creative Photography, University of Arizona, 1985), 24.
- ⁴⁹ Moholy-Nagy, *Vision in Motion*, 27.

⁵⁰ Laura Muir, 'Lyonel Feininger's Bauhaus Photographs' in *Bauhaus Construct: Fashioning Identity, Discourse and Modernism*, Jeffrey Saletnik and Robin Schuldenfrei, eds. (London; New York: Routledge, 2009), 125.

⁵¹ Moholy-Nagy, *Vision in Motion*, 177.

⁵² Central School, 'Central School of Arts and Crafts Syllabus & Timetable 1951-32'.

⁵³ Central School, 'London County Council Central School of Arts and Crafts Syllabus & Timetable 1950-1951', 1950, 13, Central Saint Martins Museum and Study Collection, University of the Arts London.

⁵⁴ Central School, 13.

⁵⁵ Central School, 'London County Council Central School of Arts and Crafts Syllabus & Timetable 1954-55', 1954, 20, Central Saint Martins Museum and Study Collection, University of the Arts London.

⁵⁶ Part-time staff often had their own links with industry. Henderson, for instance, combined his teaching with employment in a lithoprinting and photography business, as well as working on commercial photographic commissions.

⁵⁷ Johnstone, *Points in Time*, 220.

⁵⁸ The immediate post-war moment predated the introduction of the standardised Diploma in Art and Design (DipAD) in 1960, which made Johnstone's model of interdisciplinarity somewhat redundant by imposing a more uniform, discipline-specific approach to student assessment. The DipAD emphasised the need for quantifiable outcomes, disciplinary specialisation, and an intellectualised outlook. Johnstone later lamented that, after the introduction of the DipAD, art pedagogy suffered 'that departmentalization to which our education system is prone' Johnstone, *Points in Time*, 239.

⁵⁹ Central School, 'Central School of Arts and Crafts Syllabus & Timetable 1950-51', 13.

⁶⁰ Central School, 16.

⁶¹ Central School, 'London County Council Central School of Arts and Crafts Syllabus & Timetable 1953-54', 1953, 14, Central Saint Martins Museum and Study Collection, University of the Arts London.

⁶² William Johnstone, 'Unity of Art and Industry', *Times Review of Industry*, 1948; Quoted in Nigel Llewellyn, ed., *The London Art Schools: Reforming the Art World, 1960 to Now* (London: Tate Publishing, 2015), 33.

⁶³ Central School, 'Central School of Arts and Crafts Syllabus & Timetable 1950-51', 21.

⁶⁴ Central School, 13.

⁶⁵ Johnstone, *Points in Time*, 251.

⁶⁶ Robin Schuldenfrei, 'The Irreproducibility of the Bauhaus Object' in *Bauhaus Construct: Fashioning Identity, Discourse and Modernism*, 54.

⁶⁷ Schuldenfrei, 54.

⁶⁸ I am grateful to Judy Willcocks and the team at the Central Saint Martins Museum and Study Collection, University of the Arts London, for providing this information along with architectural plans of the building.

⁶⁹ Llewellyn, *The London Art Schools*.

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- ⁷⁰ Cotton, *Nigel Henderson & Eduardo Paolozzi*, 61.
- ⁷¹ Sylvia Backemeyer, *Making Their Mark: Art, Craft and Design at the Central School, 1896-1966* (London: Herbert Press, 2000), 15.
- ⁷² Central School, 'Central School of Arts and Crafts Syllabus & Timetable 1950-51', 4.
- ⁷³ Magdalena Droste, 'The Bauhaus Object between Authorship and Anonymity' in *Bauhaus Construct: Fashioning Identity, Discourse and Modernism*, 205.
- ⁷⁴ Alina Payne, 'Bauhaus Endgame: Ambiguity, Anxiety, and Discomfort' in *Bauhaus Construct: Fashioning Identity, Discourse and Modernism*, 249.
- ⁷⁵ Alina Payne, 248.
- ⁷⁶ Johnstone, *Points in Time*, 210.
- ⁷⁷ Johnstone, 210.
- ⁷⁸ Johnstone, 282.
- ⁷⁹ Becky Conekin, *'The Autobiography of a Nation': The 1951 Festival of Britain*, Studies in Design (Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press; Palgrave, 2003), 4.
- ⁸⁰ Robbins et al., *The Independent Group*, 6–7.
- ⁸¹ Conekin, *The Autobiography of a Nation*, 4.
- ⁸² David Mellor, 'A "Glorious Technicature" in Nineteen-Fifties Britain: The Many Cultural Contexts of the Independent Group', in *The Independent Group: Postwar Britain and the Aesthetics of Plenty*, by David Robbins et al. (Cambridge, Mass; London: MIT Press, 1990), 229.
- ⁸³ Mellor, 229.
- ⁸⁴ 'Cover Image and Front Matter', *Architectural Review* CIX, no. 653 (May 1951).
- ⁸⁵ Eduardo Paolozzi quoted in Cotton, *Nigel Henderson & Eduardo Paolozzi*, 61.
- ⁸⁶ Ken Garland interviewed by Alex Seago, 16 June 1989. Alex Seago, *Burning the Box of Beautiful Things: The Development of a Postmodern Sensibility* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 186.
- ⁸⁷ Ken Garland interviewed by Martin Harrison, 1999, in Martin Harrison, *Transition: The London Art Scene in the Fifties* (London: Merrell in association with Barbican Art, 2002), 102–3.
- ⁸⁸ Nigel Henderson, handwritten manuscript, c. 1951, in notebook kept between c. 1950-52. Tate, TGA 9211.3.1.
- ⁸⁹ Gyorgy Kepes, *Language of Vision* (Chicago: P Theobald, 1944), 15.
- ⁹⁰ Moholy-Nagy, *Vision in Motion*, 21.
- ⁹¹ Ken Garland interviewed by Martin Harrison, 1999, in Harrison, *Transition*, 102–3.
- ⁹² Derek Birdsall, *Group Interview with Ken Garland and Derek Birdsall* (London, 2009), Central Saint Martins Museum and Study Collection, University of the Arts London.
- ⁹³ Nigel Henderson, letter to Chris Mullen, undated. Chris Mullen papers (in author's possession).

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- ⁹⁴ Nigel Henderson, handwritten manuscript, c. 1951, in notebook kept between c. 1950-52. Tate, TGA 9211.3.1.
- ⁹⁵ Nigel Henderson, handwritten manuscript. Tate, TGA 9211.3.1.
- ⁹⁶ Emma Stein, 'László Moholy-Nagy and Chicago's War Industry: Photographic Pedagogy at the New Bauhaus', *History of Photography* 38, no. 4 (2 October 2014): 398–417.
- ⁹⁷ John R Blakinger, *Gyorgy Kepes: Undreaming the Bauhaus* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2019), 32.
- ⁹⁸ Blakinger, 29.
- ⁹⁹ Blakinger, 40.
- ¹⁰⁰ Blakinger, 38.
- ¹⁰¹ Blakinger, 38–40.
- ¹⁰² Blakinger, 47.
- ¹⁰³ Jean-Louis Cohen, *Architecture in Uniform Designing and Building for the Second World War* (Montréal: Canadian Centre for Architecture, 2011), 190.
- ¹⁰⁴ Cohen, 191.
- ¹⁰⁵ Quoted in Cohen, 208.
- ¹⁰⁶ Nigel Henderson, letter to Chris Mullen, undated. Chris Mullen papers (in author's possession)
- ¹⁰⁷ Margaret Garlake, *New Art New World: British Art in Postwar Society* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 1998), 7.
- ¹⁰⁸ Garlake, 29.
- ¹⁰⁹ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley, Calif.; London: University of California Press, 1988), 96.
- ¹¹⁰ de Certeau, xiv.
- ¹¹¹ de Certeau, 18.
- ¹¹² de Certeau, xii.
- ¹¹³ de Certeau, xii.
- ¹¹⁴ de Certeau, xii.
- ¹¹⁵ de Certeau, xii–xiii.
- ¹¹⁶ de Certeau, xvii.
- ¹¹⁷ de Certeau, 31.
- ¹¹⁸ de Certeau, 25–26.
- ¹¹⁹ Gregory Sholette, *Dark Matter: Art and Politics in the Age of Enterprise Culture* (London; New York: Pluto Press, 2011), 153.
- ¹²⁰ de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 28.

¹²¹ Beth Williamson, 'Paolozzi, Anton Ehrenzweig and Art Education in Post-War London', in *Eduardo Paolozzi*, ed. Daniel Herrmann (London: Whitechapel Gallery, 2017), 45.

¹²² de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 107.

¹²³ 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 (1 August 2013): 222-244.

¹²⁴ Walsh, 240.

¹²⁵ Lawrence Alloway, 'Notes by Lawrence Alloway', in *The Independent Group: Postwar Britain and the Aesthetics of Plenty*, by David Robbins et al. (Cambridge, Mass; London: MIT Press, 1990).

¹²⁶ de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, xviii.

¹²⁷ de Certeau, xviii.

¹²⁸ Sholette, *Dark Matter*, 39.

¹²⁹ Sholette, 39.

¹³⁰ Mark Fisher, *The Weird and the Eerie* (London: Repeater Books, 2016), 54.

¹³¹ John Roberts, *Revolutionary Time and the Avant-Garde* (London: Verso, 2015), 57.

¹³² Nigel Henderson, letter to Colin St John Wilson, 25 February 1983. Wilson archive, Pallant House Gallery, WIL/10/11a.

¹³³ Roberts, *Revolutionary Time and the Avant-Garde*, 86.

Chapter two: A field station for scrutiny: 46 Chisenhale Road and the work of visual analysis, 1949-54



Figure 39. Unattributed cutting of photographic image, untitled, undated. Nigel Henderson Estate. Photo: Nigel Henderson Estate.

In the holdings at the Kings Head, there is a small cutting of a black and white photograph showing a pair of sculpted eyes, fixed in an impassive stare [fig. 39]. The extract features a portion of a simplified human face, which has been cropped just above the lip and along the brow. The moulded nose and wide-open, lidless eyes are tightly framed, and the sculpture's gaze is cast out from the image at a slight angle. The cutting is backed on card, unsigned and undated, and measuring just 170 x 122mm. Evidently, the shot has not been taken by Henderson; instead the exaggerated photographic grain suggests it has been extracted from another source, photographically copied, enlarged and reprinted, before being cut down to size. Intriguingly, this same pair of eyes stare out from other images among the holdings at the Kings Head.



Figure 40. Nigel Henderson, photograph of *Parallel of Life and Art*, ICA, 1953. Nigel Henderson Estate. Photo: Nigel Henderson Estate.

They can be found peering out from a photograph of *Parallel of Life and Art* from 1953, for instance [fig. 40]. In the exhibition hang at the ICA, an unabridged version of the print – this time featuring the full sculpted head from the neck upwards – hung between two windows, suspended just above visitors’ eye-lines. Within the gallery, the sculpted eyes were directed across the room, their gaze resting upon an array of pictures pinned up on the adjacent wall. In the catalogue, the head is listed as ‘Etruscan funerary vase’, and no source is provided for this found image. Other photographs from the archive at Tate show the Etruscan head installed at the ICA [fig. 41]. In one, Henderson’s daughter stands directly beneath the image, gazing back at the camera’s lens; in another, she sits reading adjacent to the head, her eyes cast down onto a book.



Figure 41. Nigel Henderson, photographs of *Parallel of Life and Art*, ICA, 1953. Tate, TGA 9211/5/2/86, TGA 9211/5/2/75, TGA 9211/5/2/88, TGA 9211/5/2/72, & TGA 9211/5/2/59. Photo: Tate (middle left & middle right: positive prints; top, bottom left, bottom right: negatives reproduced as digital positives).

Reproductions of the Etruscan head also feature on two *Parallel of Life and Art* posters [fig. 42], this time superimposed with a spiral motif, which emerges from the top of the head, alongside faint, screen-printed reproductions of other pictures from the exhibition.



Figure 42. Posters for *Parallel of Life and Art*, ICA, 1953. Nigel Henderson Estate. Photos: Rosie Ram.

In an additional photograph found at the Kings Head, the eyes of the Etruscan head can be seen in an entirely different setting: the interior of the house the Henderson family occupied between 1945 and 1954, at 46 Chisenhale Road in London's East End [fig. 43]. There, the Etruscan head is embedded within an arrangement of images, objects and ephemera that are distributed across the wooden shelves of a large kitchen dresser. This time, the head appears as a closely cropped excerpt that frames the eyes, matching the grainy cutting that survives at the Kings Head today.

In my last chapter, I argued that the Central School provided a formative context in which Henderson's photographic experimentation emerged as a surreptitious and interstitial mode of artistic research work, which operated beneath the surface of the school, remaining only partially visible, and thus able to deviate from the dominant protocols and priorities of the institution. The photograph of the cutting of the sculpted eyes positioned within the intricate dresser display at 46 Chisenhale Road suggests that this mode of photographically mediated research work was critically connected with another context in post-war London: the private house in which the artist and his wife lived and worked alongside one another in the East End. In this chapter, I ask how the setting of 46 Chisenhale Road further shaped the development of Henderson's research practice in post-war London, and, in turn, how this form of research reshaped the house.



Figure 43. Nigel Henderson, photograph of dresser at 46 Chisenhale Road, London, 1953. Nigel Henderson Estate. Photo: Nigel Henderson Estate.

A labour of looking: seeing closely, seeking out and searching

On the top shelf of the dresser display depicted in Henderson's photograph [fig. 43] is a distorted photograph of a boy on a bicycle, echoing the elevated placement of the E. J. Marey print of *The Cyclist* (c. 1888) from the ICA hang of *Parallel of Life and Art* [seen installed in fig. 41, top], but here placed alongside the pieces of crockery and glassware. On the shelf below, the Etruscan eyes stare out from the dresser at eye-level, and to their left is part of another print from *Parallel of Life and Art*, listed in the catalogue as 'Disintegrating mirror (contact print)'. On the shelf below, is an abstract photocollage, initialled NH and dated 1949. An image of a papier-mâché figurine stands to its right, inspired by the exhibition *Mexican Art: From Pre-Columbian Times to the Present Day*, which opened at the Tate Gallery in March 1953. Propped against this, is a distorted image of a bather from a series also seen in *Parallel of Life and Art*. On the bottom shelf, is a free-standing mirror, the frame of which is hand-painted with chubby stripes. It reflects a portion of the opposite wall, which is papered with silkscreen prints from the Central School, patterned in a cacophony of tangled marks. Layered over these frenetic markings, is a grossly enlarged photographic portrait of Lord Kitchener, whose stern countenance glares across the room. Tucked just behind the striped mirror, is a small piece of card repeating '*Parallel of Life...*' over two rows. And to the right, the spiral motif that appears on the exhibition posters can be glimpsed once again, this time propped behind a fruit bowl.

Taken in 1953, while Henderson was teaching Creative Photography at the Central School and developing *Parallel of Life and Art*, this photograph of the family's dresser seems at some level to present an alternative staging of the exhibition within the private interior of 46 Chisenhale Road. Yet, this is a dramatically scaled-down, highly partial, and contaminated iteration of the hang at the ICA. Here, the images are interspersed among more mundane items: crockery, glassware, matchboxes, toys, a fruit bowl, and a mirror. It is unclear whether this is a miniaturised preconstruction or reconstruction of the gallery display, or whether it existed simultaneously, in parallel, beside the official exhibition at the ICA. Whatever the case, inside Henderson's house on Chisenhale Road, *Parallel of Life and Art* is broken into pieces, ruptured, and redistributed among everyday objects and household detritus.

This temporary arrangement of materials on the shelves of the dresser no longer exists today, of course, other than in the photographic images that frame the composition, captured by Henderson's camera. What kind of artistic work do these photographs evidence? The relationship between the pictures of Henderson's dresser arrangement and *Parallel of Life and Art* suggests that his work organising and viewing materials inside the house was more than decorative. At the same time, his efforts do not seem to have been a straightforwardly preparatory activity ahead of the gallery installation of the exhibition. Questions of visibility and value once again become pertinent when considering Henderson's artistic labour inside 46 Chisenhale Road. The work of arranging and photographing the display across the dresser's shelves seems to court invisibility and eschew the accrual of museological or economic value. Yet, in the decision to photograph this otherwise fleeting and fragmentary arrangement, different kinds of visibility and alternative value systems appear to have been sought. In this chapter, I argue that the only way to activate these divergent forms of visibility and value is by analysing this work through the conceptual framework of artistic research.

Strikingly, Henderson's cutting of the sculpted eyes of the Etruscan funerary vase appears to emphasise the act – or perhaps the work or labour – of visual analysis. In Henderson's carefully trimmed version of the image, the unblinking eyes become the central focus of the picture. Even when it had not been cropped so drastically to frame the eyes, the print already prioritised vision. As is shown in the installation photographs of *Parallel of Life and Art* taken by Henderson, the sculpted head is a bodiless one, gazing out from the wall and greeting visitors with its silent stare as they entered the exhibition – looking at them as they looked at the show. Comparable Etruscan objects in museum collections reveal that these heads were designed to be the lids of vases in which human ashes were kept after cremation. Notably, such vases often have moveable forearms and clasped hands to give them an active, anthropomorphic appearance. However, in *Parallel of Life and Art*, these arms and hands are absent. Initially, the funerary vase featured only the head in the gallery hang; and then, after cropping, it is only the eyes that are included in Henderson's excerpt of this image.

In both the exhibition at the ICA and in his private interior, these eyes are positioned just above eye-level, so they look out laterally across these rooms. Significantly, in the dresser display, this emphasis upon vision is dramatised further by the small mirror. Not only does the mirror – a portable *looking* glass – gesture to the acts of reflecting and

contemplating. It also introduces the glare of another character into Henderson's shot: Lord Kitchener. As if to make their eyes meet across the room, the gaze of the Etruscan head is directed slightly rightward and downward, while Kitchener's stare is oriented towards the left and tilted up, so that their two lines of sight could almost cross.



Figure 44. Nigel Henderson, photographs of dresser and the surrounding room at 46 Chisenhale Road, London, 1953. Nigel Henderson Estate. Photos: left: Nigel Henderson Estate; right: Rosie Ram.

This idea of the interior of 46 Chisenhale Road as a place where Henderson experimented with a practice of visual analysis is further evidenced by the sequence of images to which the shot of the dresser belongs. Among the holdings at the Kings Head are two further pictures that show Henderson's photographic eye panning around the room [fig. 44]. In the first, he has stepped back and angled his camera slightly rightward. The walls, ceiling and door immediately surrounding the dresser have now come into view, with the dresser itself cropped vertically down the middle. This photograph reveals a cupboard beneath piled with papers and books, an adjoining wall painted with thick vertical stripes, and an adjacent wall papered with the silkscreen prints from the Central School. The enlarged photographic portrait of Kitchener can now be seen looming ominously next to the door. A hole-punched shade covers the ceiling light, which hangs in front of a further pattern-printed sheet featuring a knotted web of elliptical lines. A photographic lamp is suspended from a hook on the back of the door, illuminating the dresser display.¹ In the next photograph from this sequence, the camera tilts upwards to reveal a greater expanse of the ceiling above. The dresser and surrounding walls are cropped horizontally, with the image clipped just beneath Kitchener's chin. Not only do these alternating shots of the dresser frame the

composition slightly differently, subtly adjusting the viewing perspective, but they also show discreet but unmistakable modifications to the contents and arrangement of the display itself. As well as tweaking the layout of materials on the dresser's shelves, Henderson moves the portable mirror around the room. First, it is placed on the dresser [fig. 43], redirecting Kitchener's silent stare towards the ornamented shelves; then, it is relocated onto a table [fig. 44, left], tilted to reveal the patterned wallpaper behind.



Figure 45. Nigel Henderson, photographs of 46 Chisenhale Road, London, c. 1953. Tate, TGA 9211/9/6/126 & TGA 9211/8/4. Photos: Tate (negatives reproduced as digital positives).

In the archive at Tate, there are three photographic negatives that extend this series further [figs. 45 & 46], providing additional evidence of Henderson's artistic exercises in arranging, rearranging, and reflecting inside 46 Chisenhale Road. In one, two mirrors are combined in the same composition [fig. 45, left]. In the lower left corner of this shot, the portable mirror appears on the table, tightly framing Kitchener's austere countenance. In the upper right corner, a large mirror appears on the mantelpiece, presenting the viewer with the portion of the wall in front of Kitchener's eyeline. In another, his daughter, Justin, sits at the table [fig. 45, right]. The walls surrounding her are overlaid with patterned prints and partially covered with decorative straw matting. The portable mirror is placed on the chequered tablecloth, positioning the reflection of Kitchener alongside her, like an imposing guest in the house. In a further

negative, a large mirror is shown occupying the entire mantelpiece, framing the reflection of his other daughter, Jo, who stands at the back door [fig. 46]. In addition to the densely patterned prints papering the wall, a photogram of bombsite debris can be seen pinned to the ceiling, not far from the hole-punched lampshade. This time, Henderson's distorted photograph of a boy on a bicycle – a version of which was also seen on the top shelf of the dresser – can be glimpsed balanced precariously above an internal door.



Figure 46. Nigel Henderson, photograph of 46 Chisenhale Road, London, c. 1953. Tate TGA 9211/9/6/127. Photo: Tate (negative reproduced as digital positive).

Artistic labour and, concomitantly, artistic authorship are conventionally defined in relation to the role of the artist's hand, to their touch, sensuousness, and dexterity as they engage in the manual act of mark-making. Yet, Henderson's work inside 46 Chisenhale Road seems to depart from these traditional qualifiers. His hands are instead engaged in the work of gathering, organising, reproducing, and readjusting pre-existing materials, while his eyes examine, interpret, and oversee this work, which is remediated by the camera. His efforts are not oriented towards the creation of an artwork per se, yet they undoubtedly comprise a key part of his artistic practice at this

time, not least in his work surrounding *Parallel of Life and Art*. By drawing the interior display into dialogue with the hang of the exhibition, Henderson seems to contrast the public kinds of spectatorship associated with the art gallery with a more private forms of visual analysis inside the house at 46 Chisenhale Road. What is more, the evidence of his work within the property resonates with his teaching notes for his Creative Photography classes at the Central School, where he lists ‘Some sheets of mirror’ and ‘Soft board to use as tackboard to pin up class results’ under his ‘Immediate requirements’ for these lessons, as well as suggesting that his students’ photograms might be used for ‘Interior Decoration’ and “‘Wall paper’”.² Inside 46 Chisenhale Road the tutor puts his teaching into practice using mirrors, pinning up materials, installing photograms on the ceiling, and wallpapering the interior with Central School prints. The house is thus connected with his underground research work at the art school, positioning the property as a zone in which these ideas were tested across the walls, ceilings, and shelves, creating a three-dimensional display of visual experimentation.

Etymologically, the origins of the modern term ‘research’ can be traced to sixteenth-century France and to phrases that can be translated as ‘the act of seeing closely’ and to ‘seek out, search closely’.³ Drawing upon these etymological roots, this chapter argues that Henderson’s labours inside 46 Chisenhale Road engage in a practice of seeing closely, seeking out and searching, which was conditioned by a complex set of conditions that shaped his and his wife’s occupation of the East End property.

Parallel of Life and Art and the work of collaborative ‘scrutiny’

This sense of 46 Chisenhale Road as a site characterised by practices of image and pattern organisation and of extended visual analysis is confirmed by accounts of Henderson’s and his collaborators’ preparatory activities for *Parallel of Life and Art*. Remembering the working method they developed together, Henderson notes that the group’s earliest discussions began when Paolozzi brought Alison and Peter Smithson to his East End house. As Henderson recalls, that they had decided to ‘ferret about for some common ground’ by meeting once a week at 46 Chisenhale Road in order to ‘throw material into the pool for general discussion, acclaim or rejection, and build up a sort of pool of imagery and maybe a spin-off of ideas really to see what happened’.⁴ In an interview with ICA Director Dorothy Morland, he explains,

Parallel of Life and Art sprang out of the bringing together by Eduardo of the Smithsons, whom he'd met at the Central School, and myself. He brought them out to Bethnal Green, and we took a shine to each other, and thought that [if] we had regular meetings and brought forward material that we were reading or found, that seemed significant to us, we would push it through a scrutiny before the others to see how they reacted. This way we built up quite a body of images and a certain amount of comment, and at the end of the year, maybe a little less, there was quite a lot of work'.⁵

Henderson thereby identifies the house at 46 Chisenhale Road in Bethnal Green as the primary site in which their collaboration developed, following their nascent conversations at the Central School. More than that, he positions the house as a place in which they developed a distinctive research methodology of holding group meetings, sharing visual materials, pushing these materials through a process he describes as collaborative 'scrutiny', and thereby gathering 'a body of images' and commentary.

Crucially, Henderson's description of the group's work together in the house suggests that their efforts were not originally oriented towards making an exhibition, per se, but rather they channelled their energies into the shared activities of discussion, image sharing, and collaborative visual analysis without yet knowing the final form the project would take. In his notes for a talk about *Parallel of Life and Art* at the Architectural Association later that year, Henderson spells out this process:

'We showed each other

Found confirmation

Decided to pool

Categories began to form.'⁶

Emphasising the visual nature of this collaborative work, he states, 'We were interested in collecting together images [...] we found considerable confirmation in each other's eyes.'⁷ Again, within 46 Chisenhale Road, the activity of perceptual analysis is brought

into focus. Henderson also comments that the ‘rich bulk’ of materials that they gathered represented ‘a kind of processed food which we drag into our private lairs & digest in our own way at leisure.’⁸ Again, this visual digestion is connected with the specific setting of his East End house.

In their meetings at the house, they subjected the visual materials they collected to a process described by Henderson as pushing the images through a ‘scrutiny’. This notion of scrutiny is significant. For Henderson, photographic technologies – namely the camera and enlarger – enabled the kind of intensive looking that scrutinising implies. In his notes, he identifies the camera as a scrutinising device, writing, that it ‘had been developed by the painter to try to objectify his SCRUTINY’.⁹ And elsewhere he cites the plate camera as a ‘scrutiny box’.¹⁰ Furthermore, in the notes for his *Parallel of Life and Art* talk Henderson identifies one of the ‘ideas latent in the exhibition’ as having been ‘the changed conception of the nature object brought about by the objective scrutiny of the photo-process.’¹¹ And he goes on to describe, ‘the distortions inherent in the photographic scrutiny’.¹² He concludes, ‘We have exploited the analogies (graphic correspondences) which appear to exist between disparate things as a result of the universal dispersal of the image of the printers block derived from photographic scrutiny in the 1st place.’¹³ This process of photographic ‘scrutiny’ meant subjecting the images to technologised modes of photographic analysis inside Henderson’s house, where his camera, enlarger and darkroom equipment remained close at hand. As these notes indicate, the scrutinising work of visual analysis at 46 Chisenhale Road was inherently photographic. In this context, looking closely meant looking through photography.

Importantly, the house at 46 Chisenhale Road was a principal site of Henderson’s photographic experiments between 1949 and 1954, in tandem with his darkroom in the basement at the Central School, which he also used between 1951 and 1954. Not only did the artist develop his interest in photography by taking pictures in the East End streets surrounding the house, but he also repurposed a portion of the interior for this photographic work by installing a makeshift darkroom in the family’s downstairs bathroom. As he recalls, ‘I started processing my work in “the bathroom” – a room I had persuaded the War Damage crew to install with a bath and sink. It was certainly the only bath with tapped water in the street and an electric water heater’.¹⁴ Such a makeshift darkroom space was not uncommon for budding photographers at the time, as is indicated in a 1939 Rolleicord manual, which states, ‘The ideal is a darkroom with

running water [...] the bathroom is the usual substitute, equipped with a table, chair and shelf or cupboard for bottles.¹⁵ We can catch a glimpse of the rudimentary darkroom-bathroom setup at 46 Chisenhale Road in a photographic contact print by the photographer Roger Mayne [fig. 47], which is now in the holdings at the Kings Head. Mayne visited the East End house in 1953 and took a series of photographs, which he gave to Henderson as contact sheets. In one, the bath and sink can be made out in the corner, with an electric water heater decorated with thick vertical stripes installed above the bath, over which fabric is draped, possibly providing an additional curtain to block out the light from the window behind. There is what appears to be photographic paraphernalia – bottles and jars of photographic chemicals, brushes, dishes, and rags – littered around the stove, above which is an electric lamp. Once again, we find the spiral motif, this time carefully balanced on the bathroom mantelpiece.



Figure 47. Roger Mayne, photograph of Nigel Henderson's bathroom-cum-darkroom at 46 Chisenhale Road, London, 1953. Nigel Henderson Estate. Photo: Nigel Henderson Estate.

It is significant that this bathroom-cum-darkroom has a similar lack of formal status to Henderson's darkroom in his repurposed space in the basement at the Central School, further evidencing the uncertain, interstitial nature of photography at this time. In his house, Henderson would select, enlarge, expose, develop and wash his photographic prints, before hanging them out to dry over the bathtub, often working under the cover of darkness provided by the night. He also made photograms and other cameraless abstractions, sometimes in collaboration with Paolozzi, using detritus gleaned from the bombsites nearby. When Paolozzi came to stay with the Hendersons in 1949, they 'would work through the night together in Henderson's bathroom which served as a darkroom after everyone had gone to bed. They took it in turns to arrange the objects. [...] It was important that the photograms were loose and random in organisation'.¹⁶ These kinds of darkroom experiments can be seen pinned up around the house, dispersed across the family's walls, mantelpieces, shelves, and ceilings.

The work of 'scrutiny' inside 46 Chisenhale Road did not only imply photographic analysis, but it also connoted organising printed materials into changing configurations and creating spatialised displays, through which the relationships between images could be studied. This is indicated in another picture from Mayne's contact sheet, which shows the Hendersons' upstairs study [fig. 48]. The artist himself is depicted in the centre of the shot, slumped in a low armchair, with one hand partially shading his eyes. On the wall behind him, there is a large sheet, displaying papers, reproduced images and handwritten text organised across a lightly sketched grid. It features the headings 'Documents', 'Man', 'Cinema', 'Concept', '1910', 'Science', 'Klee – Kandinsky', 'Diagram'. These terms are echoed in the contents and categories of *Parallel of Life and Art* where, for instance, Klee's and Kandinsky's works were situated in close proximity, and where the date '1910' was turned into '1901' in the exhibition's catalogue.¹⁷ Mayne's photograph, therefore, further evidences the use of the 46 Chisenhale Road for the research meetings held by the group in advance of *Parallel of Life and Art*.



Figure 48. Roger Mayne, photograph of Nigel Henderson's study at 46 Chisenhale Road, London, 1953. Nigel Henderson Estate. Photo: Nigel Henderson Estate.

Henderson referred to the planning process for *Parallel of Life and Art* in the following terms, 'we proceeded to build up our own collection of images until we could see a sufficient cross-section of the likely totality to give us some idea of what was driving us.'¹⁸ In Mayne's shot, a record of this 'cross-section' can be seen splayed across the wall. Significantly, Henderson's use of the term 'cross-section' aligns this mode of visual inquiry with scientific research work, by invoking the idea of cutting across the central axis of something to inspect its interior composition. Here, the artistic cut of collage echoes the lateral incision of preparing a cross-section. Having studied biology at Chelsea Polytechnic before the Second World War, Henderson will have been familiar with such scientific terms as 'cross-section' and the practice of studying materials under a microscope. Yet, inside 46 Chisenhale Road, his collage-like cross-section of photographically extracted imagery – which seems to be a cross-section of the

photographic visual world – departs from scientific reason. Instead, we see jarring juxtapositions and cacophonous patterns that disrupt rational interpretation.



Figure 49. Nigel Henderson, scrapbook, c. 1951-54. Nigel Henderson Estate. Photo: Nigel Henderson Estate.

Henderson states in his explanation of the inchoate beginnings of *Parallel of life and Art* that: 'As we came to know each other better... [we] used to exchange images from our scrapbooks'.¹⁹ He adds, 'we all were keeping scrapbooks of things that moved us'.²⁰ The relationship between this scrapbooking work and the house at 46 Chisenhale Road is gestured to pictorially on the back cover of a scrapbook kept by Henderson from c. 1951 to 1954 [figs. 49 & 50], which remains at the Kings Head. It features a child's drawing of a house, crudely sketched in colourful crayon, with cut-out photographs of his children collaged on top. Above the door of the house, the number '46' is repeated twice in red. Fragments of abstract photographic prints serve as trees.²¹ The pages of the scrapbook are populated by pictures comparable to those exhibited in *Parallel of Life and Art*, as well as those that lend themselves to the categories listed in that exhibition catalogue.



Figure 50. Nigel Henderson, scrapbook, c. 1951-54. Nigel Henderson Estate. Photos: Nigel Henderson Estate.

Henderson also recommended this activity to his Creative Photography students, writing in his notebook:

‘I intend, by example, to encourage students to keep scrapbooks. Every person to-day has through pictorial reproduction, an immense amount of material passing through his hands. He can emotionally increase his alertness and intelligent participation in living by a/ cutting out that material which simply moves or interests him b/ that interests him specifically by good use of the medium c/ By montage possibilities d/ Separating parts of the image to varying degrees & watching the effect in terms of language

All this is tremendously IDEA-PROMOTING’

This research methodology of image extraction, collection, and reconfiguration – and the concomitant promotion of ideas – can be elucidated using the notion of ‘collage thinking’

Road, as well as the tackboard-like display in his study upstairs. Like Henderson's dresser arrangement, it includes a distorted photograph of boys with a bicycle, a distorted image of bathers, the disintegrating mirror contact print, as well as abstract patterning resembling the Central School silkscreen prints. A photographic cutting positions two men in trousers and shirts standing in the foreground with their hands in their pockets and their backs to us. They peer curiously into the image, apparently intensively engaged in visual inspection. These diminutive figures are dwarfed by the photographic configuration that confronts them, which includes positive and negative images. Notably, the array of materials appears incomplete, with empty spaces dramatizing the processual, ongoing nature of this compilation and analysis work.

Building upon Boyer's notion of 'collage thinking' – conceiving of collage as a cognitive methodology as much as a visual practice – the mode of collage employed by Henderson and his collaborators inside 46 Chisenhale Road appears, largely, to depart from the museological definition of collage. Conventionally understood, the artistic labour of collage-making is oriented toward the production of a fixed composite, comparable to a painting, which might accrue visibility and value – both art-historical and economic – within the museum collection or on the market. In the interior at 46 Chisenhale Road, there is evidence of a highly provisional and processual kind of collage in play, privileging the labours of visual analysis, collaborative discussion, photographic 'scrutiny', and display over the production of an artwork. Here, the cutting showing the pair of Etruscan eyes becomes a unit of visual data within a research practice.

Crucially, Henderson's research practice at 46 Chisenhale Road developed in intimate dialogue with another, unnamed collaborator on the project that became *Parallel of Life and Art*: Judith Henderson. This is indicated by the final draft of the notes for his Architectural Association talk [fig. 52].²⁵ Whereas all the previous drafts are scribbled scappily in broken bursts, inscribed in Henderson's idiosyncratic scrawl, this final draft is written more fluidly, in full sentences, and – most strikingly – by another hand. When compared with her handwritten notes from the same period, it is apparent that this is Judith's handwriting. At the top of the pages, Nigel has added chunky numbers in pen, emphasising the difference between his characteristic style of line and this finer script. And he inserts a couple of corrections into the text as well as more playful marginalia that further demonstrates the divergence of their handwriting. It is thus evident that Judith worked with Nigel during his anxious preparations for the presentation. Given

this involvement – and the authority with which she put his sketchily asserted ideas into fluid, unfaltering prose – it is entirely plausible that Judith worked with Nigel and his fellow collaborators during their preparations for *Parallel of Life and Art* itself at 46 Chisenhale Road, contributing to their research methodology of visual analysis.

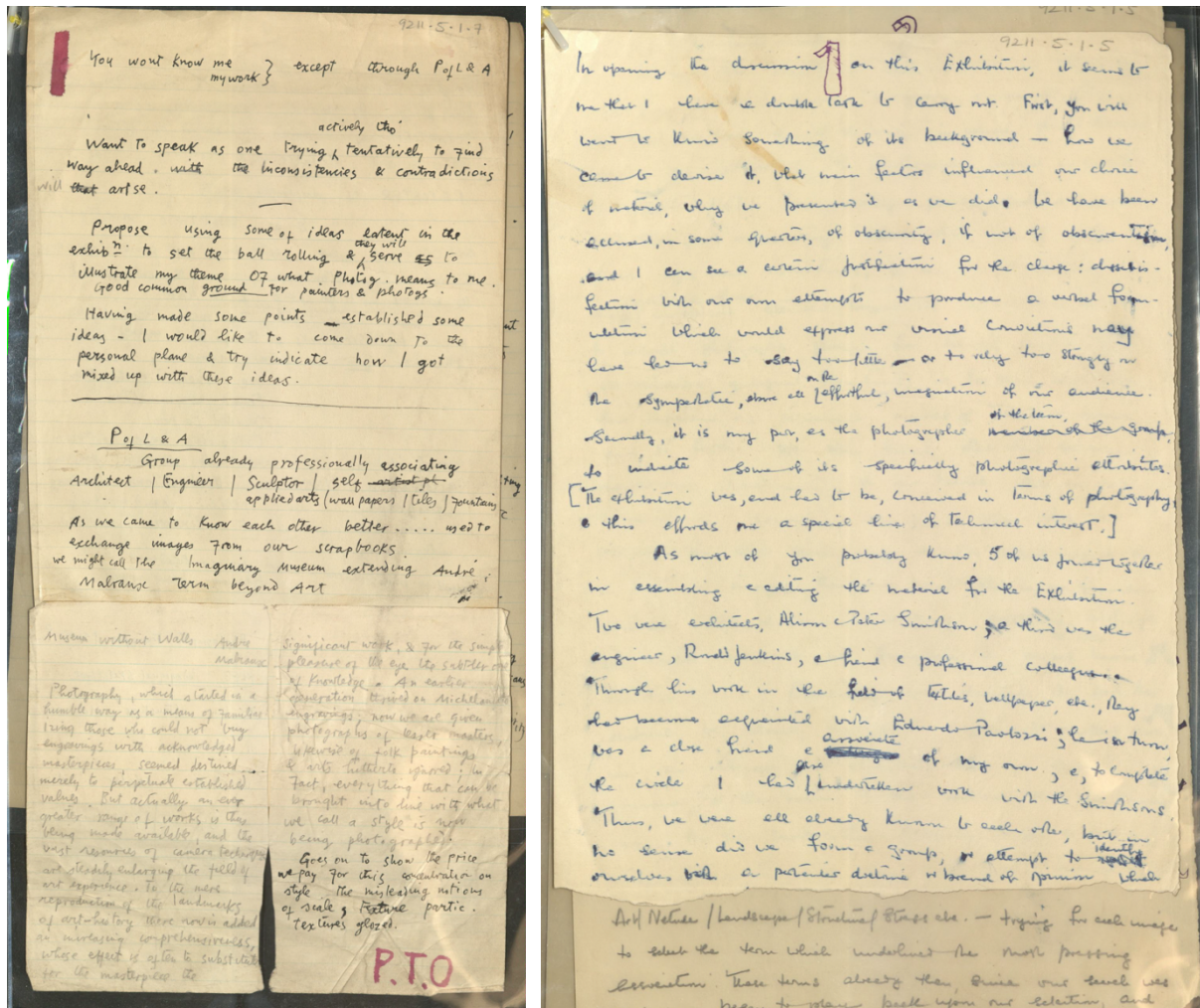


Figure 52. Left: Nigel Henderson, notes for a talk on *Parallel of Life and Art* at the Architectural Association, London, 1953. Tate, TGA 9211/5/1/7. Right: Judith Henderson's transcript of Nigel Henderson's notes for a talk on *Parallel of Life and Art* at the Architectural Association, London, 1953. Tate, TGA 9211/5/1/5. Photos: Tate.

The house as a 'field station' for covert observation

46 Chisenhale Road was, indeed, a site of scrutiny and observation work, but it was not Nigel's artistic research practice, primarily, that determined the Hendersons' occupation and use of the property; it was Judith's professional role. Following their marriage in 1943, the couple took up residence at the house in 1945 when Judith was appointed as a tutor on a new training course, entitled 'Discover Your Neighbour', which was launched in the dilapidated neighbourhoods of Bethnal Green. Judith, who had a first-class

degree from Cambridge, was appointed to the programme by the sociologist J L Peterson. An article in the journal *Social Work* from April 1946 describes the purpose of Discover Your Neighbour as providing practical training for graduates who had studied sociology or ‘for those about to enter other professions not always immediately recognisable as Social Work, namely Doctors, Clergymen, Lawyers, Probation Officers, Teachers, Politicians, Industrialists and Civil Servants – any profession, in fact, which involved the practice of a special technique upon human beings.’²⁶ The intention was to offer a course that was ‘unacademic’ and ‘as “first hand” as possible’, which would give its students ‘the sort of feeling that they would get as “strangers in a foreign land.”’²⁷ This approach is described as ‘field training’,²⁸ and Bethnal Green is identified as an appropriate ‘field’ because it was seen as “self-contained” in tradition and feeling’.²⁹

The article in *Social Work* is by Peter Kuenstler, an Oxford graduate who, like Judith, was engaged in social work in the East End ‘settlements’ of Bethnal Green. In his article, Kuenstler describes the basic method and primary areas of interest of the Discover Your Neighbour course. Those completing it were required to ‘analyse in some detail the form of community life in the area’.³⁰ As well as keeping continuous, chronological notes documenting daily life in their allocated local region, they were advised to focus on three key topics, namely ‘Home, Work and Leisure’³¹. In addition to their written reporting, those completing the training had to study the ‘historical and geographical background of Bethnal Green’,³² not through traditional academic research but by learning ‘in a practical way’. Local geography was investigated ‘by trips on the river, by a walk from Billingsgate to Limehouse, by climbing the Monument, by a bus ride to Barking.’³³ Similarly, local history was encountered through ‘the observation of street names, of shop names, by visits to the City churches which had been under the special aegis of specific foreign elements of the population.’³⁴ While it was initially hoped that students might be able stay in homes in the neighbourhood, this idea was soon abandoned; it was seen as ‘out of the question in present conditions of housing.’³⁵

However, ‘resident tutor-organisers’, such as Judith, did live in local houses in order to provide ‘a small centre of local research [...] and approximate more closely to the analogy of a field station.’³⁶ It was imagined that such ‘field stations’ might be connected with ‘the local library, where there are, or should be, local collections dealing with the past history of the neighbourhood; or with the museum, where the course might be illustrated by archaeological evidence, or exhibitions of the products made in the

locality.³⁷ Discover Your Neighbour advocated a mode of primary research work – described as ‘field training’ – intended to be applicable to any profession. It was grounded in a methodology of direct observation and meticulous record keeping. This research programme explicitly framed the Hendersons’ house at 46 Chisenhale Road as a ‘field station’ for covert visual observation. Undoubtedly, it also conditioned Nigel’s approach to his artistic work in and around their East End dwelling. His photography of the surrounding streets seems to faithfully follow the Discover Your Neighbour advice to learn the local geography and history of the area by walking and observing [fig. 53].



Figure 53. Nigel Henderson, photographs of East London, c. 1949-54. Nigel Henderson Estate. Photos: left & right: Nigel Henderson Estate; centre: Rosie Ram.

The interaction between the couple is further indicated in the catalogue to an exhibition titled *Nigel Henderson: Photographs of Bethnal Green, 1949-52* (1978).³⁸ Although it was published nearly 25 years after the Hendersons left the East End, this catalogue provides an important record of the dialogue between Judith’s socio-anthropological research and Nigel’s photographic work during the period.³⁹ Moreover, the belated publication of these photographs emphasises the critical fact that, at the time of capturing these images, he viewed this kind of photography more as a practice of accumulating visual data than as one of generating resolved artistic outputs.

The first half of the catalogue features a selection of his photographs, and the second half comprises extracts from Judith’s Discover Your Neighbour records from December 1946 until June 1947, interspersed with further photographs. Judith’s notes detail the minutiae of the daily lives of the Samuels household from number 31 Chisenhale Road, who were the central subjects of her observation project. The family comprised Leslie and Doreen Samuels, who had five young sons under the age of 10. Before the war,

Leslie had been a foreman in a timber factory and Doreen had worked as a machinist in a textile factory. In Judith's notes, she details their shopping habits, sleeping patterns, childcare arrangements, employment, uses of state support, religious beliefs, debts, familial ties, health, leisure activities, cultural interests, and the layout, use and decoration of the various rooms inside their house. These notes are intended to be direct and concise, observational records, and entirely empirical.

However, the ostensibly objective nature of this research work was blurred by the increasingly intimate relationship between the two households. While stationed at 46 Chisenhale Road and studying their neighbours, the Hendersons became close friends with the family Judith was tasked with observing, so much so that when the Hendersons left London for the Kings Head at Landermere Quay in 1954, they soon invited the Samuels to join them there. An entry in Judith's notebook from 7 April 1947 illustrates the bond developing between the families. She writes,

'Nigel went over to their house and Mr. S. showed him his "study" which he had made over the weekend, in their front room upstairs. [...] The idea was to use it as a quiet room for the grown ups. Mrs. S. could do her machining there out of the childrens' [sic.] clamour. This was clearly an idea copied from us and he was very proud of having done it. Nigel has been telling him that it is essential to have some place to be on one's own'⁴⁰

Not only does this quotation provide a record of Judith's observational work – in which she is caught carefully and covertly detailing the behaviour of the Samuels family and her and her husband's interactions with their neighbours – but it also emphasises the importance placed upon the activity of studying inside the Hendersons' house. Nigel sees the study as an 'essential' component of the house. For him, it seems to have been imperative for a portion of the interior to be reserved for a private, contemplative kind of practice, to the extent that he insists upon his neighbours adopting the same ethos.

In a later interview, Nigel remembers that Judith was supported in her work on *Discover Your Neighbour* by Tom Harrison, who had initiated Mass Observation (MO), a project intent on recording the details of everyday life and popular culture in Britain, primarily between 1936 and 1947. Nigel recalls that practitioners associated with MO would often come to their house in Bethnal Green in the late 1940s and early 1950s. He

notes that despite the fact he was ‘a little too young for Mass Observation’ before the war, in the aftermath he ‘was not too young to pick up some of its tremor, some of the intent of it all.’⁴¹ Harrison furnished Judith with a typewriter and offered her ‘enthusiastic backing’.⁴² As Nigel reflects, ‘We’d have occasional lunches with him, he’d want to see how the work [on Discover Your Neighbour] was progressing and I think he even produced a little bit of cash from time to time for papers and rubbers and typewriter ink.’⁴³

In 1978, the journal *Camerawork* published a special issue on the legacy of MO, featuring Henderson. It begins by setting out the trajectory of MO’s development:

‘Mass Observation was established by the small group of upper-middle class intellectuals and artists, but grew to involve around 1,500 observers from all social classes and from all over the country. They amassed a wealth of information on the minutiae of everyday life of the period. During World War II the Government took over M.O.’s fact-collecting organisation for propaganda purposes and to keep in touch with public morale. After the war M.O. became a limited company and turned to consumer research.’⁴⁴

A pamphlet produced in 1937 by Harrison and fellow MO founder Charles Madge elucidates the initiative’s intentions. MO, it states, ‘aims to be a scientific study of human social behaviour, beginning at home.’⁴⁵ The pamphlet continues by explaining MO’s three key methods: first ‘inviting ordinary people to report on their everyday lives in diary form’; second ‘recruiting a team of observers whose role was to watch, listen and document all aspects of ordinary behaviour’; and third ‘involving poets, writers and artists in a subjective role to complement the documentary bias of the observers.’⁴⁶ The observers are cast as the gatherers of raw data, who ‘must patiently amass material, without unduly prejudging or pre-selecting from the total number of available facts.’⁴⁷ These facts are then ‘carefully filtered’ to create a ‘reference library accessible to every genuine research worker’.⁴⁸

In his critique of MO as a ‘very public espionage’, Tom Picton details the deceptive element of the project, which saw Harrison and his fellow MO researchers infiltrating working class society. Picton quotes Harrison as stating,

‘we penetrated the environment without anyone realising we were studying it. We all took jobs locally: I had one with Walls Ice Cream, then in a cotton mill, and as a lorry driver. [...] We were able to provide a sort of secret service, precisely because we were quiet people.’⁴⁹

Picton also reflects on the instrumentalisation of MO, first by the wartime government as ‘home front espionage’⁵⁰ in 1940, and then by post-war capitalism. When MO practitioners became co-opted into the national war effort, Picton notes, they became ‘civil spies’ helping to assuage the government’s fear of the working classes and stymie popular revolt.

Then, arguably, in its reinvention as a market research corporation, the MO project helped to pacify the British population by satiating their consumerist desires. *Camerawork* details the transformation of MO into a corporate organisation after the war, selling consumer research data. In an interview with John Parfitt, Managing Director of Mass Observation Ltd., this assimilation into post-war capitalism is described in the following terms,

‘The transition to Mass Observation as a company today occurred in a fairly gradual fashion. During the war it became part of the war machine. It was both an instrument of recording the population’s reactions to hard times and also for understanding how best to put propaganda over to people. But when the War ended then commercial life began again with the opportunity to sell, as distinct from merely provide, the population with products. [...] Mass Observation formed a company in 1948, although its prime purpose was still very much social research. Gradually, because of where its income came from, the work of the company evolved into consumer research [...] the real growth of market research began after the war.’⁵¹

Significantly, photography played a role in the conceptualisation of the MO project. As the introduction to *Camerawork* explains, MO ‘described its observers as “the cameras with which we are trying to photograph contemporary life”’.⁵² Correspondingly, Picton sees MO as embodying a ‘cool, mechanical eye’⁵³ redolent of photographic technology. He describes its observers as ‘perambulating cameras’ and identifies the MO reports as ‘verbal snapshots [whose] detail is photographic.’⁵⁴ Similarly, Humphrey Spender, who

had worked as a photographer for MO, reflects that ‘Tom [Harrison] thought of the photographic side as very important but saw it as pure recording’.⁵⁵ Spender continues, ‘Tom did want more photographers to work for Mass Observation. He was desperately trying to get photographers to work. But then there weren’t nearly so many people who could use a camera’ as Harrison had hoped.⁵⁶ Given this assessment, it is likely that Harrison had not only encouraged Judith’s written observation work for Discover Your Neighbour but that he was also an advocate of Nigel’s concomitant engagement with photography. However, the artist’s photographic practice departed from Harrison’s hopes for photography to operate as ‘pure recording’. His work did not easily lend itself to this systematised – and more readily instrumentalised – approach to observation.

Despite sharing an early association with MO, Henderson’s photographic work departs significantly from its approach to documentation,⁵⁷ which has been aligned with the ‘development of documentary realism’ and ‘the British documentary tradition’.⁵⁸ Having said that, Henderson does identify his photography of the streets of Bethnal Green as a data gathering exercise, stating, ‘I was trying to collect bits that later I could draw on’.⁵⁹ However, these ‘bits’ were not offered to projects of social observation, such as Discover Your Neighbour or MO, nor governmental, militaristic or corporate endeavours. Instead, his photographic ‘bits’ appear to have fuelled a more complex project of image extraction, reconfiguration and analysis. In his photographs of the dresser display, he is clearly not attempting to faithfully record everyday life within or around his East End dwelling nor to accurately detail the decorative scheme of the interior. Instead, these photographs appear to indicate a more restless arranging and rearranging of the shelves, a careful adjusting of the camera’s line of sight, and a readjusting of the mirror’s reflective direction; not to mention his use of photographic reproductions and readymade images within these complex compositions. The photographs provide highly partial views, focusing somewhat obliquely on the enigmatic display, and leaving the rest of the room wilfully obscured.

Indeed, Henderson was at pains to stress the informal, messy, and un-programmatic nature of his work, thus diverting it from Judith’s academic training and the officious and invasive precedent of MO. In *Camerawork* he states, ‘I’ve still, I’m afraid, this very strong *amateur* passion. It’s a very rude word now for some reason’.⁶⁰ His attitude has echoes of the antipathy towards professionalisation expressed by Moholy-Nagy in *Vision in Motion*: the ‘industrial era marks the extinction of the amateur and the arrival of the

careerist, whose only aim is to commercialize the means of expression'.⁶¹ When asked why he didn't become a photographer, Henderson responded somewhat dismissively (and perhaps disingenuously), 'It never occurred to me really'.⁶² He explains, 'I just walked and walked and kept staring at everything. And it occurred to me after a little while that I might try taking a camera with me but it wasn't that I decided I wanted to be a photographer.'⁶³ As Frank Whitford summarises, quoting the artist directly:

'Henderson never regarded himself as a conventional, nor even especially gifted photographer. He never received formal lessons and learned the necessary method "largely on the linoleum floor of the bathroom in 46 Chisenhale Road, Bow, E. ... Only once did I weaken and think I must get some data under my belt. I enrolled at a hard-arsed technical school in Bolt Court. I was put to work with day-release students from Kodak. [...] The project: to photograph a chrome tap, getting all the lights correct. I think I might like that now, but then – and in that blasé and bored ambience – NO!'"⁶⁴

Henderson reiterates this antagonism towards the professionalisation of photography in his notes for the Architectural Association talk on *Parallel of Life and Art*. He draws a tentative connection between his use of the camera, Judith's professionalised Discover Your Neighbour work, and his own artistic anti-professionalism. He writes, 'Having camera. started using own environment. Wife sociologist. Bethnal Green – homogenous streets people signs walls faces [..] no training. Kindness of photogs | film given | terrible waste of effort inevitably'.⁶⁵ He uses the camera to invoke the ethos of Judith's work while undermining the possibility of his own status as being that of a trained photographer.

Visual analysis after the war: 'From bomb sights to bomb sites'

At the Kings Head there is an issue of the *Mass Observation Bulletin*, dating from 1948, which is likely to have been given to Judith Henderson by Harrison [fig. 54]. Titled 'Next Door Neighbours', its focus is the observation of neighbourly relations. At the end of the document, 'Trends' in the data are analysed, highlighting the profound impact of the war on social interactions.

'Relations between neighbours cannot properly be discussed without reference to the outside events that are continually reshaping habits and attitudes. [...] the war has had its effect. Blitzing, A. R. P. activities, the sharing of air-raid shelters, and perhaps above all the constantly replenished supply of subjects for conversation, were bound to strengthen street relationships. [...] But what is happening now the war is over?'⁶⁶

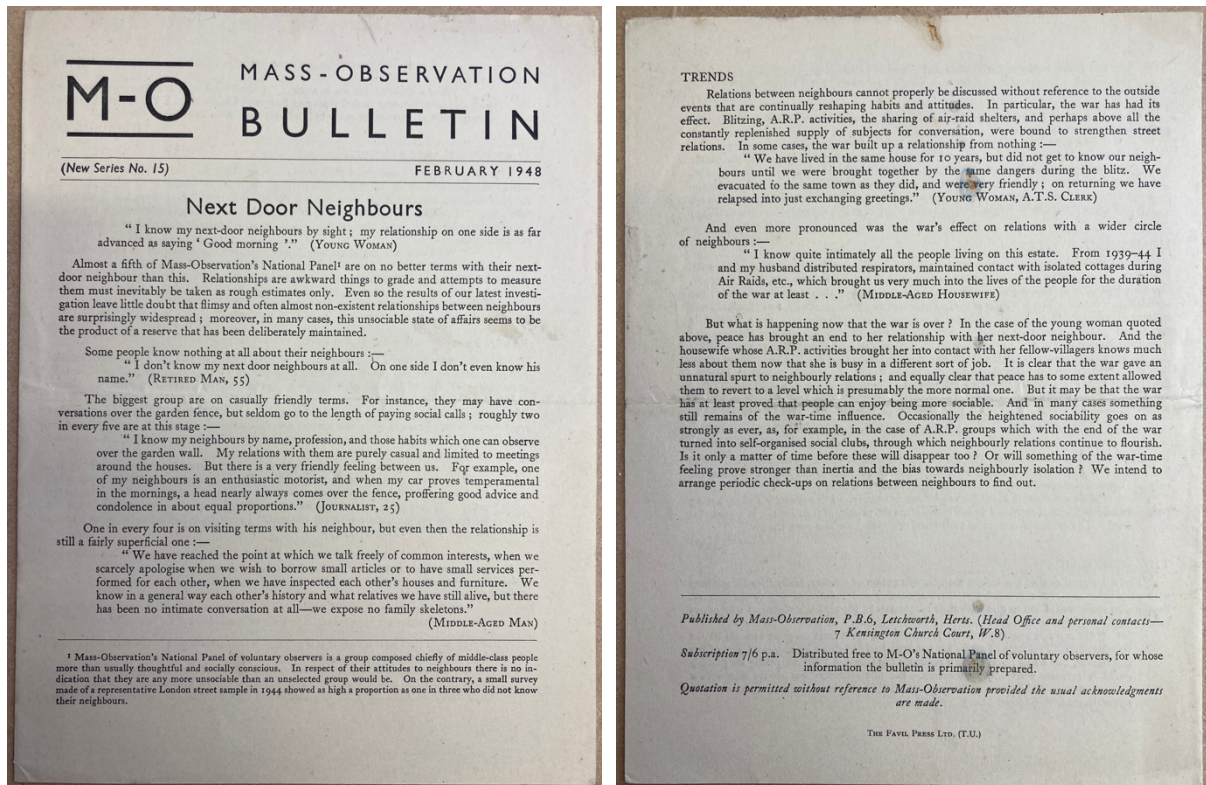


Figure 54. Mass Observation Bulletin, no. 15, February 1948. Nigel Henderson Estate. Photos: Rosie Ram.

It seems that Discover Your Neighbour had been established to address this very question. And Bethnal Green was a pertinent context in which to study the impact of the war. This is made clear by another booklet in the holdings of the Nigel Henderson Estate, entitled *Bethnal Green's Ordeal 1939-45*, written by George F. Vale, and published by Bethnal Green Council in 1945 [fig. 55, left]. Again, it is likely that this text was given to Judith as she prepared for her Discover Your Neighbour research.

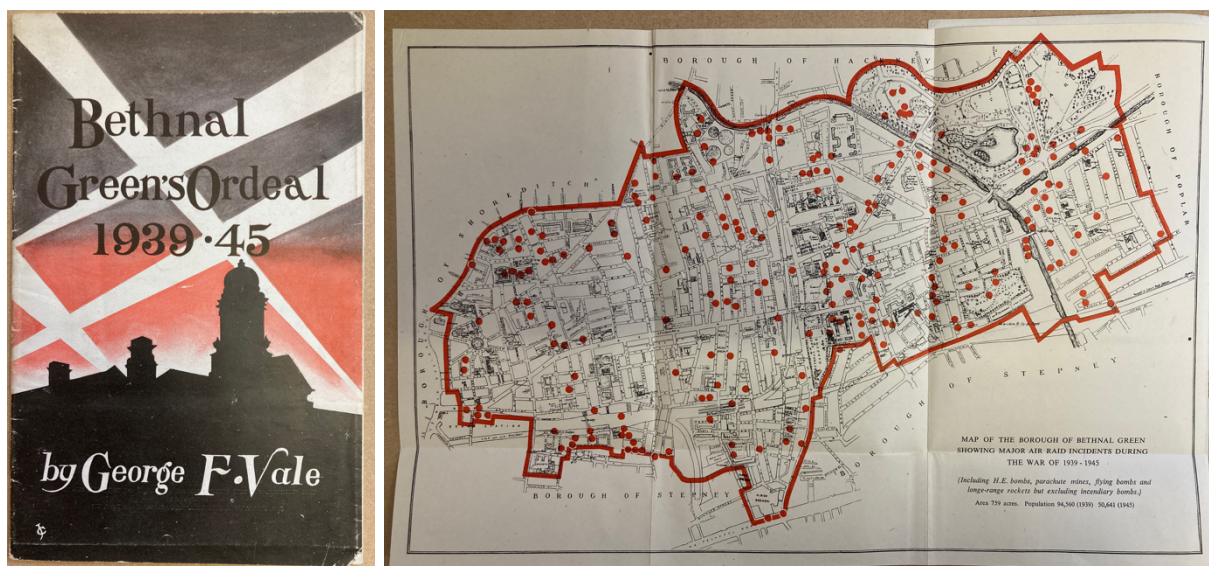


Figure 55. Left: George F. Vale, *Bethnal Green's Ordeal 1939-45*. Right: Map of the Borough of Bethnal Green Showing Major Air Raid Incidents During the War of 1939-1945. Photos: Rosie Ram.

Bethnal Green's Ordeal charts the horrors wrought by the Second World War on the borough surrounding the Henderson's home. It describes the digging of trenches in Victoria Park and the distribution of gas masks in 1938. The commencement of the blitzkrieg's 'baptism of fire' in London in 1940 is also recorded in violent detail.⁶⁷ Vale writes that 'the East End was bathed in a fatal brilliance: people spoke in whispers. What seemed the culminating horror was upon us: London was burning. [...] That night was an inferno, a nightmare of noise and fire: it seemed that time had stopped. Death stalked the streets [...]'.⁶⁸ However, one of the 'most difficult of all war time restrictions to bear with equanimity and with a reasonable mind' was, Vale writes, the complete 'black-outs'. He continues, 'the hours of darkness were so many, especially during the long winter nights – many of which were raidless – that at times the depressing effects of the "black-out" were almost unbearable.'⁶⁹

In the back of *Bethnal Green's Ordeal* is a 'Map of the Borough of Bethnal Green Showing Major Air Raid Incidents During the War of 1939-1945' [fig. 55, right]. The map is spattered with red dots, each one marking a bombing incident and two positioned on Chisenhale Road. During the war, more than 80 tonnes of missiles were dropped from the skies above Bethnal Green, including parachute mines, oil bombs, flying bombs, long-range rockets, incendiaries, and A. A. shells. The development of each of these modern missiles represents a sinister kind of progress: science and engineering coming together in pursuit of destruction. Of this gruesome arsenal, 65 tonnes of missiles exploded, utterly devastating the area.⁷⁰ Vale remarks upon a quiet, creative

response to the abject misery of nightly devastation, when people would resolutely rearrange and tidy the obliterated streets,

‘One of the most amazing things in connection with the raids was the way that people and the authorities got into the habit of “clearing up.” Almost within seconds of the bomb exploding, people on the fringe of the severe damage would be seen with their brooms, brushes and dusters, creating some sort of order out of the chaos. As time went on, a most remarkable sequel to every incident was the pathetically neat piles of debris – plaster, glass, etc. – in the gutter waiting for removal by the borough workmen.’⁷¹

In Henderson’s photographs of the shelves, walls, and ceilings of the house at 46 Chisenhale Road, there are echoes of this reparative wartime practice of carefully recreating order among the debris and damage of total war.

Given this legacy of blackouts and aerial bombardment, of wholesale destruction and minor attempts at reparation in the East End, Henderson’s nightly labour in his darkroom at 46 Chisenhale Road, often spent rearranging debris from bombsites to make ghostly photograms that can be seen installed on his ceilings and walls, itself gains a darker significance in the shadows of the recent war [figs. 56 & 57]. When read as an artistic research practice, this activity becomes a visual investigation into destruction itself, an aesthetic analysis of the materialities of breakdown and absence. Rather than aligning with the positive, patriotic optics of post-war reconstruction – of building a better Britain – this darker visual investigation appears to question the very possibility of reconstruction itself. At the Kings Head, there remain multiple examples of these photograms on roughly cut loose sheets. Revealingly, these prints each have holes in their corners where pins once held them in place, evidencing their use as a chaotic kind of wallpaper inside 46 Chisenhale Road.



Figure 56. Nigel Henderson, photograms, untitled, c. 1949-54. Nigel Henderson Estate. Photos: Rosie Ram.

Reflecting the production of such images, Henderson states,

'I was buying Govt. surplus papers; some of them US Army Airforce. All sorts of things had to go down on paper, just to see what transpired, many things lugged back from those goldmines of semi-transmuted things – the bomb sites, (From bomb sights to bomb sites). And I could see how a change of scale & of context and sometimes the limited presentation that a photogram gives further abstracted the achieved image from the points of origin. I had here a method for drawing & a technique for close scrutiny of all kinds of marks and energies of line & shape texture. These often underlined for me the energies of shapes I found in the street on walls & in the road surfaces in the blasted railings and battered bins.'⁷²

In this quotation, the 'bomb site' is aligned with a militarised mode of perception, the 'bomb sight', which Henderson had experienced as a pilot for the Coastal Command, thus inflecting his mode of visual investigation with the memories of war. Yet, in this post-war moment, the technology of the fighter plane equipped for aerial bombardment is repurposed for a practice of artistic research. What is more, the photogram itself is produced from the residues of the conflict, using the 'Govt. surplus papers; some of them US Army Airforce'. Here, the idea of 46 Chisenhale Road as a 'field station' takes on military connotations as a kind of garrison. However, Henderson's research practice both invokes and inverts such connotations. The bombsite is brought inside, its relics and residues are papered darkly as photograms across the surfaces of the house, seeing a further inversion that flips the assaulted ground outside onto the interior ceiling. In this post-war period, Henderson's research practice at 46 Chisenhale Road appears to imply that the impetus of MO and the rational, systematised methods of Discover Your Neighbour do not hold. While there are echoes of these programmatic approaches in his practice, his photographs of the interior of 46 Chisenhale Road and the photograms that he created to paper the house indicate a more provisional, fractured, and processual kind of research, one that reflects the futility of coherency and complete resolution after the horror of war, and instead offers a logic that is itself inverted, dark and obscure.



Figure 57. Nigel Henderson, photograms, untitled, c. 1949-54. Nigel Henderson Estate. Photos: Rosie Ram.

Radical science, military research, and the post-war think tank

Judith Henderson's observational research in Bethnal Green was informed by another critical precedent: her academic training before the Second World War, when she had studied with Margaret Mead and Ruth Benedict at Bryn Mawr College in Pennsylvania, whose work she continued to follow. After the war, Mead and Benedict became involved in the American think tank RAND.⁷³ The acronym RAND derives from the term 'Research and Development' (R&D), and the core remit of the organisation was to supply the state and its military with analyses. In many ways RAND typifies the instrumentalisation of visual research during and after the Second World War. As Pamela M. Lee writes, 'Scholars commissioned by RAND would marshal their diverse expertise in reading analogous patterns, bridging the divide between art and a broader visual culture, and between the humanities, social sciences, and hard science.'⁷⁴ Mead joined RAND in 1948 to conduct a study of the USSR. Describing her method, she states that it had 'been developed during the last decade for the study of cultures at a distance, using individual informants and written and visual materials where field work is impossible.'⁷⁵ Her research team analysed data in detail, 'by methods of tracing connections and delineating patterns'.⁷⁶ Mead reflects, 'I have had twenty-five years of experience working on comparable problems',⁷⁷ during which time she would have been mentoring Judith Henderson.

The formation of the think tank in post-war America had its roots in the deployment of British Operations Research (OR) during Second World War. The objective of OR in Britain was to observe and analyse the use of military equipment and personnel in order to increase efficiency and optimise decision making. Joseph F. McCloskey describes how OR saw scientists drawn into ‘the precincts of the military’ and living ‘under field conditions’ while they completed this wartime work.⁷⁸ Before the war, Nigel Henderson had been in direct contact with several of the most prominent scientists who came to shape the development of OR in Britain. In a series of letters written towards the end of his life, he identifies some of these figures,

‘I remember [...] people like Bernal [John Desmond Bernal], Bill Pirie [Norman Wingate Pirie], the Cambridge biologist, Zuckerman [Solly Zuckerman], & Blackett [Patrick Maynard Stuart Blackett] [...] these illustrious scientists and most charming people, among many others, would be found in the “Long Room” at the King’s Head where I am writing & working now.’⁷⁹

As a member of the Communist Part in 1930s London, Henderson was in further contact with this milieu of experimental thinkers, where the ‘Marxist Study Groups at Marx House were good and gave us heart and a warm room & encouraged us to think & speak out.’⁸⁰ He describes encountering ‘Waddington (“Wad”) [Conrad Hal Waddington] who obviously had a real interest in the Arts & a passion for jazz & seemed like the kind of scientist I had hoped scientists would be’.⁸¹ When the Second World War broke out, these radical intellectuals turned their attention to supporting the British state in their efforts to defeat fascism. Bernal, Zuckerman, and Blackett became actively involved in OR research. And Waddington was made scientific adviser to the Commander in Chief of the Coastal Command, in which Henderson himself was enlisted as a pilot.

Of all these protagonists, Henderson had the most extended contact with Bernal and Blackett, the latter of whom secured him a job assisting picture restoration at the National Gallery before the war.⁸² McCloskey identifies Blackett as ‘the father of operations research’ and as an advocate of constructing interdisciplinary teams of experts to gather data and perform analyses. Blackett deployed this method when he set up ‘Blackett’s Circus’, which comprised ‘a group of scientists drawn from a wide variety of disciplines’ whose task was to study the nightly bombing of British cities, particularly

London. For these researchers, their nights were spent conducting ‘endless data collection at the gun sights’ in order to ‘gain the understanding that brought increasingly effective use of anti-aircraft artillery properly coordinated with increasingly effective radar.’⁸³ Having joined the Coastal Command in 1941, one of Blackett’s studies revealed that the black night bombers that were being used for daytime raids should be painted with light colours on their undersides to reduce visibility in daylight.

As a pilot for the Coastal Command, Henderson was in close proximity with this kind of militarised research. However, he maintained a highly ambivalent attitude to the conflict and his contribution to Britain’s military efforts, having nearly killed himself and his crew in a prank he described as ‘a reckless piece of “showing off”’ before suffering a nervous breakdown. It is likely, then, that he will have maintained an aversion to the wartime instrumentalisation of the thinking of those scientists he had been in dialogue with before the war. Significantly, he also remained resistant to the most radical predictions of the scientific community who went on to shape OR. Remembering his conversations with Bernal before the conflict, Henderson writes,

‘He had a nasty image of a nearly literal Think Tank as we would now call it. Good brainy men decapitated (like the Russian Alsatian in the medical film) with surgical skill & their heads cushioned in a nutrient solution and linked with others in the same bath – and holding colloquy withal! Ugh! Such phantasies disgust & disturb me.’⁸⁴

In *The World, the Flesh and the Devil: An Enquiry into the Future of the Three Enemies of the Rational Soul* (1929), Bernal predicts a future in which the living human brain could be preserved long after the body had deceased.⁸⁵ This preserved brain, Bernal writes, could then be connected up to others forming a kind of compound mind. Initially, he suggests, ‘this would limit itself to more perfect and economic transference of thought which would be necessary in the co-operative thinking of the future. But it cannot stop here. Connections between two or more minds would tend to become a more and more permanent condition until they functioned as dual or multiple organisms.’⁸⁶

The World, the Flesh and the Devil depicts the human brain in pursuit of total collective colonisation and control, whereby the compound mind becomes ‘capable of penetrating those regions where organic bodies cannot enter or hope to survive. The interior or the

earth and the stars, the innermost cells of living things themselves, would be open to consciousness.⁸⁷ In aversion to this, Henderson's own engagement with collaborative research after the war was not oriented towards the 'perfect and economic transference of thought' or the homogenised 'co-operative thinking of the future' but rather towards something more disruptive and deviant, broken by the cuts and collisions of collagic modes of collaborative cognition using ambiguous photographically replicated images as units of visual data. Henderson states that when Paolozzi 'would talk of being a "man of ideas"', he himself had 'disgusting visions of a "think tank."' ⁸⁸ Furthermore, Henderson offers a critique of the IG that echoes this sentiment, 'The transactions of the various able members of the subsequent "Think-Tank" were of little interest to me personally as I have never regarded myself as an intellectual'.⁸⁹ His research work at 46 Chisenhale Road should therefore be understood as a mode of practice that refused the idea of the think tank as a space for fostering the frictionless fusion of academic thought. Instead, looking and thinking collectively become fractured activities, generating obfuscation rather than clarity, and thus eschewing ready co-option by science or the military.

Ambiguity, satire, and intoxicated modes of seeing

In his notes, Henderson cites a publication that sheds further light on his interest in the conjunctions – and critical contradictions – between scientific rationality, technologised objectivity, and artistic research. This is *The Layman's Guide to Modern Art: Painting for a Scientific Age* (1949), by Mary C. Rathbun and Bartlett H. Hayes, Jr. In this text, the authors propose that artistic vision aligns and yet departs from the mechanically augmented vision of science and technology. Rathbun and Hayes argue that the purpose of art is to move beyond a scientifically 'factual' form of perception in order to represent the unseeable. They write, 'The modern artist, like the scientist, is a seer'.⁹⁰ Henderson appears to grapple with this sentiment where he addresses the contrasting functions of the camera within his work. The camera operates simultaneously, he states, as 'RECORDER of dispersed phenomena of nature, works of art, architecture & technics – as REPORTER of dispersed events & as SCIENTIFIC investigator and CREATIVE agent'⁹¹ Crucially, in his practice at 46 Chisenhale Road, the simultaneous practices of recording, reporting and scientific investigation that he invokes through the camera do not, ultimately, generate the kinds of legible results typically associated with these terms. Instead, through the creative agency of the photographic image, this research

work is reoriented towards more uncertain and ambiguous outcomes; the knowledge it generates is irrational, illogical, disruptive, and destabilising.

Significantly, wherever Henderson mentions the sculpted head of the Etruscan funerary vase, it seems to signify a degree of uncertainty for him. In his notes for his Architectural Association talk, he writes, ‘The overwhelming beauty of the occasional common throw-away image – news photo (a sort of objet trouvé) sometimes in the ambiguity of a bad print or I take a liberty (I’m not sure of myself here) the Etruscan Funerary Vase’.⁹² Elsewhere, he sketches out the following sentiments,

‘Etruscan Vase – analogy. Objet trouvé

Ambiguity

Plastic organisation. Revelation of form.’⁹³

Furthermore, where Judith references the Etruscan funerary vase in her final draft of his script, Nigel inserts a correction. In Judith’s hand the text appears to refer to ‘the equivocal nature of the bad print. Eg ? Etruscan funerary vase’. Above Judith’s text, Nigel adds the word ‘ambiguous’ without striking through her choice of term. In his version, the line thus becomes ‘the ambiguous nature of the bad print. Eg ? Etruscan funerary vase’. This brings Henderson’s quotation on the ‘IMAGE’ back into focus, in which he states that ‘an “ambiguous” art image’ has the capacity to interpret ‘known things’, while a ‘known thing’ might be rendered ‘ambiguous by technical fault or manipulation.’⁹⁴ With regard to the Etruscan eyes embedded within Henderson’s dresser display, not only is the cutting itself rendered ambiguous by photographic manipulation, but it also renders the ‘known things’ around it ambiguous too.

The units of visual data that he collects and collates at 46 Chisenhale Road are not presented in the form of a systematic, conclusive, and comprehensive report as his wife would have been trained to generate. Rather, these materials enter into a complex, collagic arrangement of juxtapositions and multi-evocative associations, creating ongoing equivocality. Ambiguity, therefore, emerges as a critical device for his departure from the more programmatic approaches of Discover Your Neighbour and MO as well as

from the militarised methods of OR and the formations of the post-war think tank, as typified by RAND. Furthermore, a similarly ambiguous logic structured the hang of *Parallel of Life and Art*. As the press release states, ‘There is no single simple aim in this procedure. No watertight scientific or philosophical system is demonstrated. In short it forms a poetic-lyrical order where images create a series of cross-relationships.’⁹⁵



Figure 58. Nigel Henderson, photograph of 46 Chisenhale Road, London, 1953. Nigel Henderson Estate. Photo: Rosie Ram.

Importantly, inside 46 Chisenhale Road the work of image extraction, reconfiguration, and analysis is framed by cynicism and a dark humour, which adds to the unsettling aesthetic. This is epitomised by the jarring presence of Lord Kitchener [fig. 58]. As a figure associated not with the recent conflict of the Second World War but with the earlier horror of the First World War, Kitchener creates a ruptured and disconcerting sense of time. He appears as a strange anachronism in the bomb-blasted context of 1950s London. For Mark Fisher, the weird is characterised by feeling of ‘wrongness’.⁹⁶ Fisher associates the weird with things that are cut out, both materially extracted and

temporally or spatially disconnected.⁹⁷ Clearly, the imposing countenance of Kitchener should not exist in the family's kitchen; it has a distinctive wrongness in this context.

Fisher also aligns the weird with a notion of the grotesque as well as with the dark humour of parody, mockery, and satire. The grotesque, he writes, will likely elicit 'laughter as much as revulsion'.⁹⁸ This coupling of laughter and revulsion is due to the fact that the grotesque carries the 'co-presence of the laughable and that which is not compatible with the laughable.'⁹⁹ This kind of visual humour is indicated in Henderson's notes for the *Parallel of Life and Art* talk, where he writes, 'Rather bitterly borrowed a camera to satirise old model.'¹⁰⁰ Satire – or the significance of observing, recording and reporting the visual world with a satirist's eye – is suggested by the appearance of Kitchener in his interior arrangements, who appears as a grotesque figure in his home, provoking laughter and revulsion. Henderson's closely cropped and grossly enlarged portrait of Kitchener is unsettling within the privacy of his domestic interior. In this context, this image also conjures a sense of the 'unhomely', as theorised by Fisher where he expands upon the Freudian *unheimlich*. Fisher writes, that the weird 'cannot be reconciled with the "homely" (even as its negation).'¹⁰¹ For Henderson, this weird, unhomely figuration is obviously a crucial part of the intricate arrangements within his interior, as well as in his photographs of these collagic compositions.

Here, the enlarged Kitchener print might be a direct pun: Kitchener is installed in the kitchen. Henderson's writings are peppered with exactly this kind of lexical game, so the joke is unlikely to have been missed on him. Kitchener's unrelenting stare may also be a dark reference to Judith's clandestine observation work, in which Nigel was complicit. This surveillance of their neighbours is likely to have caused the couple increasing feelings of ambivalence, if not discomfort, as their intimacy with the Samuels grew. Alternatively, the image may suggest a more subversive kind of humour. Satire operates through mocking figures in positions of power, particularly political protagonists, such as Kitchener.¹⁰² During the First World War, Kitchener was responsible for recruiting a vast volunteer army of British troops to fight on the Western Front. One of the posters used for this task famously features him pointing directly towards the viewer, above the commanding phrase 'Your country needs YOU'.¹⁰³ Until conscription was introduced in 1916, the poster was used to cover hoardings on walls and buildings, it was posted in shop windows, and plastered on the sides of public transport across London. However, the portrait of Kitchener inside Henderson's home is not this famous illustration.

Instead, it is taken from an earlier postcard or cabinet card, thus adding to its strange sense of anachronism.¹⁰⁴ Here, Henderson might be satirising the authority of the British military and the invasion of the war into the privacy of people's homes.

Surrounded by the bomb-blasted environs of Bethnal Green, humour was seen as key to keeping up morale. As Vale writes, 'East End humour was the great antidote to fear – of that there was no lack and some of it was of rare quality.'¹⁰⁵ Although seemingly jovial, the idea of laughing amidst the abject horror of war is itself disturbing. This is perhaps captured in Henderson's use of the Kitchener poster. In the grotesque and darkly satirical forms of the weird, Fisher writes,

'laughter does not issue from the commonsensical mainstream but from the psychotic outside [...] invective and lampoonery becomes delirial, a (psycho)tropological spewing of associations and animosities, the true object of which is not any failing of probity but the delusion that human dignity is possible.'¹⁰⁶

The apparition of Kitchener in the Henderson's East End kitchen, surrounded by a neighbourhood still devastated by the brutal destruction of war, is a grotesque and darkly satirical figure. As such, it suggests that the only kind of knowledge that can be scavenged from the wreckage of war is a delirial, psychotic kind, devoid of calm, scientific rationality and objectively measured administration. Reflecting on the setting of East London, Henderson remarked, 'Houses chopped by bombs while ladies were still sitting on the lavatory, the rest of the house gone but the wallpaper and the fires still burning in the grate. Who can hold a candle to that kind of real life Surrealism?'¹⁰⁷ In this context, the findings of visual observation are too nightmarish to be assimilated into the bureaucratic record keeping of Discover Your Neighbour or MO; just as they are too tragic to be rationalised by purely scientific thinking.

Critically, Fisher associates the weird with trauma, which 'ruptures in the very fabric of experience itself',¹⁰⁸ and with altered states of consciousness. An encounter with the weird has, he writes, the potential to result in 'breakdown and psychosis.'¹⁰⁹ Henderson's experience of war and encounter with aerial bombardment and the night vision of flying had resulted in a nervous breakdown, which undoubtedly stripped his experience of the conflict with the jollity and patriotism characterised by Vale.

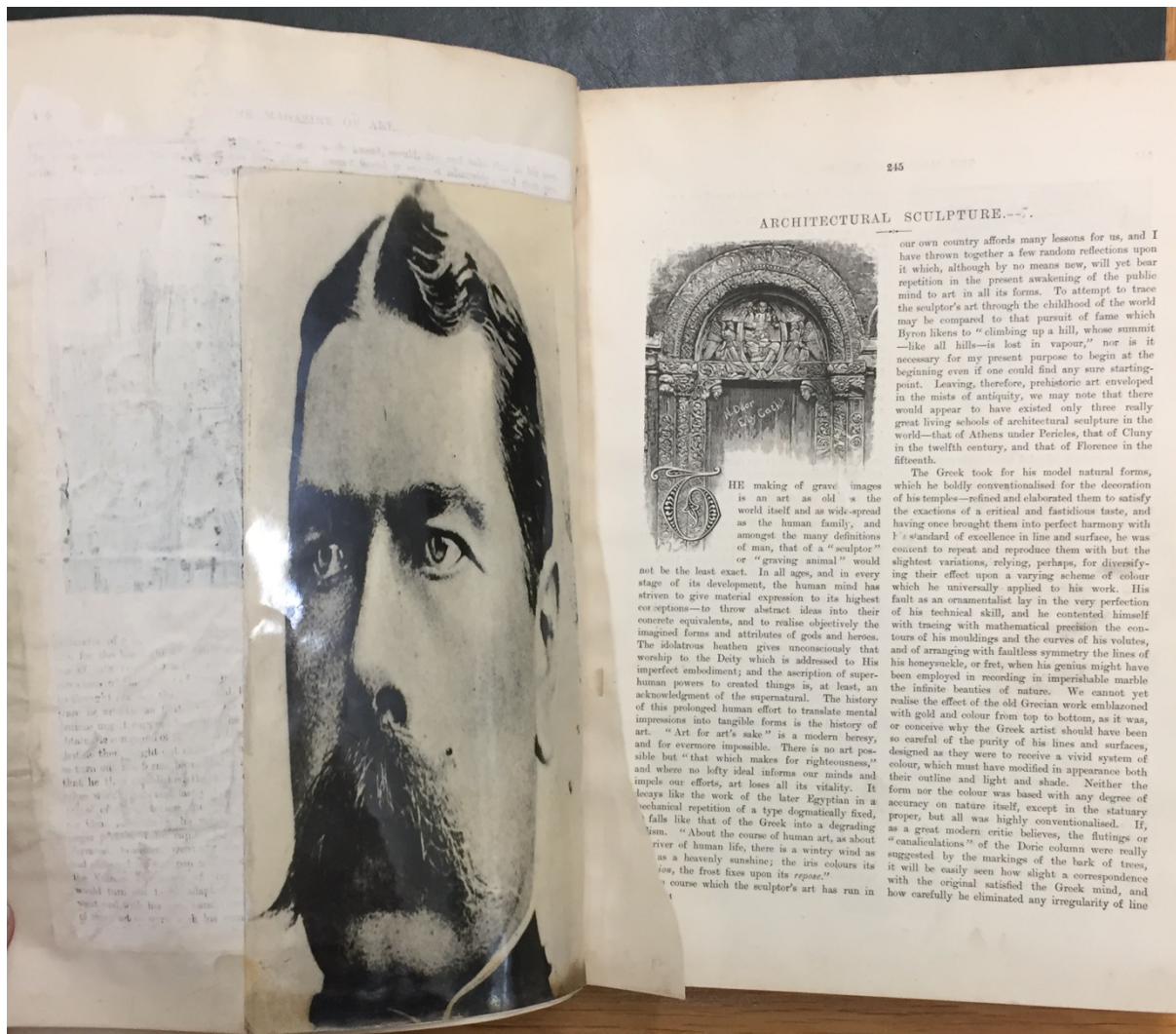


Figure 59. Nigel Henderson, scrapbook, c. 1951-54 (extra-illustrated in *Magazine of Art*, vol. IV, 1881). Tate, TGA 9211.13.3. Photo: Rosie Ram.

In one of Henderson's scrapbooks in the archive at Tate, he includes a version of the Kitchener image [fig. 59], but this time distorted and extra-illustrated inside a copy of the *Magazine of Art*, volume IV, from 1881, and within a chapter on 'Architectural Sculpture'.¹¹⁰ Here, the distortion becomes a means of stimulating a sense of delirium and evoking an altered state of consciousness. The artist described the process of photographically distorting such images as follows: 'I could sometimes enrich the impact of the image by slanting the paper under the enlarger and projecting the lens. For me this would form sometimes an "expressionistic" image giving a slightly "intoxicated" version which suggested to me a certain delirium.'¹¹¹ An example of this delirious, intoxicated kind of image can be seen in the photographs of 46 Chisenhale Road in the form of the distorted image of the boy on the bicycle [fig. 60].



Figure 60. Top left: Nigel Henderson, photograph of dresser at 46 Chisnehale Road, London, 1953. Nigel Henderson Estate. Photo: Nigel Henderson Estate. Top right: Nigel Henderson, photograph of 46 Chisnehale Road, London, c. 1953. Tate TGA 9211/9/6/127. Photo: Tate (negative reproduced as digital positive). Bottom: Nigel Henderson, distorted photograph of boy on bicycle, London, 1951. Nigel Henderson Estate. Photo: Rosie Ram.

This same image can be found at the Kings Head today. Mounted on card, it is discoloured, warped, and torn. Its value seems not to lie in its status as an artwork, but rather as an expressionistic and intoxicated piece of visual data to be mobilised within the collagic arrangements of Henderson's interior, producing a weird kind of meaning.

In his homemade darkroom at 46 Chisnehale Road, Henderson quite literally distorts documentation. In doing so, he both invokes and disrupts the systematic logic of research and the reliability of meticulous record keeping by inserting the irrationality of

photographic manipulation into this otherwise ‘objective’ research programme. Importantly, the artist highlights the incompatibility of the methods that inflect this mode of practice, where he writes, ‘one of the many things that make me doubt myself is my relative indifference to Art. I can’t make a *study* of it.’¹¹² There is an indication of dissonance here, suggesting an incommensurability between the established category of ‘Art’ and the studious work of research, from both of which his work departs. By reading Henderson’s dresser display and the arrangements around his house as an articulation of his artistic research practice, it becomes obvious that this kind of experimental work was not systematic, bureaucratic, or rationalised. The process was not entirely empirical or fully replicable, and the results were not falsifiable. In this light, the arrangement of images and objects might be seen as gesturing to the critical collision of his and Judith’s roles within the ‘field station’ that the couple called home.

Neither artist’s studio nor domestic interior

I began this chapter by asking why it is that Henderson’s work inside 46 Chisenhale Road is so difficult to identify, and why it is that something like Paolozzi’s role in designing the silkscreen-printed wallpaper can be more straightforwardly named. In his interview with Morland, Henderson positions the East End property as providing a formative context for *Parallel of Life and Art*, identifying the interior as a private place for the group’s inchoate research work. As a setting for such preliminary work, the interior of the house might be contrasted with another site, the archetypal incubator of artistic labour: the studio. For Caroline A. Jones, the artist’s studio comprises part of a ‘powerful topos’¹¹³ in which the modern artist is conceived as a ‘solitary individual’.¹¹⁴ In particular, she maps the ‘romance of the studio’ onto the emergence of abstract expressionism in New York, where ‘cold-water flats’ provided ‘sites of creative solitude’.¹¹⁵ At this moment, Jones observes that a number of critics also ‘fell prey to the seduction of the isolated studio’s romance’;¹¹⁶ namely, Harold Rosenberg and Clement Greenberg, who promoted the ‘image of the lonely, marginalized artist’.¹¹⁷ Crucially, Jones details the ways in which the photography of artist’s studios ‘contribute to this construction of the heroic individual’.¹¹⁸ Moreover, she shows how this genre of imagery insists that the ‘artist in his studio was a gendered construct excluding women.’¹¹⁹



Figure 61. Left & right: Nigel Henderson, photographs of dresser at 46 Chisenhale Road, London, 1953. Nigel Henderson Estate. Photos: Nigel Henderson Estate. Centre: Hans Namuth, photograph of Jackson Pollock in his studio, Long Island, America, 1950. Nigel Henderson Estate. Photo: Rosie Ram.

As will be explored in more detail in the next chapter, the hang of *Parallel of Life and Art* at the ICA included an example of the type of imagery analysed by Jones, a photograph by the German photographer Hans Namuth of the abstract expressionist painter Jackson Pollock in his Long Island studio, shot in 1950 and published in 1951. In Namuth's image, Pollock's face is shown in profile, gazing contemplatively, and set against the frantically spattered backdrop of his canvases and paint flecked studio floor and walls. Similarly, the photographs of Henderson's dresser display create comparable compositions, if heavily cropped and altered in proportion and scale [fig. 61]. On the glass pane of the mirror in one shot [fig. 61, left], it is Kitchener's reflection we now see in profile, still gazing fixedly but this time set against the tangled lines of the silkscreen-printed patterns that papered the Hendersons' walls. In another of the shots [fig. 61, right], the small striped mirror is tilted upwards on the table, turning the papered walls into a patterned plane akin to Pollock's canvas floor. Significantly, these wallpapers were produced at the Central School, where, as we have seen, Henderson described one of his students as practicing 'a sort of scaled down & adapted Jackson Pollockry'.¹²⁰ Within the interior of 46 Chisenhale Road, the tangled textures clearly resemble Pollock's thickly interwoven paint markings on his studio floor and walls. These images – Namuth's shot of Pollock's Long Island studio and Henderson's photographs of his London interior – operate in tandem and in tension. One gestures to the trope of the solo artist in the painterly studio, while the other partially mirrors and yet deviates drastically from the archetypal imagery of this space.

The photography of Alexander Liberman was equally pivotal in forging the myth of the isolated artist in *his* studio. In 1947, Liberman began his thirteen-year project *The Artist in His Studio*, in which he positioned ‘the artist in an eternal isolated studio – cordoned off from women, untouched by others, set off from the world.’¹²¹ As Jones highlights, Liberman treated the artist’s studio with a devout religiosity, viewing it as a ‘sacred site’.¹²² In his portrayal of Giacometti, Liberman insists upon the masculinity of artistic genius. He describes the painter’s wife Annette as ‘like a slender girl of fourteen [...] This girl-wife seems made to be the companion who does not distract the artist from his work.’¹²³ As Mary Bergstein writes, Liberman’s project ‘promulgated the legend of masculine domination through the representation of studio life.’¹²⁴ In Liberman’s portrayal of Giacometti, Bergstein argues that the photographer amplifies the virility of the artist against the ‘benign cooperation of his wife as passive inhabitant of the studio environment.’¹²⁵ Namuth’s photographs similarly present the artist’s studio as patriarchal space, heterosexually male, either excluding or subjugating women. As Jones observes, ‘the ejaculatory aspect of action painting [...] underscored the masculinism of the studio space’.¹²⁶ At 46 Chisenhale Road, Henderson worked in a space defined by his wife’s professional and academic qualifications. In this context, the Kitchener portrait becomes an unnerving parody of patriarchal dominance inside the home. More than that, by casting Kitchener’s bellicose stare across the miniature, reimagined exhibitionary space of the dresser display, the scene is recast as a searing critique of the heroic, hypermasculine, artist that the trope of the studio connotes.

Significantly, Jones contrasts the image of the masculinised studio with that of the typically feminised zone of domesticity. She describes the artist’s studio as ‘a private space that gives capacious breadth only to one mind and provides room for only one pair of hands (so different from the domestic spaces open to women, children, and the man at home).’¹²⁷ She differentiates the labour enacted in the studio to that carried out at home,

‘the manly, athletic work encoded in the spontaneous brushstroke is not housework; nor, in some senses, is it “labor” – that category of human effort required for survival or wage. It is gratuitous, expressive, personal [...] functionally upper class, and male. [...] The spontaneous brushstroke (or the sensual fingerful of clay on the sculpture) has no boss, no patron, no mouths to feed.’¹²⁸

Contrastingly, the photographs of Henderson's meticulous arrangements inside 46 Chisenhale Road are inextricable from everyday domesticity. Rather than locating his artistic labour within a cordoned-off, masculinised space, his work is ensconced in the traditionally feminised interior of the household, integrated among the detritus of shared family life. Not only are the *Parallel of Life and Art* images embedded within a large wooden kitchen dresser – a piece of the family's furniture that remained in constant use – they are also littered with other household miscellanea: crockery, glassware, matchboxes, children's toys, a fruit bowl, and a decorated mirror. Moreover, in two of the negatives that are now at Tate, Henderson's two daughters are featured as integral elements; just as they both feature on the back cover of the scrapbook that he used to gather pictures to share with his collaborators in their *Parallel of Life and Art* meetings at the house. Evidently, women and children are not excluded from Henderson's scrutiny-focused zone of collaborative observation. The photographs of his interior arrangements, therefore, stand in contrast to the 'topos' of the modern studio and the concomitant construction of the image of the male artist-genius at work.

The divergence of 46 Chisenhale Road from gender and sexuality tropes of the period can also be dramatised by juxtaposing the Hendersons' treatment of the house with the lifestyles promoted in design exhibitions after the war. In 1946, for instance, the Council of Industrial Design presented *Britain Can Make It* at the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A). This show contained a section on 'Furnished Rooms' that imagined archetypal inhabitants for the interior designs presented in the V&A display. In the catalogue, cartoons are included that 'depict the occupants of some of the furnished rooms'.¹²⁹ These illustrations accompany concise descriptions of the types of families who might be imagined to live in these different kinds of dwellings [fig. 62]. A 'kitchen with dining recess in a small modern house' is designed for a family composed of the following members: a 'Young architect; paints in his spare time. His wife, keen on amateur dramatics; their son.'¹³⁰ A 'kitchen in a large, well-appointed house' is tailored to suit a 'Managing director of an engineering works; university education. His wife: lived in America for some years. Their daughter, now at boarding school. Their staff; two maids and a manservant.'¹³¹ A 'bedroom in a small house in an industrial town' imagines its inhabitants as a 'Railway engineer, on night shift; formerly in the Eight Army. His wife; house proud. Their five children.'¹³² A 'bedroom in a detached town house' is created to suit a 'Young doctor, newly in practice; studies

social conditions. His wife; likes outdoor sports and photography.¹³³ Tellingly, this final cartoon offers an almost direct inversion of Nigel and Judith Henderson's household roles whereby Judith assumes the position of the husband, a young doctor who studies social conditions, and Nigel adopts the role of the wife, pursuing photography and spending time outdoors.

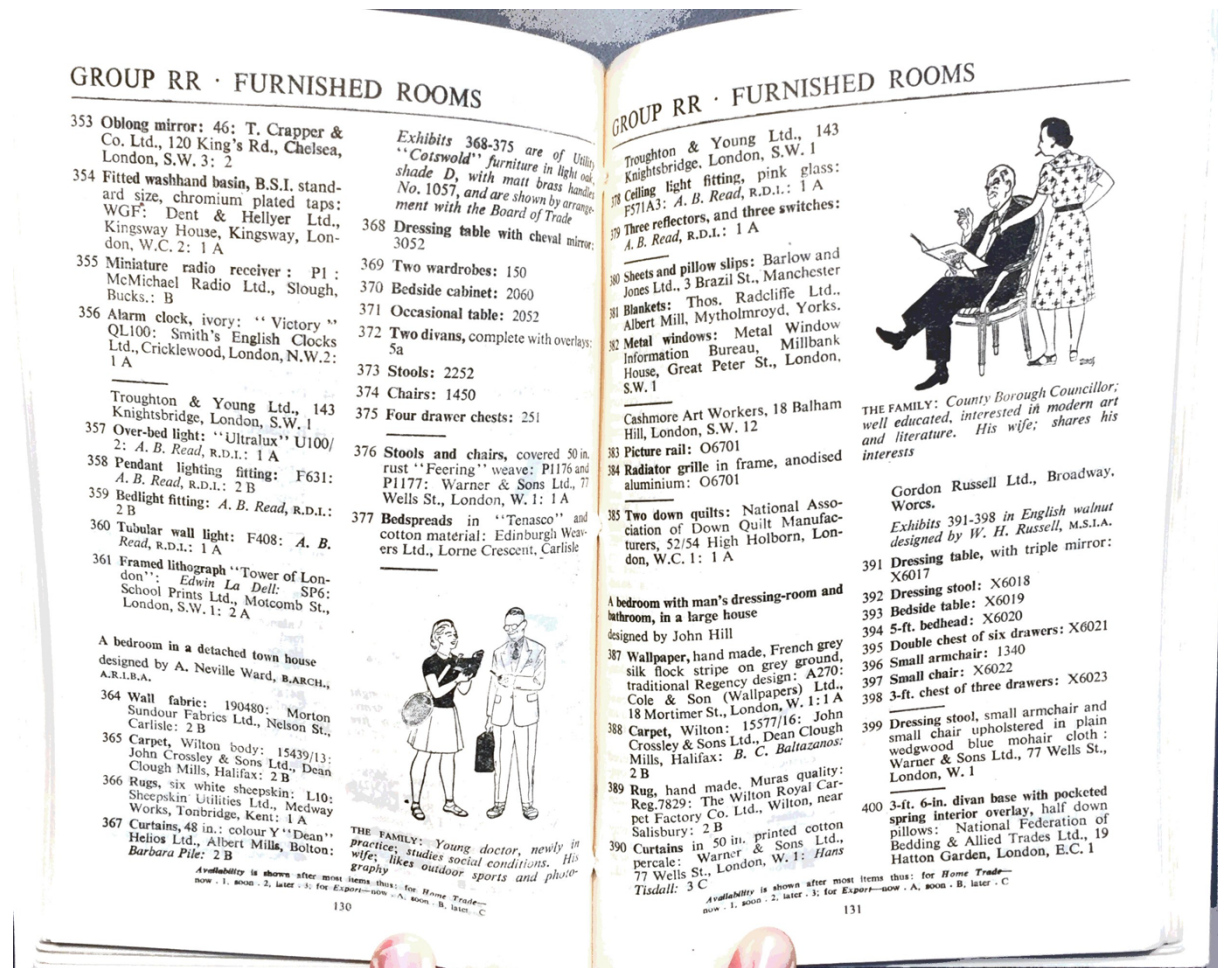


Figure 62. Exhibition catalogue for *Britain Can Make It*, London, published by the Council of Industrial Design, 1946, 130-131. Photo: Rosie Ram.

Extending Jones' assertion that the image of the artist's studio is constructed in opposition to domesticity – as its antithesis – Christopher Reed argues that modernism actively sought to suppress domesticity. In the field of modernist architecture, he cites Le Corbusier as a chief proponent of this anti-domestic ethos. Quoting the architect, he writes, 'Le Corbusier inveighed against the "sentimental hysteria" surrounding the "cult of the house," and proclaimed his determination to create instead, "a machine for living in."¹³⁴ For Le Corbusier, traditional domestic interiors threatened 'the heroism of their male inhabitants,'¹³⁵ Reed writes. Likewise, he observes this anti-domestic heroism in abstract expressionism, whereby 'heroic achievement was constituted through the

suppression of the domestic'.¹³⁶ He points to Greenberg's antagonism towards the 'kitsch' décor of middle-class homes, and Rosenberg's warning that abstract painting risked becoming mere 'wallpaper' unless it asserted its heroic departure from homeliness.

In contrast, Reed sees members of the Bloomsbury Group as having forged their common identity through 'a shared sense of exclusion from traditional domesticity'.¹³⁷ Significantly, the Henderson family had direct experience of the Bloomsbury Group's radical domesticity and their rejection of the norms of gender and sexuality. Judith Henderson, né Stephen, was the child of psychoanalysts Adrian and Karin Stephen, the former of whom was the youngest sibling of writer Virginia Woolf and painter Vanessa Bell. When Adrian, Virginian and Vanessa Stephens' father died, Vanessa moved her siblings from Hyde Park Gate to a house at 46 Gordon Square, which became the formative context of the Bloomsbury Group's experimental activities.¹³⁸ As Reed notes, 'The Bloomsbury Group's re-imagination of domesticity began with the look of 46 Gordon Square.'¹³⁹ Previous art-historical assessments of the group have, Reed claims, been constrained by their adherence to modernism's pursuit of heroism and its anti-domesticity, thus 'removing Bloomsbury's paintings from the canon of modernism and refusing to consider the murals, ceramics, textiles, and wallpapers as art at all.'¹⁴⁰ This reflection is pertinent for considering those elements of Henderson's interior at 46 Chisenhale Road that cannot enter the museum – the parts of the home that are inextricable, ephemeral, and lack museological value – and yet which clearly comprise part of his research practice of re-arranging and re-photographing the space.

However, just as Henderson's photographs of his interior at 46 Chisenhale Road are too entangled in the domestic to conform to representations of artists' studios at the time, neither do these images readily align with artistic depictions of domesticity from the post-war period. His shots of the dresser stand in contrast, for instance, to the work of a group of his contemporaries in post-war London who became known as 'the young painters of the kitchen-sink school',¹⁴¹ in a phrase coined by the critic David Sylvester in 1954. In his article for *Encounter* magazine, Sylvester plays off the studio against the domestic interior. He describes the artist's studio as the place 'where suddenly we are brought face to face with the metaphysics of the creative act and comforts are forgotten.'¹⁴² Like Liberman, he sees Giacometti's studio as the exemplary of this anti-domestic ethos. For Giacometti, Sylvester writes, 'the only room is a studio. It is the world of the dedicated artist.'¹⁴³ Again, the studio is characterised by a form of

masculinity in which women are excluded or dominated. The critic writes, 'Even when their wives and mistresses and relations take up position in this setting to pose for them, we feel they are pretending to be models paid by the hour. [...] every human feeling must be subordinated to the artist's terrible and all-consuming dedication'.¹⁴⁴ Sylvester sees certain painters in Britain in the early 1950s, such as Jack Smith and John Bratby, as part of a 'post-war generation' that 'takes us back from the studio to the kitchen'.¹⁴⁵ Their paintings comprise

'an inventory which includes every kind of food and drink, every kind of utensil and implement, the usual plain furniture, and even the baby's nappies on the line. Everything but the kitchen sink? The kitchen sink too. The point is that it is a very ordinary kitchen, lived in by a very ordinary family. There is nothing to hint that the man about the house is an artist or anything but a very ordinary bloke.'¹⁴⁶

Although there are similar signifiers of domesticity included in Henderson's interior arrangement at 46 Chisenhale Road, his photographs of the dresser differ distinctly with such paintings. Moreover, in Henderson's shot of his thoughtfully organised arrangements, there is abundant evidence to suggest that 'the man about the house' is anything but 'a very ordinary bloke'; even if this man does not necessarily present himself as an artist in the heroic modernist sense. In contrast to Sylvester's 'kitchen sink' painters, the domestic is not Henderson's subject matter and nor his driving concern. Just as he is not representing the interior of 46 Chisenhale Road as an artist's studio, neither is he representing it as the studio's apparent antithesis: the domestic household.



Figure 63. *Design*, no. 84, published by the Council of Industrial Design, December 1955. Nigel Henderson Estate. Photos: Rosie Ram.

Furthermore, Henderson's photographs of 46 Chisenhale Road deviate from the stylistic conventions of modern interior design photography. Among the holdings at the Kings Head there is an issue of *Design* magazine [fig. 63], published by the Council of Industrial Design in 1955, which provides as a striking contrast to the photographs of the Hendersons' East End interior. The copy of *Design* features an article celebrating the approach taken by Henry Rothschild in selecting modern design and craft items to sell in his interior shop, Primavera on Sloane Street.¹⁴⁷ The illustration that accompanies the text is captioned 'Typical Primavera items' and lists the various products on show. Printed linens by Paolozzi are accompanied by items designed by 'artist craftsmen' as well as unattributed materials: a handwoven cloth, wall coverings made of woven rushes and cotton, an embroidery picture, a mosaic table, salad servers, an enamelled dish, a sculptural object described as a 'decorative construction', an Orkney laundry basket, and a wall plaque.¹⁴⁸ These are arranged in a clean composition with hanging drapery arranged in luxurious folds, elegantly placed furnishings, pictures, and objects, all combining harmonious abstract patterns.

Henderson's photographs of his interior make a distinctive contrast to this modern design aesthetic, although he too includes wall coverings, textiles, dishes, and sculptural

objects. In Henderson's shots, however, the patterns are broken and interrupted; the objects and photographic images are makeshift, ephemeral and fragmented; the arrangement appears somewhat dirty, damaged, and littered with detritus. The illustration in *Design* magazine is tastefully arranged to please the eye of the discerning modern consumer as they browse the pages of the glossy magazine. In contrast, the arrangement at 46 Chisenhale Road – punctuated by two strange pairs of eyes, those of the Etruscan head and Lord Kitchener – insists upon another ulterior and more intensive kind of looking: the creative 'scrutiny' of photographic investigation among the wreckage of post-war London. Critically, the outcomes of this strange, searching kind of practice are not consumable objects, but rather they are ambiguous, provisional forms of knowledge, offering alternative ways of looking at and thinking about the modern world, which are interwoven through its broken fabric.

The unconventional uses of 46 Chisenhale Road by Nigel and Judith Henderson as well as by Jenkins, Paolozzi, and Alison and Peter Smithson, positions the house as an outpost in which they could experiment with data collection, image extraction, pictorial manipulation, photographic 'scrutiny', and the construction of changing, collage-like display configurations, which were not oriented towards the production of finite artistic forms, but instead pursued a process of visual analysis that disrupted scientific rationalism and bureaucratic reporting. This unusual use of the house, which saw the domestic space repurposed both as a 'field station' for Judith's socio-anthropological observation work and as a place for Henderson's searching and unsettled kind of artistic research practice, complicates the idea of the studio and, in doing so, breaks with the conventions of artistic labour, identity, authorship and originality that the studio typically connotes. Having demonstrated how Henderson's research troubled both the traditions of domesticity and those of the studio, a further question must now be posed: how does this kind of practice problematise the exhibition space, as the archetypal place of art's public presentation, where artistic work is valorised as such. To interrogate this question, my next chapter turns to the exhibition that emerged from Henderson's collaborative activities at the Central School and at 46 Chisenhale Road, *Parallel of Life and Art* at the ICA in 1953.

¹ This same photographic lamp can be glimpsed at the edges of several of Henderson's photographs of the *Parallel of Life and Art* hang at the ICA. Sam Kaner is also shown holding it in Henderson's photographs of the London jazz scene.

² Nigel Henderson, handwritten manuscript, c. 1951, in notebook kept between c. 1950-52. Tate, TGA 9211.3.1.

³ 'Research | Origin and Meaning of Research by Online Etymology Dictionary', accessed 7 June 2021, <https://www.etymonline.com/word/research>.

⁴ Nigel Henderson in conversation with Reyner Banham, 7 July 1976, recorded for *Fathers of Pop* (Arts Council of Great Britain, 1979); it was not used in the final film. Quoted in Robbins et al., *The Independent Group*, 124–25.

⁵ Nigel Henderson interviewed by Dorothy Morland, 17 August 1976. Edited transcript of a tape of Nigel Henderson talking about the early years of the Institute of Contemporary Arts c. 1940s to late 1950s. Tate, TGA 955.1.14.6 2/3.

⁶ Nigel Henderson, handwritten notes for talk on *Parallel of Life and Art*, titled 'A discussion on the implications of the exhibition' during the 'Evening Forum 3' at the Architectural Association School of Architecture, 54-6 Bedford Square, 7pm, 2 December 1953. Tate, TGA 9211.5.1.7. The contents of the exhibition *Parallel of Life and Art* was lent to the Architectural Association by the ICA and was presented there between 30 November and 4 December 1953.

⁷ Nigel Henderson, handwritten notes for talk on *Parallel of Life and Art*, titled 'A discussion on the implications of the exhibition' during the 'Evening Forum 3' at the Architectural Association School of Architecture, 54-6 Bedford Square, 7pm, 2 December 1953. Tate, TGA 9211.5.1.6.

⁸ Nigel Henderson, handwritten notes for talk on *Parallel of Life and Art*. Tate, TGA 9211.5.1.6.

⁹ Nigel Henderson, handwritten notes for talk on *Parallel of Life and Art*. Tate, TGA 9211.5.1.7.

¹⁰ Cited in *Nigel Henderson: Paintings, Collages & Photographs* (London: Anthony d'Offay, 1977).

¹¹ Nigel Henderson, handwritten notes for talk on *Parallel of Life and Art*. Tate, TGA 9211.5.1.6.

¹² Nigel Henderson, handwritten notes for talk on *Parallel of Life and Art*. Tate, TGA 9211.5.1.6.

¹³ Nigel Henderson, handwritten notes for talk on *Parallel of Life and Art*. Tate, TGA 9211.5.1.6.

¹⁴ Nigel Henderson quoted in Lynda Morris and Terry Morden, *Nigel Henderson: Photographs of Bethnal Green, 1949-1952* (Nottingham: Midland Group, 1978).

¹⁵ Walther Heering, *The Rollei Book: A Manual of Rolleiflex and Rolleicord Photography*, trans. Walter Dreisörner (Harzburg: Heering, 1939), 100.

¹⁶ As described in *Nigel Henderson: Paintings, Collages & Photographs* (London: Anthony d'Offay, 1977).

¹⁷ This date of 1910 was either changed to 1901 in the *Parallel of Life and Art* catalogue intentionally or this change resulted from an error. In other preparatory material the date remains 1910.

¹⁸ Nigel Henderson, handwritten notes for talk on *Parallel of Life and Art*. Tate, TGA 9211.5.1.6.

¹⁹ Nigel Henderson, handwritten notes for talk on *Parallel of Life and Art*. Tate, TGA 9211.5.1.7.

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- ²⁰ Nigel Henderson, handwritten notes for talk on *Parallel of Life and Art*. Tate, TGA 9211.5.1.7
- ²¹ These same trees appear later in the catalogue for *This is Tomorrow* (London: Whitechapel Art Gallery, 1956), on the pages dedicated to *Patio and Pavilion*.
- ²² M. Christine Boyer, *Not Quite Architecture: Writing around Alison and Peter Smithson* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2017).
- ²³ Boyer, 158.
- ²⁴ Boyer, 158.
- ²⁵ Nigel Henderson, handwritten notes for talk on *Parallel of Life and Art*, titled ‘A discussion on the implications of the exhibition’ during the ‘Evening Forum 3’ at the Architectural Association School of Architecture, 54-6 Bedford Square, 2 December 7pm, 1953. Tate, TGA 9211.5.1.5
- ²⁶ Peter Kuenstler, ‘Discover Your Neighbour’, *Social Work: A Quarterly Review of Family Casework* 3, no. 10 (April 1946): 229.
- ²⁷ Kuenstler, 229.
- ²⁸ Kuenstler, 228.
- ²⁹ Kuenstler, 228.
- ³⁰ Kuenstler, 229.
- ³¹ Kuenstler, 229.
- ³² Kuenstler, 231.
- ³³ Kuenstler, 231.
- ³⁴ Kuenstler, 231.
- ³⁵ Kuenstler, 231.
- ³⁶ Kuenstler, 232.
- ³⁷ Kuenstler, 232.
- ³⁸ Published to accompany the Midland Group exhibition of Henderson’s East End photographs in Nottingham in 1978. See Morris and Morden, *Nigel Henderson*.
- ³⁹ In the introduction, Nigel offers his own assessment of the purpose Discover Your Neighbour. It pursued, he writes, ‘an analysis of the historical conditioning forces acting on a community and bringing, over time a cohesive system of attitudes, sympathies, prejudices – what you like – which would in some measure represent such a community. To fly in the face of such a system of attitudes and beliefs or to be unconscious or indifferent to their existence would be to render your work, among such people, useless.’ Nigel Henderson quoted in Morris and Morden, *Nigel Henderson*, 3.
- ⁴⁰ Morris and Morden, *Nigel Henderson*, 43.
- ⁴¹ Nigel Henderson quoted in Dave Hoffman and Shirley Read, ‘Interview with Nigel Henderson’, *Camerawork* 11 (September 1978): 13.

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- ⁴² Nigel Henderson quoted in Hoffman and Read, 14.
- ⁴³ Nigel Henderson quoted in Hoffman and Read, 14.
- ⁴⁴ 'Mass Observation', *Camerawork* 11 (September 1978): 1.
- ⁴⁵ Tom Harrisson and Charles Madge quoted in 'Mass Observation', 1.
- ⁴⁶ Tom Harrisson and Charles Madge quoted in 'Mass Observation', 1.
- ⁴⁷ Tom Harrisson and Charles Madge quoted in 'Mass Observation', 1.
- ⁴⁸ Tom Harrisson and Charles Madge quoted in 'Mass Observation', 1.
- ⁴⁹ Tom Harrisson quoted in Tom Picton, 'A Very Public Espionage', *Camerawork* 11 (September 1978): 3.
- ⁵⁰ Picton, 3.
- ⁵¹ John Parfitt quoted in Shirley Read, 'Mass Observation: Limited', *Camerawork* 11 (September 1978): 7.
- ⁵² 'Mass Observation', 1.
- ⁵³ Picton, 'A Very Public Espionage', 3.
- ⁵⁴ Picton, 3.
- ⁵⁵ Humphrey Spender quoted in 'Mass Observation', 7.
- ⁵⁶ Humphrey Spender quoted in 'Mass Observation', 7.
- ⁵⁷ Henderson's images of the arrangement inside 46 Chisenhale Road also stand in contrast to those taken by Roger Mayne, who forged his reputation as a 'street' photographer in Britain in the 1950s. Mayne was introduced to Henderson at the beginning of the decade and visited him at his East End house in 1953. During this period, Mayne was gaining acclaim for his documentary photographs of working-class life in Britain, as typified by his 'Southam Street' series in 1956. Henderson's approach can also be contrasted with Bill Brandt's early photobook, *The English at Home* (1936), which features views of the interiors of houses across England in an attempt to document the domestic life of people throughout the country.
- ⁵⁸ 'Mass Observation', 1.
- ⁵⁹ Nigel Henderson quoted in Hoffman and Read, 13.
- ⁶⁰ Nigel Henderson quoted in Hoffman and Read, 13-14.
- ⁶¹ László Moholy-Nagy, *Vision in Motion* (Chicago: Paul Theobald, 1947), 20.
- ⁶² Nigel Henderson quoted in Hoffman and Read, 'Interview with Nigel Henderson', 13-14.
- ⁶³ Nigel Henderson quoted in Hoffman and Read, 13-14.
- ⁶⁴ Frank Whitford, *Nigel Henderson: Paintings, Collages & Photographs* (Cambridge: Kettle's Yard Gallery, 1977), n. p.
- ⁶⁵ Nigel Henderson, handwritten notes for talk on *Parallel of Life and Art*. Tate, TGA 9211.5.1.7.
- ⁶⁶ 'Next Door Neighbours', *Mass Observation Bulletin*, no. 15 (February 1948): n. p.
- ⁶⁷ George F Vale, *Bethnal Green's Ordeal 1939-45* (London: Bethnal Green Council, n.d.), 4.

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- ⁶⁸ Vale, 4.
- ⁶⁹ Vale, 9.
- ⁷⁰ Vale, 14.
- ⁷¹ Vale, 10.
- ⁷² Nigel Henderson, manuscript, untitled, undated. Tate, TGA 201011/2/1.
- ⁷³ RAND was established in 1948 by the Douglas Aircraft Company and substantially funded by the American government. At RAND, Margaret Mead and Ruth Benedict worked alongside Mead's husband Gregory Bateson.
- ⁷⁴ Pamela M Lee, *Think Tank Aesthetics: Midcentury Modernism, the Cold War, and the Neoliberal Present* (Cambridge, Massachusetts; London, England: The MIT Press, 2020), 125–127.
- ⁷⁵ Margaret Mead, *Soviet Attitudes Toward Authority: An Interdisciplinary Approach To Problems Of Soviet Character* (USA: The RAND series, 1951), 4.
- ⁷⁶ Margaret Mead, 10.
- ⁷⁷ Margaret Mead, 11.
- ⁷⁸ Joseph F. McCloskey, 'British Operational Research in World War II', *Operations Research* 35, no. 3 (1987): 453.
- ⁷⁹ Nigel Henderson, letter to Chris Mullen, undated. Chris Mullen papers (in author's possession).
- ⁸⁰ Nigel Henderson, letter to Chris Mullen.
- ⁸¹ Nigel Henderson, letter to Chris Mullen.
- ⁸² Nigel Henderson, letter to Chris Mullen.
- ⁸³ McCloskey, 'British Operational Research in World War II', 462–63.
- ⁸⁴ Nigel Henderson, letter to Chris Mullen, undated. Chris Mullen papers (in author's possession).
- ⁸⁵ J. D Bernal, *The World, the Flesh and the Devil: An Enquiry into the Future of the Three Enemies of the Rational Soul* (London; New York: Verso, 2017 [1929]), 34.
- ⁸⁶ Bernal, 42.
- ⁸⁷ Bernal, 44–45.
- ⁸⁸ Nigel Henderson, letter to Chris Mullen, undated. Chris Mullen papers (in author's possession).
- ⁸⁹ Nigel Henderson quoted in Victoria Walsh, *Nigel Henderson: Parallel of Life and Art* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2001), 142.
- ⁹⁰ *The Layman's Guide to Modern Art: Painting for a Scientific Age* (1949), by Mary C. Rathbun and Bartlett H. Hayes, Jr, n. p.
- ⁹¹ Nigel Henderson, handwritten notes for talk on *Parallel of Life and Art*. Tate, TGA 9211.5.1.7.
- ⁹² Nigel Henderson, handwritten notes for talk on *Parallel of Life and Art*. Tate, TGA 9211.5.1.6.

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- ⁹³ Nigel Henderson, handwritten notes for talk on *Parallel of Life and Art*. Tate, TGA 9211.5.1.7.
- ⁹⁴ Nigel Henderson, manuscript titled 'IMAGE', undated, Nigel Henderson Estate.
- ⁹⁵ Press release, *Parallel of Life and Art: Indications of a new visual order*, ICA, 31 August 1953. Nigel Henderson Estate.
- ⁹⁶ Mark Fisher, *The Weird and the Eerie* (London: Repeater Books, 2016), 15.
- ⁹⁷ Fisher, 21.
- ⁹⁸ Fisher, 33.
- ⁹⁹ Fisher, 33.
- ¹⁰⁰ Nigel Henderson, handwritten notes for talk on *Parallel of Life and Art*. Tate, TGA 9211.5.1.7
- ¹⁰¹ Fisher, *The Weird and the Eerie*, 10–11.
- ¹⁰² Horatio Herbert Kitchener was born in 1850 and died in 1916. After re-establishing British rule in Sudan in the late nineteenth century, Kitchener was heroized by the British press and celebrated in British popular culture. As senior member of the British Army, he gained infamy for deploying a 'scorched earth' policy during the Second Boer War and for pioneering the use of concentration camps.
- ¹⁰³ The more famous poster featuring the phrase 'Your country needs YOU' was created by the artist Alfred Leete for the cover of *London Opinion*, published in September 1914
- ¹⁰⁴ These cabinet cards were printed by the studio of Oliver Bassano between 1885 and 1890. The image of Kitchener in the Hendersons' kitchen may also have been taken from the cover of a copy of *With the Flag to Pretoria*, part 7, published in June 1900, which uses an image from Bassano's studio that is identical to the one seen plastered on wall at 46 Chisenhale Road
- ¹⁰⁵ Vale, *Bethnal Green's Ordeal 1939-45*, 13.
- ¹⁰⁶ Fisher, *The Weird and the Eerie*, 35.
- ¹⁰⁷ Nigel Henderson quoted in David Mellor, 'Nigel Henderson', *Camerawork* 11 (September 1978): 13.
- ¹⁰⁸ Fisher, *The Weird and the Eerie*, 22.
- ¹⁰⁹ Fisher, 16.
- ¹¹⁰ Nigel Henderson, scrapbook, c. 1951-54 (extra-illustrated in *Magazine of Art*, vol. IV, 1881). Tate, TGA 9211.13.3.
- ¹¹¹ Morris and Morden, *Nigel Henderson*, 5.
- ¹¹² Nigel Henderson quoted in Whitford, *Paintings, Collages & Photographs* (Kettle's Yard) n. p.
- ¹¹³ Caroline A. Jones, *Machine in the Studio: Constructing the Postwar American Artist* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 1.
- ¹¹⁴ Jones, 1.
- ¹¹⁵ Jones, 7.
- ¹¹⁶ Jones, 7.

¹¹⁷ Jones, 27.

¹¹⁸ Jones, 11.

¹¹⁹ Jones, 40.

¹²⁰ Nigel Henderson, letter to Chris Mullen, undated. Chris Mullen collection (in author's possession).

¹²¹ Jones, *Machine in the Studio: Constructing the Postwar American Artist*, 52.

¹²² Jones, 28.

¹²³ Mary Bergstein, "'The Artist in His Studio': Photography, Art and the Masculine Mystique (1995)", in *The Studio*, ed. Jens Hoffman, Documents of Contemporary Art (London: Whitechapel Gallery, 2012), 28.

¹²⁴ Bergstein, 33.

¹²⁵ Bergstein, 33.

¹²⁶ Jones, *Machine in the Studio: Constructing the Postwar American Artist*, 36.

¹²⁷ Jones, 7.

¹²⁸ Jones, 10.

¹²⁹ *Britain Can Make It* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office for the Council of Industrial Design, 1946), 115.

¹³⁰ *Britain Can Make It*, 120.

¹³¹ *Britain Can Make It*, 128.

¹³² *Britain Can Make It*, 129.

¹³³ *Britain Can Make It*, 130.

¹³⁴ Christopher Reed, 'Introduction', in *Not at Home the Suppression of Domesticity in Modern Art and Architecture* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1996), 9.

¹³⁵ Reed, 9.

¹³⁶ Christopher Reed, *Bloomsbury Interiors: Modernism, Subculture, and the Reimagination of Domesticity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 3.

¹³⁷ Reed, 7.

¹³⁸ Adrian Stephen left 46 Gordon Square to study at Cambridge University, where he became a scholar of Henri Bergson. During the First World War he was a conscientious objector, vociferously opposed to conscription, and he was an anti-fascist in the 1930s. Before marrying Karin, Adrian had an affair with the painter Duncan Grant. He moved to 29 Fitzroy Square with Virginia, before occupying 50 Gordon Square with Karin and their two daughters, Anne and Judith. In 1934, Nigel took up residence in Stephens' consulting room in Gordon Square, thereby becoming integrated into the Bloomsbury Group's wider milieu and acquainted with their alternative approach to domesticity, work, sexual conventions, gender norms and passivism.

¹³⁹ Reed, *Bloomsbury Interiors*, 20.

¹⁴⁰ Reed, 5.

¹⁴¹ David Sylvester, 'The Kitchen Sink', *Encounter*, December 1954, 62.

¹⁴² Sylvester, 61.

¹⁴³ Sylvester, 61.

¹⁴⁴ Sylvester, 61–62.

¹⁴⁵ Sylvester, 62.

¹⁴⁶ Sylvester, 62.

¹⁴⁷ J. E. B. and Henry Rothschild, 'Ten Year Old Experiment', *Design* 84 (1955): 24.

¹⁴⁸ J. E. B. and Rothschild, 24–25.

Chapter three: The photographic exhibition as a negation of painting: *Parallel of Life and Art* at the ICA, 1953

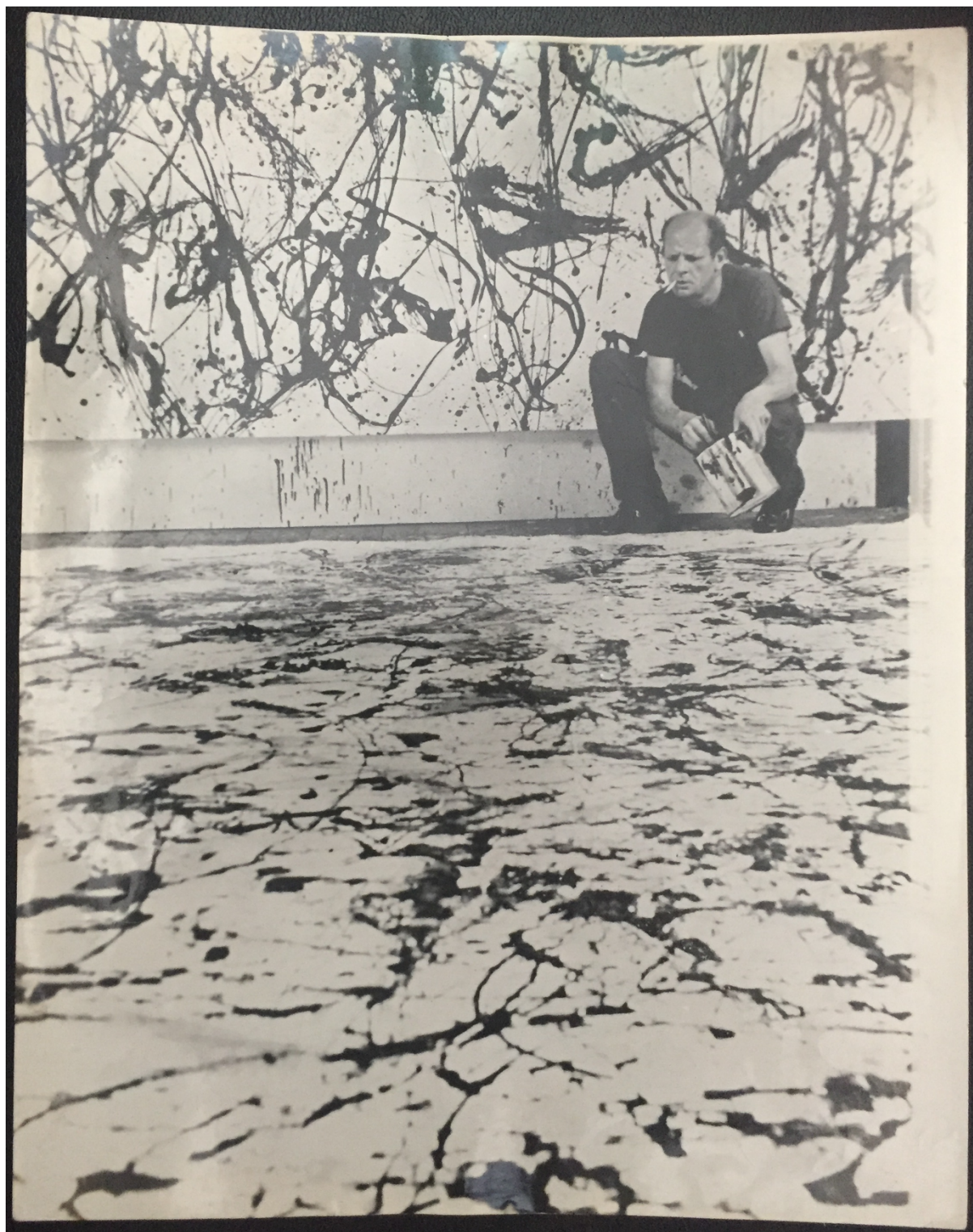


Figure 64. Hans Namuth, photograph of Jackson Pollock in his studio, Long Island, America, 1950. Nigel Henderson Estate. Photo: Rosie Ram.

Among the holdings at the Kings Head, is a black and white photograph, measuring 385 x 305mm [fig. 64]. It shows a painter in a studio, paused in the process of painting. He is crouched down on his haunches, poised with his brush held in a can of black enamel paint, caught in a moment of contemplation, with a cigarette between his lips. The painter is dwarfed by canvases that stretch out across the floor and back wall in front and behind him. Every surface is dripping with the frenetic splatters and tangled lines of freshly flicked paint. The sheet on which the photographic image is printed has faint graphite markings on its verso, featuring loosely sketched numbers and squares with a portion shaded in scribbled lines, which suggest calculations for editorial alterations. Other than these indefinite pencil details, the photograph is unmarked, and lacking any signature, title, or date. Given the painter's now mythic renown, however, and the iconic status of such photography showing him at work, it is not hard to trace the basic origins of this sheet. The photograph is a portrait of the American abstract expressionist painter Jackson Pollock, shot by the German photographer Hans Namuth in the artist's studio in Long Island in 1950. It is one of 500 photographs taken by Namuth of Pollock at work in the early 1950s, during which time Namuth also made two films of the painter creating his infamous 'drip' compositions. Selections of Namuth's photographs of Pollock were first published in *Portfolio* journal and then *Art News* magazine in 1951.

At the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA) in London in 1953, Nigel Henderson, Ronald Jenkins, Eduardo Paolozzi, and Alison and Peter Smithson included a copy of this photograph of Pollock in the exhibition *Parallel of Life and Art*. There, the image was ensconced within a miscellany of monochrome photography [fig. 65, top]. In the catalogue that accompanied *Parallel of Life and Art*, the Namuth image of Pollock is listed under the heading 'Art' and classified as 'Jackson Pollack [sic.] in studio. Hans Namuth, America' [fig. 65, bottom]. Tellingly, perhaps, Pollock's name is misspelt.

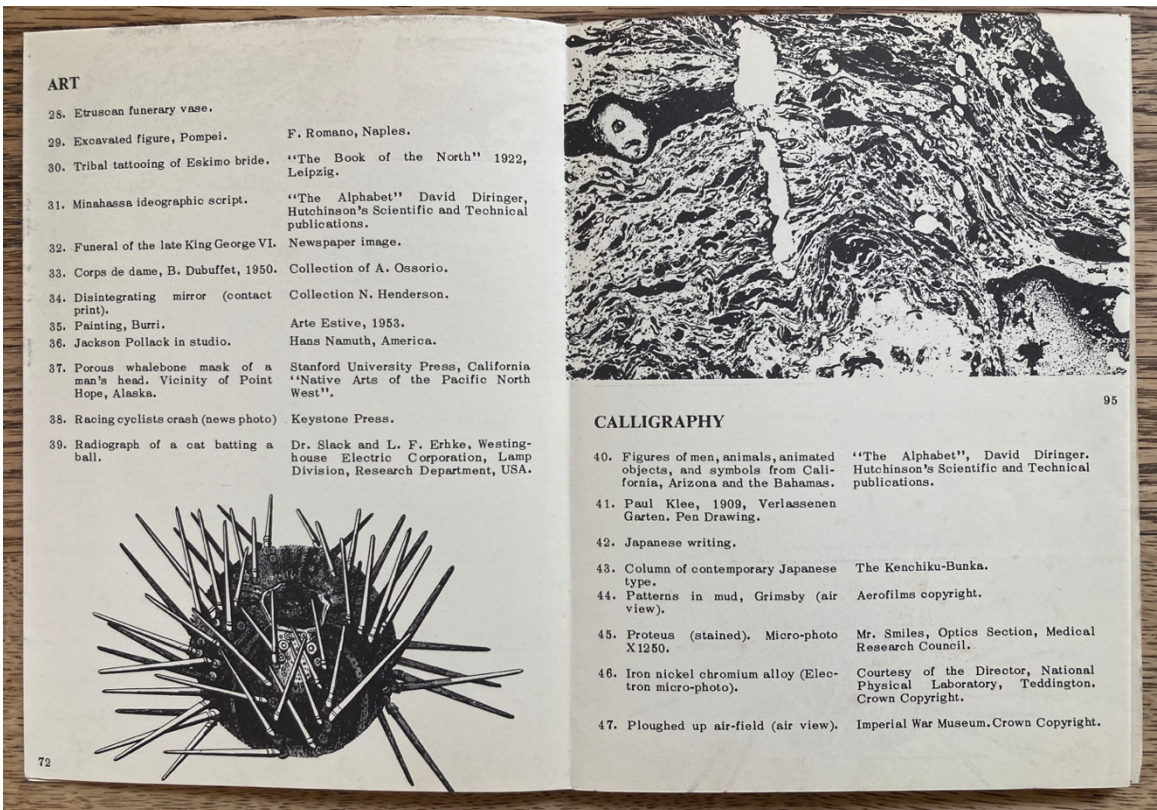


Figure 65. Top: Nigel Henderson, photograph of *Parallel of Life and Art*, ICA, 1953. Nigel Henderson Estate. Bottom: Nigel Henderson, Ronald Jenkins, Eduardo Paolozzi, Alison and Peter Smithson, catalogue for *Parallel of Life and Art*, ICA, 1953. Nigel Henderson Estate. Photos: Rosie Ram.

Installed within *Parallel of Life and Art*, the Namuth-Pollock print was surrounded by an array of other images. Some of these 122 photographically reproduced pictures were shown pasted onto hanging panels and suspended by a network of wires above visitors' heads. Others were pinned onto the gallery walls or propped up on the floor. The extant photographic prints that comprised *Parallel of Life and Art* – and their negative counterparts – are now largely distributed across two sites: the archive at Tate and the holdings at the Kings Head. In the museum's archive, the remnants of the 1953 show are primarily organised across two subdivisions of 'The personal papers of Nigel Graeme Henderson (1917-1985)'. The first of these main subdivisions is titled 'POLAA [Parallel of Life and Art] Exhibition Photographs' and contains 99 items that are identified as 'Photographs and photographic negatives of images used for photographic panels hung at the exhibition, installation photographs and layouts for exhibition text'.¹ The second is titled 'POLAA Exhibition Photographic Panels' and contains 19 items that are described as 'Incomplete set of the original photographic panels hung in the POLAA at the ICA' [fig. 66].²

This classificatory split appears to have been decided on the basis that the 19 photographic panels are objects that can be said – with some certainty – to have been installed in the *Parallel of Life and Art* hang. In turn, the 99 items placed into the former subsection are photographic images that wove themselves through and around the exhibition in more complex ways, and thus lack the clear provenance of the 'original' panels. The term 'Exhibition Photographs' amalgamates the 'images used' in the exhibition hang with other forms of photographic 'documentation' relating to the endeavour, including Henderson's shots of the display. Here, 'Exhibition Photographs' operates as a shorthand to resolve the heterogeneity of these 99 items, to stabilise their uncertain status, and to reconcile their photographically layered relationships with the exhibition itself. Browsing these materials as digital renderings on the museum's website further flattens and homogenises them, disguising their formal and ontological disparities, and thus extending the photographically disorientating logic of *Parallel of Life and Art* itself into online space.



Figure 66. Top row & both middle rows: images from the archive at Tate, classified as 'POLAA [Parallel of Life and Art] Exhibition Photographs'. Tate, TGA 9211/5/2. Photos: Tate (negatives reproduced as digital positives). Bottom row: objects from Nigel Henderson archive at Tate classified as 'POLAA Exhibition Photographic Panels'. Tate, TGA 9211/5/3. Photos: Tate.

Had the Namuth-Pollock print found its way to Tate rather than remaining at the Kings Head, it would undoubtedly have been classified as an 'Exhibition Photograph', inserted among the *Parallel of Life and Art* material, and situated under Henderson's name. Yet, when I encountered the loose sheet among the uncatalogued morass of materials at Landermere Quay, it appeared to bear a more complex relationship with Henderson's processual and investigative mode of work during the period. As a photographic reproduction of a published photograph of a painter at work, belonging to an 'artist-photographer' and exhibited in a collaborative exhibition in photographically edited form, the image stages a particular tension between the traditional artistic work of painting and Henderson's practice at the time, which can best be conceived as a form of research employing methodologies of photography and collage to mobilise images across multiple sites. By staging a relay between the labours of painting, photography, arts publishing and exhibiting, Henderson's copy of the Namuth-Pollock picture brings these different modes of work into alignment and exchange. In doing so, it elicits questions concerning the constitution of artistic work, where it is located, how it is mediated and framed, the skills it requires, the technologies it deploys, and the traces it leaves in its wake. Rather than conforming to the conventional criteria of single authorship, provenance, or medium-specificity, Henderson's Namuth-Pollock image seems to speak of authorial, spatial, temporal, intermedial and formal translation and interaction. Circulating between the studio, the darkroom, the magazine spread, and the art gallery, the image connects these sites; it layers and entwines them across time and space. In doing so, Henderson's copy of the Namuth-Pollock print serves as an adept provocation to the logic of museological codification today.

In my first two chapters, I argued that the contexts in which Henderson worked in post-war London fostered a highly experimental mode of research practice, which did not result in finite artistic forms but rather generated ambiguous visual materials that fuelled further investigations. Crucially, as I have demonstrated, this form of research developed through an oppositional dialogue with the dominant conditions that shaped the sites from which it emerged, meaning that it departed from the instrumentalisation of avant-garde pedagogies within the post-war art school as well as from the academic and professional modes of practice that determined the Hendersons' occupation of 46 Chisenhale Road, which neither served as the conventional domestic interior nor provided the traditional setting of the artist's studio. In this chapter, I turn to *Parallel of Life and Art*. Using Henderson's copy of the Namuth-Pollock picture as an entryway

into the exhibition, I analyse how his research identified itself as ‘art’ in the public context of the contemporary art gallery, having emerged from the more concealed sites explored earlier in this thesis. In doing so, I ask how his investigative practice might be named, specifically, as *artistic* research, and what the implications of this conjunction of art and research are for an understanding of both terms. Critically, this chapter reveals a negative tension between the traditional category of art and modes of research that mobilise non-art images methodologically within art’s physical and conceptual space.

By capturing the charged interaction between painting and photography, Henderson’s copy of the Namuth-Pollock print reflects his own hybridised position of ‘artist-photographer’ in post-war Britain, which was critical for his concurrent work both at the Central School and at 46 Chisenhale Road. *Parallel of Life and Art* appears to have served as a crucial context for Henderson to further interrogate the interface between art and photography, but this time within the more visible arena of the art gallery. In the planning and marketing documents produced by Henderson, Jenkins, Paolozzi and the Smithsons during their preparations for the exhibition, the collaborators can be seen grappling with the question of how to identify their interlocking contributions to the project at this moment of its public presentation. Moving through these communication formats – which include an ICA memorandum, a press release, an invitation to the private view, and the concertina-style exhibition catalogue – subtle variations are revealed in the professional nomenclature used to describe the four practitioners’ credentials. Significantly, across these various documents, Paolozzi remains a ‘Sculptor’, Alison and Peter Smithson are ‘Architects’, and Ronald Jenkins’ role sees a slight but not insignificant shift from ‘Engineer’ to ‘Civil Engineer’. In contrast, Henderson’s title is more emphatically updated, from ‘Photographer’ on the memorandum, press release and private view invitation, to ‘Painter and Photographer’ on the back cover of the catalogue [fig. 67].³

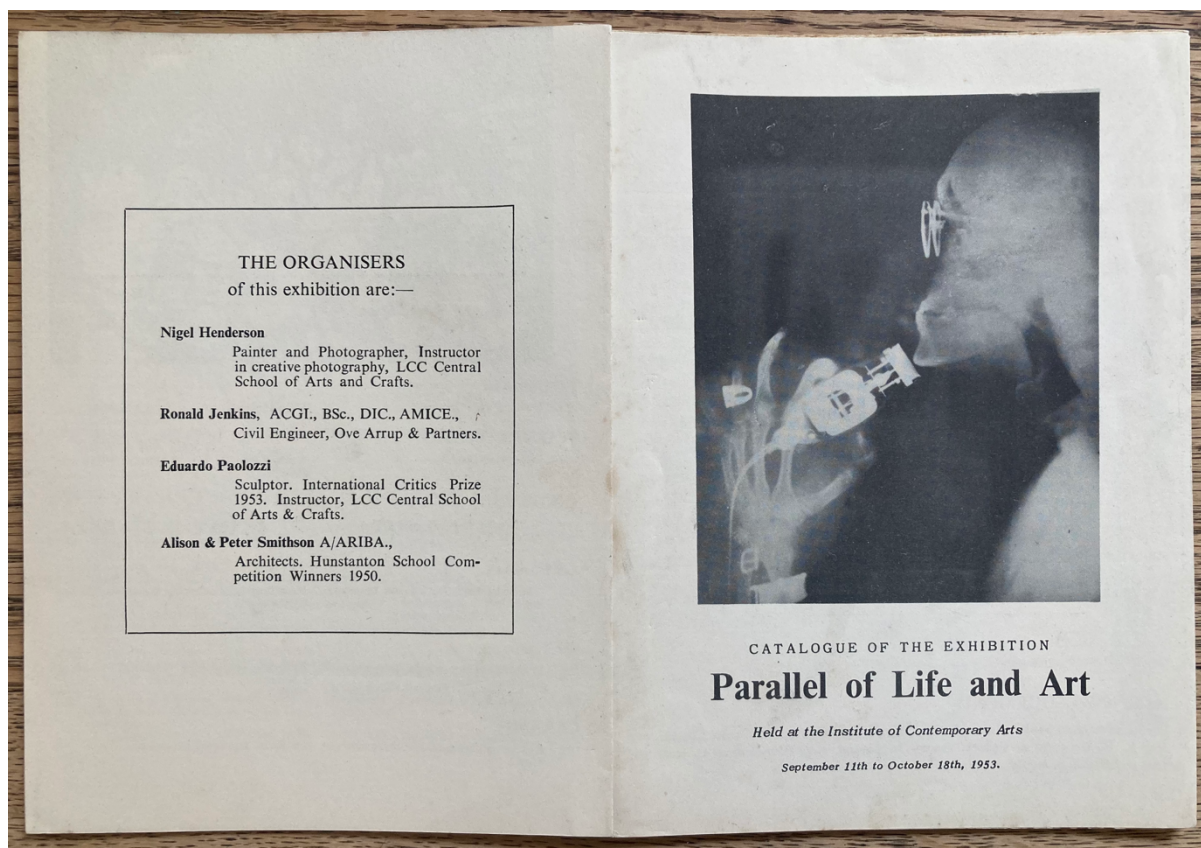


Figure 67. Nigel Henderson, Ronald Jenkins, Eduardo Paolozzi, Alison and Peter Smithson, catalogue for *Parallel of Life and Art*, ICA, 1953. Nigel Henderson Estate. Photo: Rosie Ram.

It is telling that the word 'Painter' appears before 'Photographer' in this final articulation of his working title, despite Henderson having rarely painted and claiming to have little proficiency in the medium. Yet, on the back of the *Parallel of Life and Art* catalogue he explicitly aligns – and even foregrounds – his professional identity with that of the painter. By naming his work as painting in this way, Henderson's experimental research practice is inserted into the traditional realm of art, where painting remained the defining and most elevated mode of practice. This manoeuvre appears to insist on a point of conjunction between Henderson's photographic research methodology and the conventional artistic work of painting, while acknowledging that in the post-war moment these modes of practice were somehow incommensurate and hence needed to be separately named: 'Painter *and* Photographer'. In this chapter, I study the juxtaposition of these two terms in relation to Henderson's copy of the Namuth-Pollock picture, in order to ask how Henderson's experimental research work was returned to the category of art.

Arbitrary, inconsistent, and perverse: *Parallel of Life and Art's*
critical reception



Figure 68. Top row & middle row: Nigel Henderson, photograph of *Parallel of Life and Art*, ICA, 1953. Tate, TGA 9211/5. Bottom row: Details from the above showing the Hans Namuth photograph of Jackson Pollock installed. Photos: Rosie Ram.

When *Parallel of Life and Art* opened at the ICA on Dover Street in London's Mayfair on 11 September 1953, the Namuth-Pollock picture could be found pinned up on the wall at one end of the gallery [see fig. 68, middle and bottom rows]. Embedded within a loosely linear grid of other black and white images, it was positioned in the second column from the right in roughly the middle row. Immediately in front of it, hanging panels were suspended vertically and horizontally from the ceiling, creating overlapping image planes in the gallery space above visitors' heads. As people moved around the room, their viewing experience was framed by ever-shifting superimpositions and layered lines of sight. As the *Parallel of Life and Art* press release announced, images of 'nature objects, works of art, architecture and technics' were assembled in the exhibition, drawing together pictorial details and patterns from across disparate fields.⁴ Images from remote geographic origins, far flung cultures, and distant historic epochs were inserted into the complex configuration.

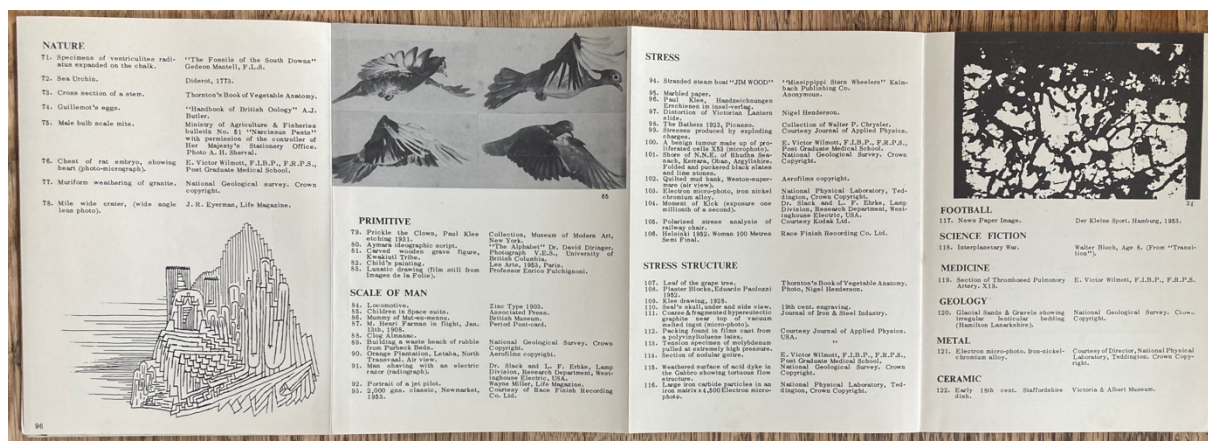


Figure 69. Nigel Henderson, Ronald Jenkins, Eduardo Paolozzi, Alison and Peter Smithson, catalogue for *Parallel of Life and Art*, ICA, 1953. Nigel Henderson Estate. Photo: Rosie Ram.

The concertina-formatted, fold-out catalogue to the exhibition provided visitors with a kind of classificatory guide to these eclectic contents [figs. 67 and 69]. It specified the origins of the images and placed them into categories, such as 'Nature', 'Primitive', 'Scale of Man', 'Stress', 'Stress Structure', 'Football', 'Science Fiction', 'Medicine', 'Geology', 'Metal', and 'Ceramic'.⁵ While some of the pictures listed under these headings were obvious fits for the categories to which they had been allocated, the majority seemed more incongruously included. One striking feature bound every image in the exhibition together: all had been replicated and transformed by photographic reproduction and editing. Through a process of copying, cropping, and enlargement, the photographic quality of the pictures was visually amplified, drawing attention to their gravelly, monochrome grain and creating a common photographic aesthetic throughout the

otherwise disorienting hang. This use of photography allowed the collaborators to filter an eclectic array of found images into the exhibition, alongside four of Henderson's own photographic experiments and one of his photographs of Paolozzi's plaster reliefs.

Unsurprisingly, perhaps, *Parallel of Life and Art* received an ambivalent critical reception. Some commentators complained of 'obfuscation' and 'esotericism'.⁶ Reflecting upon this reaction, Tom Hopkinson remarked in the *Manchester Guardian* that 'to judge from published comments' the show had proved 'disturbing and even repulsive' to many critics and journalists alike.⁷ Yet, Hopkinson himself praised the 'ingenuity' of the hang, which he saw as testament to 'an eye both thoughtful and alert'. Nonetheless, he noted the exhibition's capacity to provoke and confuse, stating that the contents served as 'a powerful stimulant to the imagination, arousing a sense of mystery and bewilderment, as if one had stumbled upon a set of basic patterns for the universe.'⁸ Writing in *The Listener*, David Sylvester chided the group for displaying *Parallel of Life and Art* with 'a consummate inconsequentiality'.⁹ He continued,

'They have been equally unhelpful in the arrangement of the catalogue, in which the items are classified under headings, but in so arbitrary, inconsistent, and perverse a fashion as only to confuse, and in which no explanation is provided, beyond a handful of quotations, of an exhibition whose meaning and purpose seem as obscure and muddled as its title – "Parallel of Life and Art: an exhibition of documents through the medium of photography." [...] if the editors have failed to explain themselves, it is probably because they have tried to do too much.'¹⁰

Judith Henderson's transcript of Nigel's notes for a talk on *Parallel of Life and Art* at the Architectural Association wryly acknowledges the force of this critical response, 'We have been accused, in some quarters, of obscurity [...] and I can see a certain justification for the charge'.¹¹ This sense of obscurity is attributed to the group's struggle to find a 'verbal form' for their 'visual convictions'.¹² In other words, the incomprehensibility of the endeavour was activated when the private processes of their research work – which stemmed from their interactions at the Central School and took shape in their meetings at 46 Chisenhale Road – were subjected to the linguistic protocols of museological classification and public presentation; hence Sylvester's complaint concerning their failure to fully 'explain'. Within the art gallery, the

photographic prints that comprised *Parallel of Life and Art* displaced artworks from the walls and, in doing so, disrupted the logic that values artistic objects above photographic images. In this setting, the Namuth-Pollock picture is not just an image of a painter painting but a stark reminder of the absence of paintings within this unnervingly photographic display, which stages the subsumption of painting into photography and with it all other cultural forms, which are in turn expelled from the gallery space within which photography now reigns.

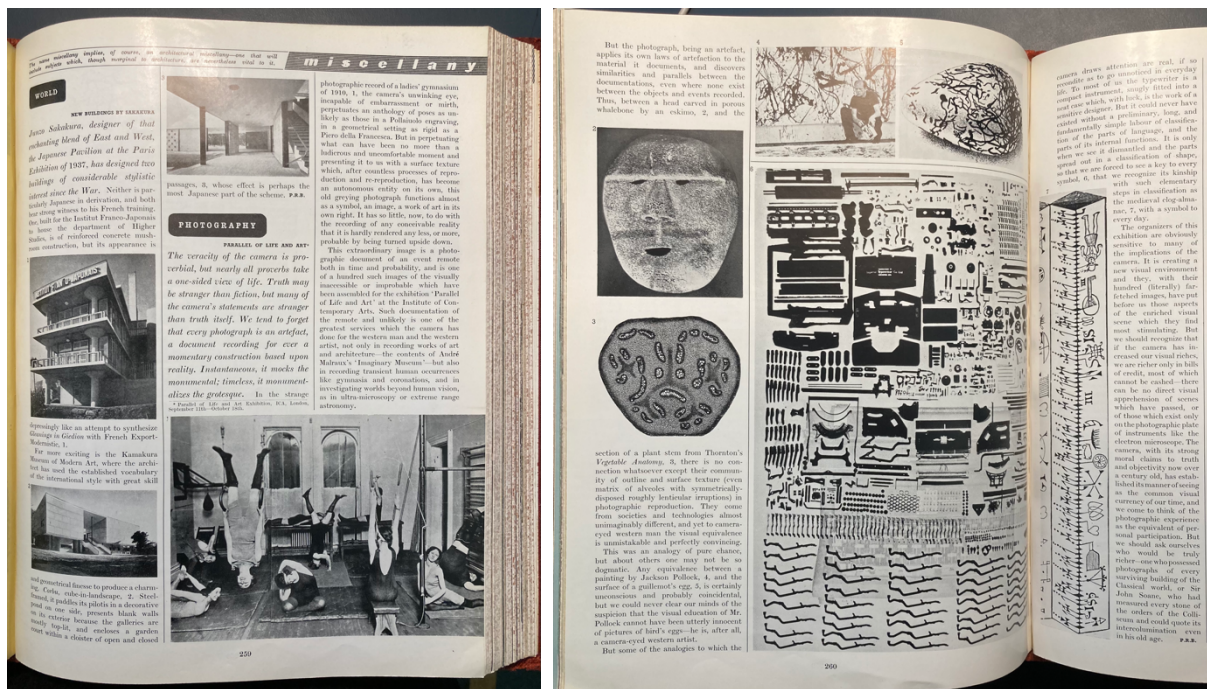


Figure 70. Reyner Banham, 'Parallel of Life and Art', *The Architectural Review* 114, no. 682, October 1953. Photos: Rosie Ram.

While the critic Reyner Banham was largely an advocate for *Parallel of Life and Art* as well as for the collaborators' wider work surrounding the ICA exhibition, he nevertheless held his own reservations about the display. In an article for *The Architectural Review*, Banham repeatedly emphasises the unsettling incongruity of the photographic exhibition [fig. 70]. He begins by reflecting that 'Truth may be stranger than fiction, but many of the camera's statements are stranger than truth itself.'¹³ And he identifies the capacity for photography to monumentalise 'the grotesque.'¹⁴ In this article, Banham draws specific images from *Parallel of Life and Art* into focus, noting 'the strange photographic record of a ladies' gymnasium' for instance, in which a 'ludicrous and uncomfortable moment' is captured by 'the camera's unwinking eye, incapable of embarrassment or mirth'.¹⁵ Banham writes that *Parallel of Life and Art* assembled 'images of the visually inaccessible or improbable' using photography as a

‘common visual currency’ to unify the assortment of imagery that the collaborators had collected during their research work at 46 Chisenhale Road.¹⁶ Tellingly, Banham’s criticism of *Parallel of Life and Art* is published in the ‘Miscellany’ pages of *The Architectural Review* and headed ‘Photography’ rather than placed into the subsequent section on ‘Exhibitions’, emphasising the sense that the display was somehow disconnected from the conventional form of the art exhibition.

At the heart of Banham’s analysis are questions concerning the status and role of the photograph, as both image and object. For Banham, *Parallel of Life and Art* demonstrates that the ‘documentation of the remote and unlikely is one of the greatest services which the camera has done for the western man and the western artist’.¹⁷ Yet, he continues, ‘the photograph, being an artefact, applies its own laws of artefaction to the material it documents, and discovers similarities and parallels between documentations, even where none exist between the objects and events recorded.’¹⁸ In *Parallel of Life and Art*, the ‘camera-eyed western man’ is faced by deceptive correspondences, Banham argues, between materials drawn from ‘societies and technologies almost unimaginably different.’¹⁹ To evidence such instances of ‘visual equivalence’, he reproduces the Namuth-Pollock image alongside an illustration of a guillemot’s egg that was also included in the exhibition, writing,

‘Any equivalence between a painting by Jackson Pollock and the surface of a guillemot’s egg is certainly unconscious and probably coincidental, but we can never clear our minds of the suspicion that the visual education of Mr. Pollock cannot have been utterly innocent of pictures of bird’s eggs – he is, after all, a camera-eyed western artist.’²⁰

Surrounded by the ‘consummate inconsequentiality’ of the photographic exhibition, the Namuth-Pollock picture contributed to the unnerving sense of both incongruity and false congruence that characterised the hang.

For critics whose professional reputations were built upon their knowledge of art and skill in translating it into linguistic form, *Parallel of Life and Art* proved somewhat frustrating, if not insulting. Across their various reactions, terms such as obfuscate, disturb, repulse, bewilder, arbitrary, inconsistent, perverse, confuse, obscure, muddle, strange, grotesque, ludicrous, uncomfortable, inaccessible, and improbable are used to

describe the photographic contents of the exhibition, its spatial structure, the organisation of its catalogue, and its impact on those who entered the show. It is as though the exhibition denied visitors the experience of art that they had come to expect within the gallery, leaving lingering feelings of bewilderment and irresolution. The sense of uncertainty elicited by *Parallel of Life and Art* appears to have been provoked by the exhibition's departure from the conventions of artistic form and classification as typically dictated by the museum and articulated in its acquisitional policies and protocols of display. In contrast, *Parallel of Life and Art* replaced artistic objects with photographic images and eschewed the criteria of provenance and permanence mandated by the museum. As Mark Fisher argues, the weird is 'a signal that the concepts and frameworks which we have previously employed are now obsolete'.²¹ In light of this statement, it seems that *Parallel of Life and Art* presented its critics with a weird kind of research practice that did not fit the concepts and frameworks through which the art gallery exhibition would normally be apprehended.

Parallel of Life and Art and the negation of museological tradition

The anti-museological ethos of *Parallel of Life and Art* is analysed and elucidated by Victoria Walsh, who identifies two pivotal reference points for the exhibition and, more specifically, for Henderson's contribution: André Malraux's essay on the 'museum without walls' (1947, published in English in 1953), and Marcel Duchamp's notion of the 'portable museum', as articulated in his *Boite en valise* series (1935-1940). As Walsh asserts, 'Both were concerned with the ontological status of the art object and its contemporary interface with the public and cultural space of the everyday through new forms of production, display, distribution and consumption of the visual.'²² Malraux's thesis asserts that photographic reproduction and distribution has the potential to disturb the classification and ordering systems of the museum, and to revolutionise what is included and excluded from the category of art. For Henderson and his collaborators, Walsh writes, 'Malraux's essay vindicated their interest in objects and artefacts beyond the confines of traditional Western art.'²³ Malraux saw photography as an increasingly universal and unifying medium, and for the *Parallel of Life and Art* organisers 'it was exactly this suspension of the indexical function of the photograph that appealed and opened up the creative potential to play with scale and space-time relations, and the visual ambiguity this produced.'²⁴

This engagement with Malraux was enriched by an appropriation of Duchamp's notion of the 'portable museum', Walsh argues, to which Henderson refers in his notes for the *Parallel of Life and Art* talk at the Architectural Association. This citation of Duchamp's *Boite en valise*, Walsh writes, 'framed *Parallel of Life and Art* as an equal challenge to the ownership of the category of art and the art object by the museum.'²⁵ Henderson's thinking was informed by his own edition of one of Duchamp's earlier works, *The Green Box* (1934), which, as Walsh states, presents a similar challenge to 'the epistemological and museological certainties of classical aesthetics that the museum embodied', further informing the critique of museological tradition staged by *Parallel of Life and Art*.²⁶

Comparably, Ben Highmore claims that the contents of *Parallel of Life and Art* appear to have been chosen with the intention to 'confuse and befuddle, purposefully to defeat any attempt to find meaning.'²⁷ For Highmore, the exhibition's disruption of museological structuring is illustrated most explicitly by the catalogue, which operated as a kind of antidote to traditional taxonomical ordering. He writes, 'If the exhibition seems randomly ordered, the catalogue that accompanied it is organised so as to suggest a taxonomy of some kind. On closer inspection, though, this taxonomy doesn't solve the problem of intelligibility but adds a new level of confusion and complexity.'²⁸ In fact, the catalogue invalidates its own categories to the extent that as 'taxonomies of the visual [...] they could be read as systematically unsystematic'.²⁹ In doing so, it implies 'not simply that "art" doesn't exist, but that we limit those things we call "art" if we keep them locked into that category.'³⁰ For Highmore, this 'opens up the possibilities and productivity of what could be called creative misrecognition, a methodology that recognises the necessity of reappraising the values that underpin our taxonomies.'³¹

I would argue that these conceptions of *Parallel of Life and Art* as being 'systematically unsystematic' and as eliciting 'creative misrecognition' apply not only to the hang of the material at the ICA but connect the exhibition with the modes of artistic research emerging within the Central School and at 46 Chisenhale Road. For Henderson, specifically, rather than *Parallel of Life and Art* being the culmination and conclusion of this investigative practice, it was a continuation of the experimental methodologies he had developed elsewhere. Crucially, by hanging *Parallel of Life and Art* at ICA, the research materials that comprised the exhibition were inserted into the gallery and presented as art, occupying the space usually allocated to painting and sculpture. And yet, as we have seen, the critical response elicited was one of confusion, due to the

drastic departure of these photographic images from the museological conventions that determined the classification and organisation of artistic forms. Building upon Walsh's and Highmore's analyses, *Parallel of Life and Art* might thus be conceived as a negational exhibition, as an insertion of non-art into the official place of art, and as a critical point at which Henderson's research enters into a more direct confrontation with the artistic traditions that are conventionally upheld by the museum.

For John Roberts, negation is the core strategy in the ongoing research programme of the avant-garde. In 'Art and its Negations' (2010) and *Revolutionary Time and the Avant-Garde* (2015), he posits a theorisation of artistic negation that provides a pertinent means of deciphering *Parallel of Life and Art* and, specifically, the presentation of Henderson's artistic research practice within the exhibition. For Roberts, negation ensures that art remains 'irreducible to its own histories and to the heteronomous forces of capitalist exchange.'³² As Roberts argues, 'there can be no renewal of art without art resisting, reworking, dissolving what has *become* tradition, and duly, therefore, what has become heteronomous.'³³ For Roberts, non-art and anti-art are vital components of this negational work. He writes,

'Without the categories of non-art and anti-art as the sites where assimilated aesthetic experience is tested, art can only reproduce itself as academic precedent and heteronomous experience. As such, it is the continuous redefinition of the boundaries of art by the strategies of non-art and anti-art that forms the basis by which art negates what has been previously designated autonomous and aesthetic in order to constitute autonomy and aesthetic experience anew.'³⁴

Negation is the force that drives art towards autonomy, Roberts argues, by ensuring that it emerges as 'something other to the conditions that call it into being'.³⁵ He writes, 'negation (withdrawal, non-reconcilability, disaffirmation, distantiation, dissension, subtraction, displacement, denial) secures autonomy (a place, a site for reflection; a gap for the non-identitary)'.³⁶ Yet, he cautions against aligning artistic negation with the 'conventional modernist notions of formal "advance" or stylistic supersession in art or, nihilistically, with the destruction of tradition as such.'³⁷ Rather, he identifies negation as 'the restless, ever *vigilant positioning* of art's critical relationship to its own traditions of intellectual and cultural formation and administration.'³⁸

Negation, therefore, ensures that art remains autonomous despite its ‘constant submission to the demands of entertainment and commerce and institutional legitimation and approbation’.³⁹ Negation is stimulated, Roberts argues, by the ‘very “asociality” of art under capitalism’ whereby ‘for art to remain art (rather than transform itself into architectural design, fashion or social theory *tout court*) it must experience itself as being “out of joint” both with its official place in the world and with its own traditions.’⁴⁰ Roberts conceives of negation as operating via a recursive movement of departure and return. He describes this process as the recurrent carving out of ‘trajectories of escape’, which loop away from and back into the category of art and its institutions. By endlessly vacating and repopulating itself in this way, not only does art confront its own traditions but it also contends with ‘the *extra-artistic* conditions of possibility of those traditions.’⁴¹ This negational return to art is critical, Roberts argues, in order to ‘make visible what distinguishes art from non-aesthetic reason, in order to establish a realm of freedom irreducible to the “freedoms” of the market and *its* reason.’⁴² Despite ceaselessly departing art, negation is always, ultimately, therefore, ‘subject to the hailing effect of art *as art*’.⁴³

Roberts’ conception of artistic negation offers a pertinent means to analyse not only the presentation of *Parallel of Life and Art* within the art gallery at the ICA but also the concurrent manifestations of Henderson’s artistic research at the Central School and at 46 Chisenhale Road. In all these contexts, the artist’s engagement with photographic image-making emerged as ‘something other to the conditions that call[ed] it into being’, while maintaining a position that was ‘out of joint’, both with artistic traditions and with the codes and conventions of other modes of work. In both settings, Henderson’s research practice engages in the kind of ‘restless, ever vigilant positioning’ described by Roberts, so as to ensure that it remained irreducible to industrial demands, market capitalism, and academic reason. Following Roberts’ argument, for Henderson’s practice to be named as art, while at the same time negating the traditions of art and its protocols of ‘intellectual and cultural formation and administration’, his research has to be returned to the category of art and to its institutions. In *Parallel of Life and Art*, therefore, Henderson’s practice can be seen as falling ‘subject to the hailing effect of art *as art*’ and as completing a negational trajectory of escape and return.

Crucially, in the 1950s, the ICA was hospitable to artistic projects that would have been intolerable for the museums of the period, thus allowing *Parallel of Life and Art* to stage

its negational assault. The ICA defined itself as a non-collection-based institution, oriented away from the museological canon and, thus, unencumbered by the tenets of tradition and taste.⁴⁴ Everything it housed was changeable and temporary; its policies were not oriented towards posterity.⁴⁵ It was, arguably, more interested in exhibiting creative *practice* than valorised artworks. Ultimately, the ICA did not seek the assimilation of art into art history, cultural hierarchies, or conventions, and it was precisely these conditions that equipped it to house *Parallel of Life and Art*. While an institution such as the Tate Gallery, as it was then known, would no doubt have baulked at the exhibition's non-art contents, the ICA was more receptive to this approach, thus becoming a proxy for the museum from which photography was excluded. Consequently, the institution provided a context for enabling the eclectic visual data that comprised of *Parallel of Life and Art* to be tested as art in critical proximity to the museum, and for the project's full gambit of negational tactics to be activated as such.

'Painter/photog/painter/photog cross fertilization whole time'

Reconsidered in this context, the Namuth-Pollock print can be seen to trace a particularly complex trajectory of escape and return within the *Parallel of Life and Art* hang. Invoking Roberts' theorisation of negation, it can be seen to map out a journey from artistic autonomy to capitalist heteronomy and back again. It emerges from the painter's studio, via the photographer's camera and the darkroom, and traverses through the magazine editor's office, the printed press, and the publishing market, before returning to the artist-photographer's darkroom, then appearing on the gallery wall, and finally entering the holdings at the Kings Head. Not only does this trajectory implicate a series of sites, a sequence of intermedial translations, and a concatenation of authors, it complicates notions of art and non-art. Considering Banham's specific concentration upon the Namuth-Pollock image as one that encapsulated the challenges of interpreting *Parallel of Life and Art's* complex correspondences, it will be useful to examine the associations and traces that the image itself carries, which it rapidly began amassing from the very moment of its creation.

Since the production of Namuth's photographs of Pollock painting in 1950 and their publication in 1951, these depictions have come to play a pivotal role in forging the reputation of modern American painting on the global stage. So much so, they are now

commonly regarded ‘as some of the most important documents of modern art,’⁴⁶ as Caroline A. Jones proclaims. More specifically, as Fred Orton and Griselda Pollock argue, Namuth’s images have proved ‘most useful for mobilisation of the Pollock myth’⁴⁷ and for the construction of the artist as a ‘mythic subject’.⁴⁸ As early as 1957, Namuth’s depictions of Pollock were included in the curatorial collateral that Porter A. McCray, Director of the International Programme at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York, offered to Bryan Robertson, Director of the Whitechapel Art Gallery in London, as part of a touring retrospective of Pollock’s work, which opened in London in 1958. In the decades since, these images have repeatedly been deployed as curatorial devices within monographic Pollock shows, in order to foreground the act of painting in the studio as the primary source of artistic authorship and aura. In a Pollock retrospective at MoMA in 1998, for instance, visitors encountered Namuth’s photographs as they entered the exhibition, where the images hung in a full-scale reproduction of the artist’s studio.⁴⁹ Not only have these pictures shaped Pollock’s celebrity, they have also, arguably, served broader political imperatives in the post-war world. Soon after their publication, as Peter R. Kalb observes, ‘the US political and culture industry took on the task of inscribing the images of Pollock into a coherent narrative of US exceptionalism and power’.⁵⁰ Kalb points to the role these images have played in ‘aligning the reception of abstract expressionism with US politics during the Cold War’⁵¹ and their capacity ‘to chart the ideological manipulation of art’.⁵²

In 1953, however, at the time of the inclusion of the photograph of Pollock in *Parallel of Life and Art* at the ICA, Namuth’s image of the artist at work had not yet been leveraged in this way. Instead, as Kalb reflects, ‘in the still insecure world of Abstract Expressionism in the early 1950s, [...] the photographs of Pollock painting can be seen as far more equivocal’ than their art-historical reputation now implies.⁵³ Kalb argues that the ‘cultural anchorage’ the images have since acquired ‘was not yet in place in 1950’.⁵⁴ This was a time when Pollock’s ‘critical reputation and financial situation were far from secure’.⁵⁵ Kalb points to a ‘European ambivalence’ towards the artist’s work in the early 1950s, when Peggy Guggenheim, Pollock’s gallerist and patron, ‘complained of the great difficulty of getting his work shown or sold [in Europe], decrying the indifference toward Pollock especially in Paris and deep discounts being demanded of her’.⁵⁶ Pollock was viewed by much of the general public and a significant proportion of the press not as the heroic artist-genius in his ascendancy, but rather as a harbinger of art’s demise whose work heralded the death of painterly skill and traditional training.

In 1950, Pollock had ‘endured the increasing tension’ of critical debates concerning his work, and it was within this fraught context that Namuth’s images positioned him ‘as a radically new kind of artist and photography as one of its critical interpretative tools.’⁵⁷ Kalb argues that Namuth ‘offered photography as means of apprehending the new art and approaching the complexity with which it was embroiled in contemporary life.’⁵⁸ The photographs can therefore be understood, he writes, ‘as parts in a complex and collective attempt to grapple with the changing face of modern art in its painterly and photographic forms.’⁵⁹

Photography and painting meet in Namuth’s images of Pollock in a distinct way, to which the *Parallel of Life and Art* collaborators – especially Henderson – will have been highly alert. As Orton and Griselda Pollock note, the Namuth-Pollock images are contingent upon ‘Pollock’s interests and competences as a painter painting and Namuth’s interests and competences as a photographer at work first in the artist’s studio and then in the darkroom.’⁶⁰ In *Parallel of Life and Art*, the intermedial interaction between Namuth and Pollock is brought into dialogue and augmented by the collaboration between Henderson, Jenkins, Paolozzi and the Smithsons, where the mutating relations between painting and photography are elaborated upon across the exhibition space as a whole. In the selection, photographic reproduction, and installation of the Namuth-Pollock print in *Parallel of Life and Art*, as well as through his own photography of the display, Henderson can be seen to enter into and extend the negotiation between contemporary painting and photography that is encapsulated by the image. As artist-photographer or ‘Painter and Photographer’, Henderson’s practice mirrors – simultaneously – both Namuth’s and Pollock’s positions in their encounter. He continues the relay that they initiate from the artist’s studio to the photographer’s darkroom by bringing the image into his own darkroom and then placing it into the gallery, which seems to have served as collective studio for the group while they hung the display. As ‘Painter and Photographer’, Henderson locates his own practice and his professional identity at the nexus point where contemporary painting and photography collide. Emphasising this point, in his notes for the Architectural Association talk, Henderson jotted down ‘painter/photog/painter/photog cross fertilization whole time’.⁶¹



Figure 71. Top left: Nigel Henderson, self-portrait photograph, c. 1952. Top right: Nigel Henderson, photograph of *Parallel of Life and Art*, ICA, 1953. Nigel Henderson Estate. Photos: Nigel Henderson Estate. Bottom: Nigel Henderson's Rolleicord camera. Nigel Henderson Estate. Photos: Jon Law.

Henderson's subsequent photographs of the *Parallel of Life and Art* hang can be seen to extend this interaction further. Here, he seems to step out of the hybridised role of 'Painter and Photographer', and back into the singular position of 'Photographer'. In doing so, he realigns his efforts with the work of Namuth rather than locating his efforts at the point of interaction between Pollock and Namuth, moving from the photographic hand in the darkroom to the photographic eye of the camera. Importantly, Namuth took his shots of Pollock with a medium format Rolleiflex dual lens camera, a very similar model to the Rolleicord II dual lens camera Henderson himself used throughout the 1950s, and with which he photographed the *Parallel of Life and Art* hang [fig. 71].⁶²

'Using a Rolleiflex, which is not a single-lens reflex camera, Namuth could not pose Pollock for his photographs', Orton and Griselda Pollock explain,

‘He could, however, establish in his viewfinder a particular space – or arena – where Pollock would be working. Aiming his camera across the expanse of the canvas, he took pictures of Pollock as he moved into and across a kind of stage-set, i.e. the flattened, framed space visible through the Rolleiflex’s viewfinder.’⁶³

Looking down at his camera, Namuth will have waited and watched for the artist’s movement to play out across the miniature scene on the Rolleiflex’s small, square viewing screen. As Kalb confirms, ‘Namuth staked out positions around the studio, releasing the shutter as Pollock stepped into the frame.’⁶⁴ Using a Rollei-branded camera himself, Henderson will have been familiar with the way the device establishes an arena for movement on its viewing screen. He will also have been alert to the kinds of movement demanded of the photographer on the other side of the lens in his pursuit of certain types of shot. In some instances, Kalb notes, Namuth ‘positioned the camera low and aimed up’,⁶⁵ and in others, he climbed a ladder to shoot from above, thus capturing aerial perspectives. For Kalb, these images oscillate between viewing positions, echoing the sightlines of ‘the photographer in the darkroom, art director designing a magazine layout, or the individual reading an article’.⁶⁶



Figure 72. Nigel Henderson, photographs of *Parallel of Life and Art*, ICA, 1953. Nigel Henderson Estate. Photos: Rosie Ram.

This interrelation between making, moving, and looking – embodied by the artist, the photographer, the magazine publisher, and the viewer or reader – is reactivated in *Parallel of Life and Art*. In Henderson’s photography of the installation, he apes Namuth’s dramatically angled shots, often positioning his camera low and aiming up,

and thereby inverting the aerial perspective [fig. 72]. This indicates a level of collaboration well beyond that of the immediate interactions of the five named exhibition-makers: Henderson, Jenkins, Paolozzi and the Smithsons. Instead, collaboration becomes dispersed across the concatenation of different practices of image-making evident within the display. Critically, these practices are brought into alignment and exchange by ongoing cycles of photographic production and reproduction.

A triptych of photographic distortions, a contact print, a photogram, and a photochemical handprint

Within *Parallel of Life and Art*, the contemporary interaction between painting and photography was both thrown into deeper focus and elaborated upon. This was most pronounced in the portion of the hang closely surrounding the Namuth-Pollock image [fig. 73]. In addition to the panoply of found and photographically reproduced images, Henderson included four of his own photographic works, which appear in a tight configuration around the Namuth-Pollock shot. Significantly, many of his photographs of the *Parallel of Life and Art* installation focus upon capturing this portion of the hang, creating ever-shifting image configurations shot from varying distances and angles.



Figure 73. Nigel Henderson, photographs of *Parallel of Life and Art*, ICA, 1953. Tate, TGA 9211/5/2/57, TGA 9211/5/2/64, TGA 9211/5/2/58 and TGA 9211/5/2/65. Photos: Tate (negatives reproduced as digital positives).

Henderson's four photographically created images are somewhat distinct from the majority of the pictures that comprised *Parallel of Life and Art* in that they do not straightforwardly represent enlarged photographic reproductions of found images per se. Rather, they are the products of his own darkroom practice, in which he experimented with methods such as photographic distortion, making photograms and chemigrams, and contact printing [fig. 74]. In fact, these four images seem almost surreptitiously inserted among the hang, given their departure from the group's agreed protocol of sourcing readymade images, collaborative selection, and reproduction.



- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| 34. Disintegrating mirror (contact print). | Collection N. Henderson. |
| 53. Coffee grounds (photo-image). | Nigel Henderson. |
| 54. Hand print. | Nigel Henderson. |
| 97. Distortion of Victorian Lantern slide. | Nigel Henderson. |

Figure 74. Top left: Illustration of the '34. Disintegrating mirror (contact print)' from the *Parallel of Life and Art* catalogue. Photo: Rosie Ram. Top right: Image used for '54. Hand print'. Tate, TGA 9211/5/2/21. Photo: Tate (negative reproduced as digital positive). Middle left: One of the images used in '97. Distortion of Victorian Lantern slide'. Nigel Henderson Estate. Photo: Rosie Ram. Middle right: Panel titled '53. Coffee ground (photo-image)'. Tate, TGA 9211/5/3/11. Photo: Tate. Bottom three rows: Listings of these materials in the *Parallel of Life and Art* catalogue. Photos: Rosie Ram.

In the literature, these four darkroom experiments go relatively unremarked upon. Yet, I would argue that their direct relationship to Henderson's 'Painter and Photographer' role, in combination with their break from the exhibition's overarching criteria for inclusion, singles them out for closer attention.

Their exact positioning is made clear in Henderson's photographs of the display. Pinned onto the wall immediately to the left of the Namuth-Pollock print was an image classified in the catalogue as 'Distortion of Victorian Lantern slide. Nigel Henderson'

and categorised as ‘Stress’ [fig. 75]. In the top left corner of the same image-gridded gallery was a work classified as ‘Coffee grounds (photo-image). Nigel Henderson’ and categorised as ‘Landscape’ [fig. 79]. Hanging down horizontally from the ceiling in front of this, was a picture classified as ‘Disintegrating mirror (contact print). Collection N. Henderson’ and categorised as ‘Art’ [fig. 78]. Suspended vertically ahead of this was an image classified as ‘Hand print. Nigel Henderson’ and, again, categorised as ‘Landscape’ [fig. 80]. While Henderson appears to name himself as the maker of the images in the categories ‘Stress’ and ‘Landscape’, he refrains from naming himself as the maker of the image placed into the category of ‘Art’, thus eschewing the title of ‘artist’.



Figure 75. Top left: Detail of Nigel Henderson, photographs of *Parallel of Life and Art*, ICA, 1953. Tate, TGA 9211/5. Top right: Nigel Henderson, negative showing ‘97. Distortion of Victorian Lantern slide’. Tate, TGA 201011/5/1. Bottom left: Listing in *Parallel of Life and Art* catalogue. Bottom right: Nigel Henderson, one of the images used in ‘97. Distortion of Victorian Lantern slide’. Nigel Henderson Estate. Photos: Rosie Ram.

The ‘Distortion of Victorian Lantern slide’ was pinned up immediately to the left of the Namuth-Pollock print [fig. 75, top left]. It was a composite of three photographically distorted images arranged like a vertical triptych [fig. 75, top right, shown as negative]. Similar prints remain in the holdings at the Kings Head [fig. 75, bottom right]. They show swimmers at the seaside, whose bodies and surroundings have been warped and contorted by darkroom manipulation. Directly to their left, was a work by Pablo Picasso that also depicted bathers on a beach, classified in the catalogue ‘The Bathers 1923, Picasso. Collection of Walter P. Chrysler’, and again, like Henderson’s distortions,

categorised as ‘Stress’ [fig. 75, bottom left]. The adjacent positioning of these images in the display, their shared classificatory categories, and their comparable subject matter draws them into dialogue. Additionally, Henderson kept the slides and negatives from which he made these photographic distortions in glassine envelopes marked ‘Bathers’, echoing the titling of Picasso’s painting. Yet, while Picasso’s work is classified in the *Parallel of Life and Art* catalogue according to museological convention – listing its title, date, artist’s name, and provenance – the origins of Henderson’s bathers are uncertain. The listing gestures to an unknown moment of production in the Victorian era and an association with the outmoded technology of the ‘magic lantern’ projector.⁶⁷

At Tate, the negatives Henderson used for both his and Picasso’s bathers are now submerged in his archive in a file with restricted access [fig. 76]. Viewing these negatives, however, reveals his photographic extraction and distillation of the images, and their conversion into miniature, malleable, darkly translucent, and inverted forms.



Figure 76. Negatives for ‘98. The Bathers 1923, Picasso’ and ‘97. Distortion of Victorian Lantern slide’. Tate, TGA 201011/5/1. Photos: Rosie Ram.

By placing his photographically manipulated bathers next to a photographic reproduction of Picasso’s painted bathers within *Parallel of Life and Art*, Henderson shows photographic technologies and darkroom techniques operating in dialogue with the work of the painter’s brush, while troubling the status of the painted image, which is itself converted into photographic form. The manipulation of photographic materials in the darkroom echoes the manipulation of paint in the studio, relocating and translating traditional artistic technique into photographic terms. The texture of the canvas meets

the photographic grain of the print. Henderson would refer to his distorted photographs as ‘stressed’ images, hence the inclusion of these pictures under the category of ‘Stress’ in the catalogue. In Picasso’s piece, the bathers are ‘stressed’ using paint and brush in the artist’s studio. Whereas, in Henderson’s photographic distortions a comparable kind of ‘stress’ is achieved by folding and creasing the photosensitive paper in the darkroom during the printing process. By embedding Picasso’s *The Bathers* within *Parallel of Life and Art* in this way, Henderson embroils modern painting within the photographically mediated display, while deftly inserting his own photographic practice into the traditional realm of painting. In the exhibition and its catalogue, the pairing plays upon his chosen title like a pun: Picasso and Henderson, ‘Painter and Photographer’.



Figure 77. Left: Hans Namuth, photograph of Jackson Pollock in his studio, Long Island, America, 1950. Nigel Henderson Estate. Photo: Rosie Ram. Right: Nigel Henderson, photographs of *Parallel of Life and Art*, ICA, 1953. Tate, TGA 9211/5/2/57. Photo: Tate (negative reproduced as digital positive).

This encounter between painting and photography is further emphasised by the position of Henderson’s ‘Disintegrating mirror (contact print)’, which appeared in front and slightly to the left of the Namuth-Pollock shot, shown face down and parallel with the ceiling [figs. 77 & 78]. Again, Henderson’s photographic image of the ‘Disintegrating mirror’ translates abstract painting into photographic terms. The patterning on his panel bears a striking resemblance to the web of tangled marks covering Pollock’s canvases and splattered across the surfaces of his workspace; but this is a resemblance based, of course, on the kind of false congruence that so perplexed Banham. It is as if Pollock provides the patterned floor and back wall in his Long Island studio using paint

in 1950, and Henderson completes this decorative scheme with a similarly patterned ceiling within the gallery in London in 1953, using found materials and photography.

Yet, this gesture also highlights the divergences of painting and photography. To make a contact print a photographic negative is placed onto a photosensitive surface in the darkroom, before being exposed to light. The print is produced by the *direct contact* between the negative and the emulsion of the photosensitive surface. The materials must touch one another to produce the image. At this moment, the artist's hand is absent, having been excluded by the immediate contact of the two surfaces. Moreover, in the selection of a 'disintegrating mirror' as the subject for the contact print, mimetic reflection is presented as shattered and subject to decay. The effects of physical disintegration create a patterning that is aligned with Pollock's painterly abstraction.

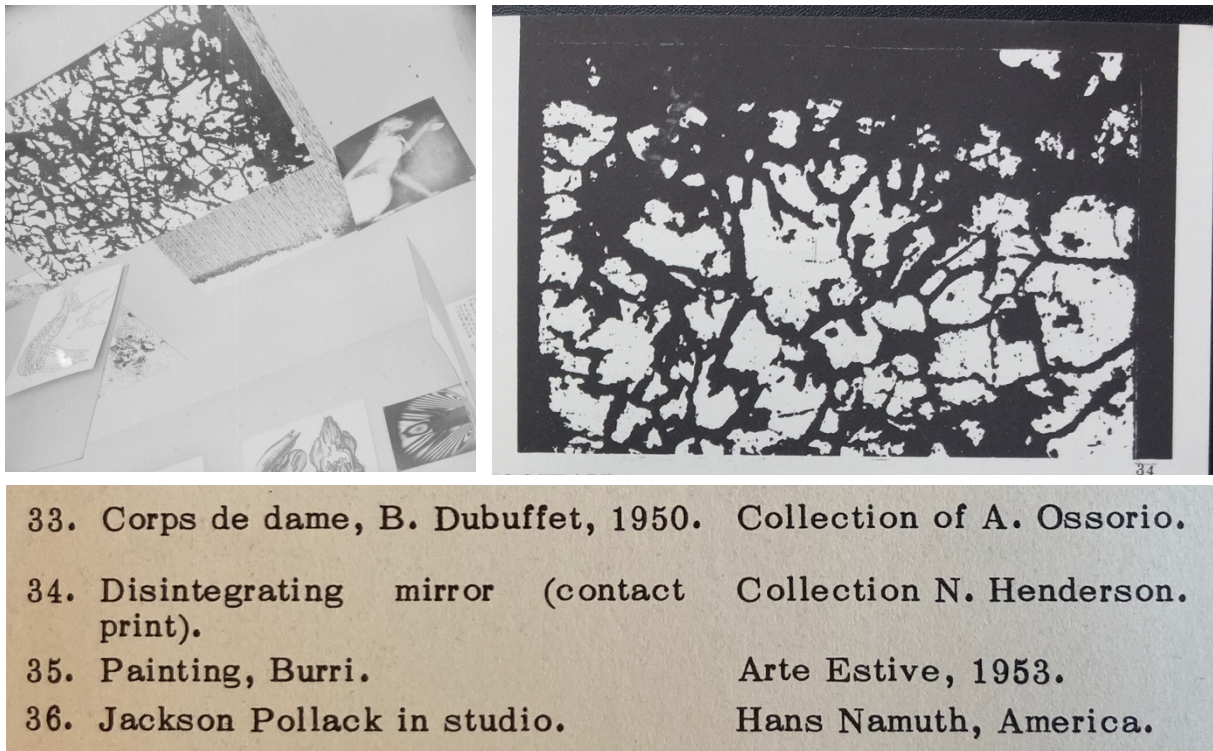


Figure 78. Top left: Nigel Henderson, photographs of *Parallel of Life and Art*, ICA, 1953. Tate, TGA 9211/5/2/99. Photo: Tate (negative reproduced as digital positive). Top right: Illustration of the '34. Disintegrating mirror (contact print)' from the *Parallel of Life and Art* catalogue. Bottom: Listings from *Parallel of Life and Art* catalogue. Nigel Henderson Estate. Photos: Rosie Ram.

In the catalogue, under the category of 'Art' this image is placed into a grouping of modern artists [fig. 78, bottom], all of whom were working with paint in abstract styles: Jean Dubuffet who is confusingly given the initial 'B', Alberto Burri whose first name is omitted entirely, and Jackson Pollock whose surname misspelt as 'Pollack'. The partial spelling (and misspelling) of their names subtly destabilises the status of these painters

within the art gallery exhibition. Listed alongside these faltering references to named artists within the category of ‘Art’, the ‘Disintegrating mirror (contact print)’ appears to have made itself, and Henderson becomes the collector of this photographically self-generated work. His listing in the catalogue mirrors that of the modern art collector Alfonso Ossorio [fig. 78], who was friends with Dubuffet and Pollock, and was himself an abstract painter. Henderson’s insertion of himself into the catalogue in this way, demonstrates the capacity for photographic experimentation, reproduction, collection and display to trouble the distinction not only between the positions of painter and photographer but between that of artist and collector too. Furthermore, understanding Henderson as an artistic researcher here, it is evident that this uncertain position affords him the capacity to move between and infiltrate multiple roles.

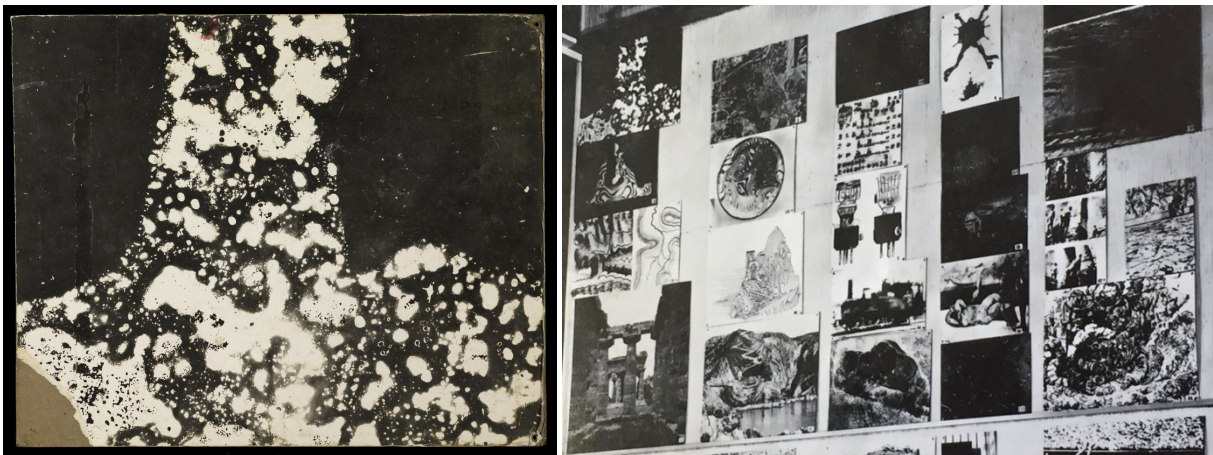


Figure 79. Left: Panel titled ‘53. Coffee ground (photo-image)’. Tate, TGA 9211/5/3/11. Photo: Tate. Right: Detail of Nigel Henderson, photographs of *Parallel of Life and Art*, ICA, 1953. Nigel Henderson Estate. Photo: Rosie Ram.

Installed in the same image-grid as the Namuth-Pollock print, Henderson’s ‘Coffee grounds (photo-image)’ extends this dialogue between photographic experimentation and abstract painting [fig. 79]. The image is a photogram made in the darkroom by placing coffee grounds directly onto a glass plate in the photographic enlarger, before exposing the arrangement to light. Henderson describes this process in the following terms: ‘the coffee grounds print – a simple projection thro’ the enlarger’.⁶⁸ This process has generated a patterned composition featuring granular, dappled forms cascading down the image’s centre, flanked by black blotted upper corners. Like the ‘Disintegrating mirror (contact print)’, it creates an abstract picture, akin to the kind achieved in the painter’s studio, yet one that has been relocated to the darkroom and translated directly into photographic terms.



Figure 80. Detail of Nigel Henderson, photographs of *Parallel of Life and Art*, ICA, 1953. Nigel Henderson Estate. Photo: Rosie Ram.

In the *Parallel of Life and Art* hang, the question of the role of the artist's hand loomed large. Within the disorientating hang, a photographically produced palm print appeared suspended in the space, attributed to Henderson, printed in black and white, and blown up to dramatic, even grotesque proportions [fig. 80]. It was stuck to a panel and suspended vertically from the ceiling in the upper register of the room, just in front of the horizontal 'Disintegrating mirror' panel [visible in figs. 71, top right & 73, top right] and placed perpendicular to the wall displaying the image-grid that included the 'Coffee grounds' print and the Namuth-Pollock picture [fig. 80]. Henderson's photographic handprint is likely to have been made using the chemigram method of cameraless photography. In chemigram photography an object – in this case, the artist's own hand – is placed into photographic developer fluid and then onto photosensitive paper to make a print, which is exposed to light before being stopped with fixer. This print can then be photographically reproduced, translated into negative, and enlarged using a photographic enlarger. Hovering imposingly over the rest of the found and photographically reproduced images that comprised the display, the disembodied and fingerless palm appears, at first, to emphasise its own dislocation. Henderson's severed hand cannot reach these readymade pictures. It hangs alienated among the atomised environment of photographically replicated prints.



Figure 81. Image used for '54. Hand print'. Tate, TGA 9211/5/2/21. Photo: left: Rosie Ram (negative); right: Tate (negative reproduced as digital positive).

At Tate, Henderson's 'Hand print' can be found among his archive in negative form [fig. 81, left]. On the museum's website, it is presented as a positive image [fig. 81, right], more closely mirroring the panel seen hanging in the ICA display [fig. 80]. Yet, handling the negative in its negative form gives a sense of its distinctive photographic tactility as a translucent and miniature piece of material, both an image and an object, which can be held in the hand, studied closely, and touched. In the museum, however, accessing the image in its negative form is restricted. Experiencing its tactility is limited by the requirement to wear latex gloves. This impedes an understanding of the photographic specificity of the materials that were produced in preparation for *Parallel of Life and Art* and, by extension, the photographic logic of the exhibition itself.

Given its central location within the *Parallel of Life and Art* hang, Henderson's palm raises the question of how to reconceptualise artistic skill in relation to my notion of a photographically mediated mode of artistic research. Traditionally, the hand embodied skill in art. It is the celebrated source of painterly dexterity and expressive line, and it leaves the valorised traces of authorial touch. Yet, in *Parallel of Life and Art*, Henderson uses photographic technologies to distort and disrupt the status of the hand and, in doing so, to 'deflate' traditional notions of artistic skill via photographic means.⁶⁹ For Roberts, artistic negation is pursued through such strategies of 'deflation'. At the start of the twentieth century, artistic deflation was confined within the painted canvas, he argues. Cubist artists, for instance, deflated mimetic skill by distorting the classical form of the painted nude. With the introduction of readymade fragments into the space

of painting by Picasso and Braque, Roberts argues, the bounded confines of the canvas were ruptured irreparably, and the deflation of artistic skill was relocated beyond painting's terms. As he explains,

‘with the readymade, deflation entered the realm of anti-art, positioning art’s strategies of negation in conflict with the canon of painterly achievement. As a result, deflation becomes embodied in a radical reorientation and expansion of artistic skill: collage, photography, assemblage link the negation of painting with the development of forms of non-artistic technique. The measure of artistic competence shifts from mark-making to the positioning, arranging and conjunction of pre-given processes and prefabricated forms. [...] With the shift to a deflationary logic *outside* the painting, the position of the artist also shifts. The artist marks, breaks, interrupts the surface of the painting – thereby reaching into the space of the painting – in a way that signals that the painting is now historically “in the way” of art’s technical demands.’⁷⁰

Roberts claims that the insertion of readymade elements into art radically reordered the relationship between the skilled hand and the connoisseurial eye, whereby the ‘hand and eye become linked through the selection, arrangement, superimposition and juxtaposition of materials, enforcing a shift in art’s technical base from covering and moulding to the organization and manipulation of preexistent objects.’⁷¹ It is through the readymade, therefore, that the ‘traditional eye-hand relations of craft-based artistic skills are subject to a new intellectual and technical base.’⁷² The readymade, ‘disperses the hand and eye to a world of signifiers and materials that require forms of mapping, superimposition and coordination other than those circumscribed by painterly forms.’⁷³

Importantly, Roberts couples the deflation of artistic skill with the immanent possibility of *inflation*. He writes, ‘deflation is not simply a negation of the status of painting but an actual *extension* of art’s competences.’⁷⁴ The deflation of painterly skill carries with it ‘the *inflationary* force of non-aesthetic technical skills drawn from other cultural, cognitive and practical domains: film, photography, architecture, literature, philosophy, science’.⁷⁵ In *Parallel of Life and Art*, the deflation of painting enacted by the presentation of photographic research materials can, therefore, be seen to be coupled with the inflationary force of darkroom experimentation, as embodied by Henderson’s

photographic distortion of the bathers, contact print of a disintegrating mirror, photogram made from coffee grounds, and chemigram handprint.

An important precedent for *Parallel of Life and Art*, and particularly Henderson's individual contribution to it, was Duchamp's *The Green Box* (1934), or to give it its full title *The Bride Stripped Bare by her Bachelors, Even (The Green Box)*. Henderson had met Duchamp in 1938 and had acquired his own edition of *The Green Box* shortly afterwards, as a gift from Guggenheim. As Henderson states,

[Duchamp] gave Peggy Guggenheim one... or perhaps he gave her one that she could give... so that she could give it to me. I don't know exactly but, um, I think there were... as far as I know there were two then, in her gift... and she gave me one, knowing that I had an infatuation for Duchamp, whose work I was misunderstanding, and still do misunderstand to a very considerable extent.⁷⁶

This idea of 'misunderstanding' Duchamp can be read in relation to Highmore's notion of *Parallel of Life and Art* as rooted in a practice of 'creative misrecognition'.

Significantly, Henderson's 'misunderstanding' of Duchamp appears to be rooted in a photographic reading (or misreading) of his work. As Henderson himself states, the elements of Duchamp's practice that he draws upon are 'not the great works but some of the works of Marcel Duchamp in photography', where, for instance, Duchamp 'does something as simple as laying his head down on a piece of photosensitive paper and switching the light on and getting a very fine profile.'⁷⁷ Henderson retained possession of *The Green Box* during his work on *Parallel of Life and Art*, before lending it to Richard Hamilton in 1955. Henderson's work on the exhibition appears to draw upon this photographic 'misunderstanding' of Duchamp and of *The Green Box*.

The Green Box is an object that, like *Parallel of Life and Art*, troubles the distinctions between artwork and document, original and copy, collection and archive, manual and intellectual work, perception and production. It comprises a compact box, produced as an edition of approximately 320, and filled with facsimiles of fragmentary writings, diagrams and pictures, including touched-up photographs and hand-coloured photographic reproductions. The contents of the box relate to the wider conceptual and aesthetic projects surrounding Duchamp's early works, and particularly the piece with

which it partially shares its full title, *The Bride Stripped Bare by her Bachelors, Even (The Large Glass)* (1915-23). In contrast to *The Green Box*, *The Large Glass* is a free-standing, monumental construction comprising two vertical panes of (shattered) glass, measuring over nine feet tall, and populated with graphic motifs. For Roberts, the two elements of *The Bride Stripped Bare by her Bachelors, Even* mark the moment at which Duchamp realised ‘there could be no emancipatory modernist practice without the rethinking and replacement of the function of the hand.’⁷⁸ In Duchamp’s earlier unassisted readymades, the artist took the deflation of artistic skill to its logical conclusion, Roberts argues, by displacing ‘the privileged place of the artisanal in artistic production’ and rendering the painterly hand obsolete. Yet, Duchamp’s subsequent works shows his changing attitude to the hand, indicating his ‘willingness to let *la patte* do some work again’.⁷⁹ This is most evident, Roberts argues, in *The Large Glass* and *The Green Box*. Henderson’s photographic ‘Hand print’ at the centre of *Parallel of Life and Art* can, therefore, be read in relation to his photographic ‘misunderstanding’ of Duchamp’s engagement with the hand, specifically, as expressed by *The Green Box*.

The Green Box places manual production and mechanical reproduction into a complex relay, interlacing ‘copying, nomination and mark-making’.⁸⁰ By altering his facsimiles by hand and copying his hand-altered facsimiles, Roberts argues, Duchamp used *The Green Box* to fold the readymade ‘back into a reflection on the hand and craft’.⁸¹ For Roberts, *The Green Box*, therefore, demonstrates ‘the interchange of immaterial or intellectual labour and craft’.⁸² Furthermore, Roberts describes the hand-altered facsimiles included in *The Green Box* as ‘curious hybrids’ that operate at the intersection between original and reproduction. Through these ‘curious hybrids’, he argues,

‘the unreproducible and reproducible identity of the artwork converge. [...] Handcrafted reproducible images (elaborately coloured prints) share the same space as reproductions of handcrafted reproducible images (collotypes interrupted by cut-outs and stencils); reproducibility is subject to the interventions of the hand, and therefore to artistic subjectivity.’⁸³

For Roberts, *The Green Box* places the artist’s hand into ‘a position of purposeful *non-alienated intimacy* with the machine.’⁸⁴ In *The Green Box*, he argues, ‘Handmade and readymade, manufactured object and crafted object, writing and printing, language and image, visualization and conceptualization infect and “correct” each other.’⁸⁵

Bringing Henderson's fingerless and dislocated palm print back into focus, a more complex reading of the image becomes possible by invoking Roberts' notion of the post-Duchampian reskilled hand and the 'craft of reproducibility'. Coated in developed fluid, Henderson's photochemical hand print creates the direct, evidentiary trace of individual, creative handling and artistic subjectivity during photographic image production. In doing so, the hand could be seen to reinsert itself back into the creative process, repositioning itself as the source of artistic skill, craft, subjectivity, and authorship after the advent of photographic reproducibility and in spite of the prevalence of the photographic image as a readymade commodity.

Henderson's other darkroom experiments within *Parallel of Life and Art* can also be read in relation to *The Green Box*. For instance, the 'Disintegrating mirror' contact print has material and conceptual echoes of *The Large Glass* itself, and particularly its photographic properties. As Dawn Ades, Neil Cox and David Hopkins write, *The Large Glass* might be considered 'a photographic analogue, its panes like the plates in a camera, to be imprinted with readymade images.'⁸⁶ They write that, in Duchamp's own notes, glass is variously regarded 'as window, camera lens and photographic glass negative, as mirror and device in the construction of perspective'.⁸⁷ In the period he was working on *Parallel of Life and Art*, Henderson had a plate camera as part of his photographic arsenal, as well as a Rolleicord and two photographic enlargers. He was familiar with glass plate negatives, the glass elements inside cameras, and the glass used in enlargers. He may have therefore perceived a relationship between *The Large Glass* and the more technical glass devices of photography. In the notes for *The Green Box*, Duchamp provides *The Large Glass* with the subtitle 'Delay in Glass', which speaks of the photographic lag between capturing an image on the glass plate of a negative, its undeveloped state as latent imprint, and its subsequent revelation in the darkroom. In Henderson's 'Disintegrating mirror (contact print)', the extended time of delay is dramatised by the decaying surface of the glass and juxtaposed with the instantaneous method of contact printing. Moreover, Henderson may have been alert to the mirror-like aspects of the *Large Glass* itself, which Duchamp described as a 'two-way mirror'.⁸⁸

Interestingly, one of the images included in Duchamp's *The Green Box* is a copy of his small oil painting, *Coffee-grinder* (1911).⁸⁹ As Duchamp notes, 'You can see the ground coffee in a heap under the cogwheels of the central shaft.'⁹⁰ In the upper-left corner of the image-gridded wall in *Parallel of Life and Art*, just behind his 'Disintegrating mirror

(contact print)', Henderson's 'Coffee grounds (photo-image)' can be read as an oblique reference to the *Coffee-grinder*. In Henderson's library, he had a copy of Robert Motherwell's 1951 anthology, *The Dada Painters and Poets*, from the 'Documents of Modern Art' series. Towards the end of the book there is an article by Harriet and Sidney Janis, titled 'Marcel Duchamp: Anti-Artist', dated 1945. The *Coffee-grinder*, they write, 'is Duchamp's earliest proto-dada work, his first gesture of turning against the practices as well as the symbols of the traditional artist.'⁹¹ In contrast to the replicated image of the *Coffee-grinder* found in *The Green Box*, Henderson's 'Coffee grounds (photo-image)' is a photogram made from placing coffee grounds – the waste materials produced by the machine – directly onto a glass plate in the darkroom, before exposing the arrangement to light. This gesture uses photographic methods to extend Duchamp's deflation of the painted form of the *Coffee-grinder*. In doing so, Henderson both invokes and technologises Duchamp's negation of 'the practices as well as the symbols of the traditional artist.'⁹² He deflates Duchamp's painterly deflation via photographic means.

By suspending his chemigram handprint in the centre of the display, not only does Henderson interject the photographic hand back into the moment of photographic image-making, but he also gestures to the 'handmade' quality of all the photographic reproductions that comprised *Parallel of Life and Art*, and to the handwork of a host of other workers, both named and unnamed. Not only had the eclectic selection of pictures been sourced, extracted, photographically copied, manipulated, enlarged, and installed by the hands of the *Parallel of Life and Art* collaborators themselves, but they had first been made elsewhere by other hands working with other technologies. Thus, photography served as more than an intermedial means for Henderson, Jenkins, Paolozzi and the Smithsons to collaborate on the exhibition. It placed their labour into an extended collaboration with all the workers producing, reproducing, altering, distributing, and displaying images in the wider world, whose hands are engaged in the relay of manual and mechanical touch mandated by photographic technologies.

This reading of the photographically reproduced contents of *Parallel of Life and Art* aligns with Roberts' argument that the readymade 'not only questions what constitutes the labour of the artist, but brings the labour of others – ideally at least – into view.'⁹³ When encountering the readymade images in the gallery, 'The spectator sees – simultaneously – an absence of palpable artistic labour, the presence of the palpable labour of others, and the presence of immaterial or intellectual labour.'⁹⁴ This is why the

introduction of readymade elements into art in the earlier part of the twentieth century proved so controversial; the readymade ‘dared to expose the necessary labour which makes artistic labour possible’ thereby drawing attention to the work of ‘those whose labour is invariably judged as repetitive, and subordinate to the “mysteries” of creation: workers.’⁹⁵ In *Parallel of Life and Art*, the dialogue between Henderson’s photographic experiments and the readymade photographic images that comprised the surrounding hang further complicated the distinction between art and non-art, between artist and non-artist. As an artistic research material, the photographic image occupies a position at the boundary between these binaries. It becomes the translucent interface between categories, and as such a site of mediation and exchange.

Editorial collaboration and a logic of juxtaposition

Henderson’s work on *Parallel of Life and Art* was not only framed by his ‘Painter and Photographer’ title, but also by the collective nouns that the collaborators’ chose to describe their efforts in compiling and installing the contents of the display [fig. 82].

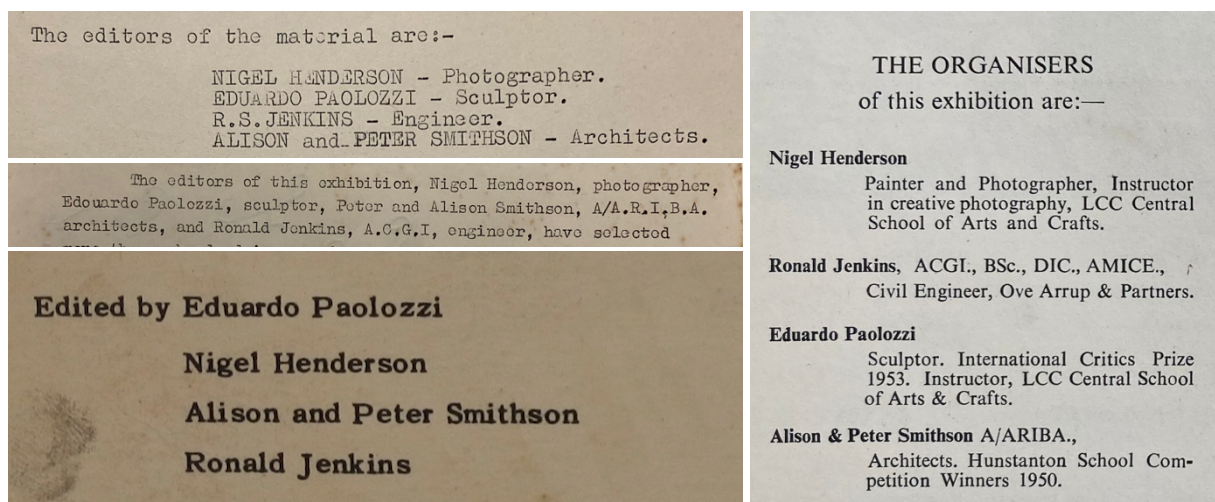


Figure 82. Top left: Memorandum, 27 March 1953. Middle left: Press release, 31 August 1953. Bottom left: Private view invitation, 10 September 1953. Right: Exhibition catalogue, back cover. Nigel Henderson Estate. Photos: Rosie Ram.

As well as showing them grappling with the question of how to describe their individual roles, their planning and marketing documents demonstrate the collaborators’ approach to choosing a title for their joint position. On the ICA memorandum, the press release, and the private view invitation, they select the term ‘editors’ to characterise their collaborative work, before reverting to the term ‘organisers’ on the back cover of the catalogue.⁹⁶ The term ‘editors’, therefore, seems to serve as a provisional placeholder, a

title in which to hold the uncertain identity of their collaborative work sharing, selecting, and ‘scrutinising’ images photographically at 46 Chisenhale Road.

The term editor commonly refers to someone working on a magazine, journal, newspaper, book, or film, who manages the sourcing, compilation, and presentation of material, whether image or text. The *Parallel of Life and Art* catalogue points to various types of edited publication as sources for the exhibition: magazines, including *Life Magazine*, *National Geographic Magazine*, and *Art News*; books, such as *Cassells Book of Knowledge*, and *Thornton’s Book of Vegetable Anatomy*; newspapers, including the *Irish Times*; as well as specialist journals and trade periodicals, such as the *Journal of the Iron & Steel Industry*, the *Journal of Applied Physics*, and the *National Geological Survey*. As they sifted through this material, selecting, extracting, and altering images, the collaborators chose a working title that placed their efforts in line with the labour of the professionals who had produced many of the print publications with which they were engaging. In choosing the collective noun ‘editors’, they thereby drew a comparison between their own methods and those from the professional fields of graphic design and publishing, such as the use of pasteups, photostats and clipping.⁹⁷ What is more, they appear to place their collaborative efforts into dialogue with these other workers. For Roberts, ‘collaboration is the means whereby the labour *in* the artwork is made conspicuous and critical.’⁹⁸ It seems that for the *Parallel of Life and Art* team, their editorial collaboration made the labour in their found images conspicuous and critical.

The Namuth-Pollock picture may have appealed to Henderson, Jenkins, Paolozzi and the Smithsons due to its relationship to editing and to the printed arts publications in which such images first appeared. Namuth’s photographs of Pollock in his studio were initially published in the graphic arts journal *Portfolio* in Spring 1951 [fig. 83].⁹⁹ This issue included articles on stereoscopic imagery, marbled paper, calligraphy, Ben Shahn, Henri Cartier-Bresson, and Alexander Calder, and came with 3-D stereoscopic viewing spectacles. The text on Pollock follows the standard, heroizing narrative, positioning the painter as an iconoclastic figure whose macho approach to his canvases is guided by his primal instincts. Yet, the graphic design departs from this exclusive enthrallment to the artist by instead dramatically emphasising the photographic nature of Namuth’s images. A two-page spread presents the shots of Pollock painting in a form that is analogous to a contact sheet or film reel, placing his darting movements around his canvas into dialogue with the quick, sequential clicks of the camera’s shutter. In the

following spread, the painter's drip marks are flipped between white on black and black on white, echoing the tonal inversion of photographic negative and positive. These images dominate the piece, relegating the text to a less dynamic, more conformist role.

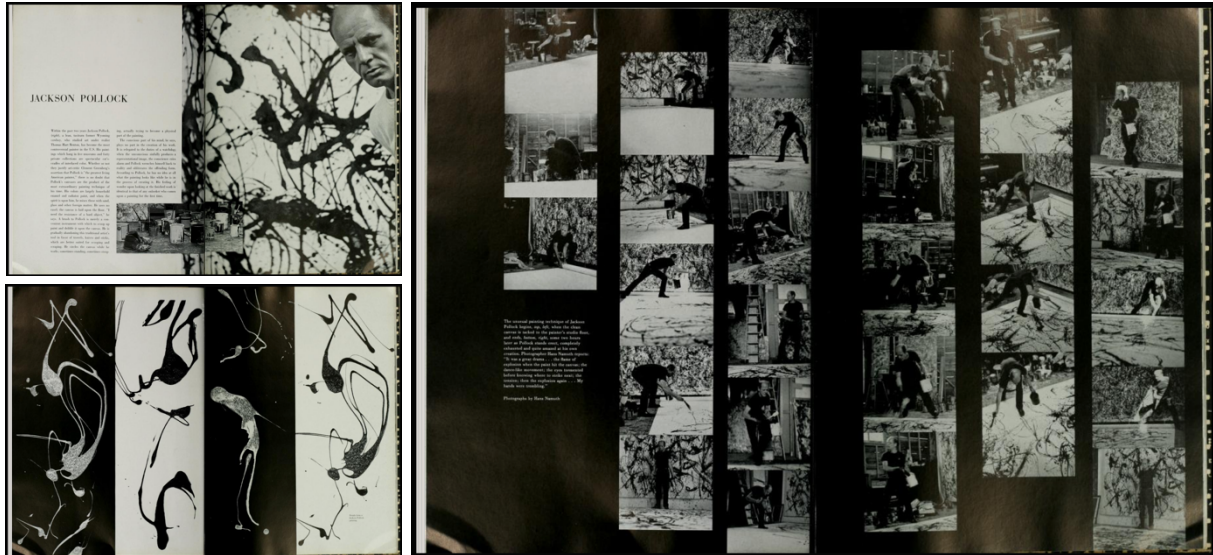


Figure 83. 'Jackson Pollock' in *Portfolio*, vol. 1, no. 3, Spring 1951, 76–80. Internet Archive. Photos: Internet Archive.

A further selection of Namuth's shots of Pollock were published not long later in the pages of *Art News* in May 1951, as part of the magazine's well-established 'Painter Paints a Picture' series, titled 'Pollock Paints a Picture', and written by critic Robert Goodnough.¹⁰⁰ Importantly, Kalb points to a crucial disjuncture between Goodnough's text and Namuth's photographs, whereby the artworks discussed in the written piece are not those depicted in the illustrations. For Kalb, this evidences a ground-breaking editorial decision by the *Art News* editor Thomas B. Hess to allow the written article and the photography to misalign, which sees Namuth's photographs departing from a purely illustrative function. Kalb argues that this 'demonstrated a radical shift in how *ARTNews* treated photography, presenting it here as an independent art form not confined to providing evidence of painterly or sculptural creativity or executing editorial demands.'¹⁰¹ Namuth's images thereby challenge the 'relegation of the photograph to explanatory device.'¹⁰² Within *Parallel of Life and Art*, this rupture between image and text is taken to its logical conclusion: written explanation was excluded from the gallery space, thus liberating the photographic images from their once subservient role to text.

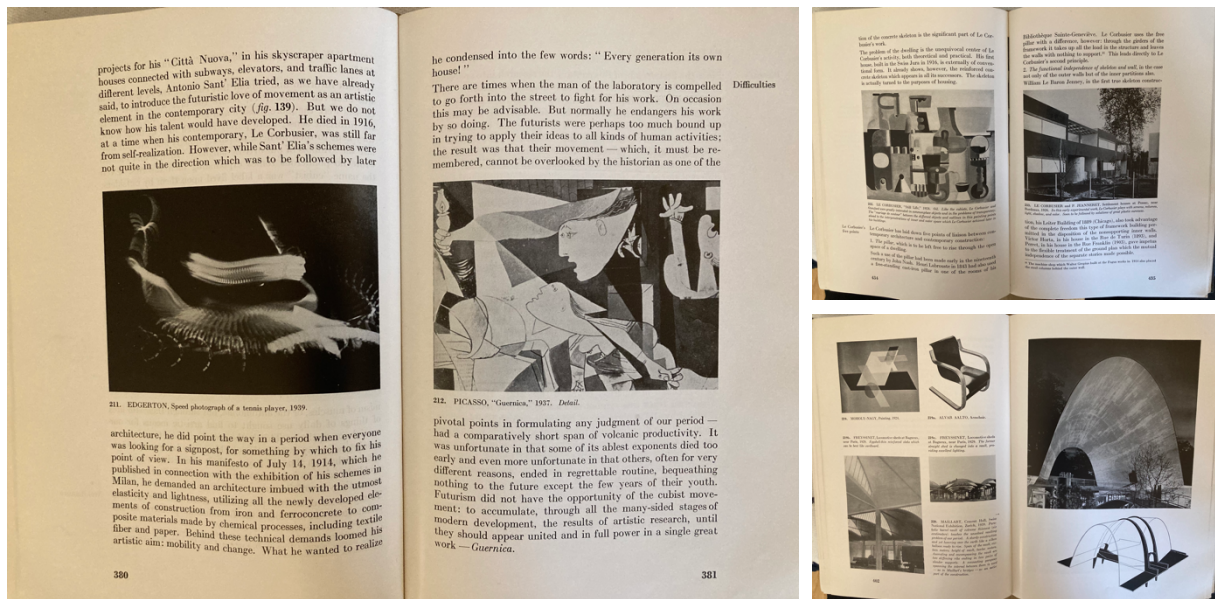


Figure 84. Sigfried Giedion, *Space, Time and Architecture*, 1941. Photos: Rosie Ram.

Another crucial precedent in relation to their work of editing is Sigfried Giedion's *Space, Time and Architecture* (1941), Henderson's copy of which remains at the Kings Head [fig. 84]. While Giedion's opus *Mechanization Takes Command* (1948) is more widely cited in the literature on *Parallel of Life and Art*, this earlier text may have played an even greater role in shaping Henderson's contribution to the group's 'editorial' method. *Space, Time and Architecture* was itself a collaborative endeavour, with Herbert Bayer working on the layouts and László Moholy-Nagy advising Giedion on the design. In an introductory section of the book headed 'The identity of methods' is a paragraph labelled 'Unconscious parallelisms of method in science and art', in which Giedion writes,

'From the first decade of this century on, we encounter curious parallelisms of method in the separate realms of thought and feeling, science and art. Problems whose roots lie entirely in our time are being treated in similar ways, even when their subject matter is very different and their solutions are arrived at independently.'¹⁰³

He argues that modern culture cannot be studied without examining the underlying methods that drive forward research in different fields. According to Giedion, modern developments in science should be studied in relation to parallel developments in the arts. For him, identifying the 'methods of approach underlying creative research' is a way of working against the blinkeredness of disciplinarity and the increasing splintering of knowledge into separate specialisms.¹⁰⁴ He writes that both modern art

and science should recognise ‘the fact that observation and what is observed form one complex situation – to observe something is to act upon it and alter it.’¹⁰⁵ Giedion’s thesis offers a means of understanding the methodology of *Parallel of Life and Art*, both in terms of the ‘curious parallelisms’ between the comparable and yet incommensurate imagery, the group’s creative approach to observation, and their generation of an obscure, negational kind of knowledge without a predetermined disciplinary domain.

As Gregor Harbusch notes, Giedion’s approach to *Space, Time and Architecture* was explicitly editorial in that ‘arranging texts and illustrations on the book pages was at least as important as the contents’.¹⁰⁶ Harbusch observes that Giedion ‘organised the book by adding thematic headings in the margins; and, finally, he personally either produced or acquired all the requisite images then positioned them.’¹⁰⁷ Furthermore, Harbusch notes that a critical aspect of Giedion’s approach was creating ‘the provocative juxtapositions of images in the book’.¹⁰⁸ Indeed, these juxtaposed image pairs are key to the book’s editorial strategy. As Harbusch observes, ‘Pairs of contrasting images are the conceptual backbone of the book. Giedion particularly sought to place phenomena from various epochs and artistic genres side by side’.¹⁰⁹ For Harbusch, *Space, Time and Architecture* signified a newly transdisciplinary and comparative approach to modern scholarship, directed towards a wider audience than that traditionally addressed by discipline-specific publications, with the photographic images serving as a modern idiom. *Space, Time and Architecture* presented the *Parallel of Life and Art* collaborators with an important example of innovative ‘editorial’ work. Again, the photographic image was liberated from serving a purely supplementary or illustrative purpose.

Furthermore, this kind of editorial approach is demonstrated in Henderson’s scrapbook [fig. 85]. Across its pages, cuttings are predominantly shown as neat squares and rectangles, glued down in loosely gridded arrangements rather than collaged together as composites. This visual strategy emphasises the interactions between cuttings, without fusing them into consolidated pictorial forms. Moreover, it offers an openness to multiple and contrasting readings. Meaning is created relationally across the scrapbook’s pages, while leaving ample blank space for uncertainty and the possibility for further additions and editorial reconfigurations. Notably, text captions are absent.



Figure 85. Nigel Henderson, scrapbook, c. 1951-54. Nigel Henderson Estate. Photo: Nigel Henderson Estate.

Space, Time and Architecture demonstrates the potential for image juxtapositions to create a complex kind of knowledge, beyond that possible within the written text. The concept of juxtaposition relies on both similarity and difference, congruity and incongruence, and on the conjunction of material that is both comparable and contrasting. The aesthetic effect and conceptual logic of juxtaposition was critical for the *Parallel of Life and Art* team. On their memorandum, they state, ‘The method used will be to juxtapose photo-enlargements [...] The images themselves cannot be so arranged as to form a consecutive statement, instead they will establish the intricate series of cross relationships that exist between different fields of art and technics.’¹¹⁰ In their press release, they further emphasise that the images ‘create a series of cross-relationships’ within the exhibition.¹¹¹ Like Roberts’ notion of art’s negational ‘trajectories of escape’, this notion of juxtaposition suggests a constant movement of alignment and misalignment, of simultaneously pulling together and pushing apart, a concurrent departure and return. This seems to have been the aspect of *Parallel of Life and Art’s* that so frustrated its critics.

For Henderson, however, the exhibition provided a critical context in which the kinds of two-dimensional, sequential juxtapositions he constructed in his scrapbook could be extrapolated within three-dimensional space and interlaced with his own darkroom experiments. Here, the exhibition form appears to have been vital for realising this spatialised network of image juxtapositions. Yet, Henderson, Jenkins, Paolozzi and the Smithsons did not embark upon their collaborative research at 46 Chisenhale road with the exhibition form in mind; rather, they came to the idea belatedly. Having spent a significant period amassing their image data, Henderson reflects that,

‘I’ve no doubt one of us approached Roland [Penrose], to see whether the thing could be presented as an exhibition; we’d already decided we’d like to use photography as a medium to hold the whole thing together. It was O.K.ed. I think we all felt people were a bit nervous of us, that perhaps we were thought to be a bit harum-scarum, unsure of our ground. We felt this nervousness and fought it off. We felt we had quite a head of pressure, we wanted to find the expressive form of it as we went along.’¹¹²

The exhibition thereby becomes a vehicle for finding ‘expressive form’, despite their own and others’ trepidations. For Roberts, art is able to remain ‘protean’ because of its capacity to harness form ‘as *a process of subjective resistance and struggle*.’¹¹³ He defines artistic form as ‘the ways in which art finds its sensuous and intellectual place in the world. [...] the very nature of how, and under what conditions, art might *appear* in the world.’¹¹⁴ In the case of *Parallel of Life and Art*, it seems that the exhibition was the form in which their artistic research could be presented and tested as a negation of the museological conventions of art. The gallery was emptied out of painting and sculpture and refilled with photographic images, presented as an unsettling kind of visual data, operating at the interface between established kinds of knowledge from more official disciplinary and professional fields. Here, the exhibition becomes the ‘expressive form’ for the inchoate and obfuscating research methodologies developed underground at the Central School and in the strange field station of 46 Chisenhale Road.

The exhibition as image, the image as research method

Henderson makes one final move in defining his relationship with *Parallel of Life and Art*. Having occupied the position of ‘Photographer’ individually and ‘Editor’ collectively in the planning and marketing documents, and ‘Painter and Photographer’ on the catalogue, he then appears to revert to his original title of photographer to capture the display. The exhibition is therefore returned to the ongoing processes of artistic research from which it emerged. Drawing upon Fisher’s writing, these photographic images create strange loops and tangles in cause and effect that generate ‘confusions of ontological level’, whereby the photograph of the exhibition, which ‘was at a supposedly inferior ontological level’ to the exhibition itself, ‘threatens to climb up out of its subordinated position and claim equal status with the level above’.¹¹⁵ Fisher’s notion of such ontological disorientations provides a cogent paradigm through which to read the interlayering of found images, photographic reproductions, negatives and positives that were mobilised throughout the research work looping through *Parallel of Life and Art* and connecting the exhibition with the separate contexts of the Central School and 46 Chisenhale Road.

This return of *Parallel of Life and Art* to the status of photographic image itself can be demonstrated by studying the negatives of the photographs that Henderson took of the ICA display [fig. 86], which are now held in the archive at Tate under conditions of highly restricted access. As the most comprehensive surviving record of the hang, these images are widely reproduced in positive form throughout the literature on art and exhibition histories of the post-war period. However, as Victoria Walsh has argued, they have an ‘aesthetic and strategic value’ in their own right, which is widely overlooked. They hold, she claims, a ‘primary function consistent with the logic of the exhibition itself’.¹¹⁶ Building upon Walsh’s analysis, I would argue that these photographs of the display return *Parallel of Life and Art* to the status of the photographic image in its primal negative form. The function of these negatives *as negatives*, however, is fundamentally neglected due to the suppression of photographic negativity in museological space.



Figure 86. Nigel Henderson, photographs of *Parallel of Life and Art*, ICA, 1953. Tate, TGA 9211/5/2/78, TGA 9211/5/2/56, TGA 9211/5/2/71, TGA 9211/5/2/77. Photos: Rosie Ram.

At Tate, many of Henderson's negatives showing the hang of *Parallel of Life and Art* are kept in a folder labelled 'NEGATIVES DO NOT USE, PLEASE USE PRINTS ONLY' [fig. 87]. These prints show positive iterations of the images, as do the digital renderings online. The negatives thereby become an absent presence within the museum.

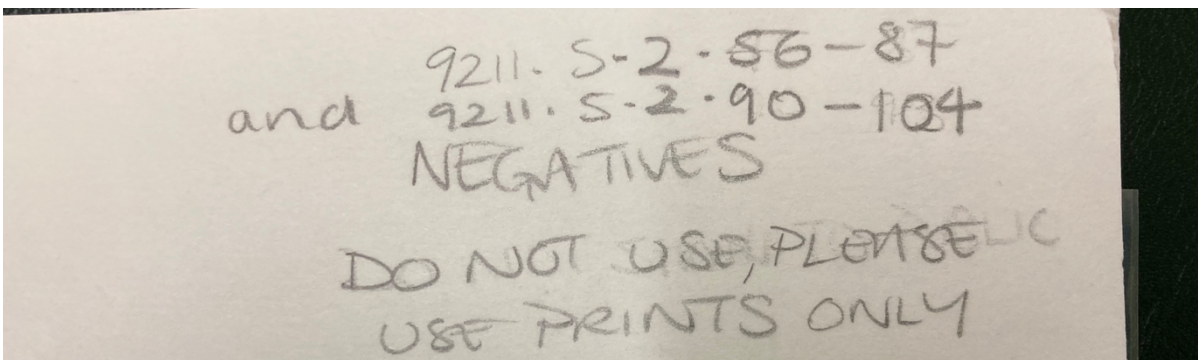


Figure 87. Archival folder. Tate, TGA 9211/5/2/56-87 and TGA, 9211/5/2/90-104. Photo: Rosie Ram.

The renunciative force of negational art persists, Roberts argues, despite the likelihood – even the inevitability – of its semi-assimilation into artistic tradition, the art museum, and art market capitalism over the course of time. Yet, while many negational works and practices do eventually become ‘tolerated and accepted’ in these contexts, he asserts, the dominant culture still ‘finds it hard, or even impossible, to give *assent* to their content’. Such content, Roberts claims, thus remains ‘lodged in renunciative spaces that capitalism finds too difficult to penetrate and mediate.’¹¹⁷ In the archive at Tate, the term ‘Exhibition Photographs’ in relation to *Parallel of Life and Art*’s unwieldy contents and the exhibition’s negational form seems to name to one such ‘renunciative space’. The archive – already a more marginal zone within the museum – tolerates the photographically replicated, incomplete cluster of images in a way that the collection cannot, yet the logic of the museum cannot quite penetrate nor mediate these negational research materials, particularly in their negative form. They become both materially and conceptually frozen in museological space. In my next chapter, I turn to these darkly translucent and tonally inverted research materials, which, I argue, provide the material, technological and conceptual basis of Henderson’s practice. Critically, I show how these negatives operated at the very hinge of the artist’s spatially and temporally extended investigative work throughout the 1950s, connecting *Parallel of Life and Art* in 1953 with *Patio and Pavilion* in 1956.

¹ Nigel Henderson, ‘POLAA [Parallel of Life and Art] Exhibition Photographs’. Tate, TGA 9211/5/2.

² Nigel Henderson, ‘POLAA Exhibition Photographic Panels’. Tate, TGA 9211/5/3.

³ Each of these documents can be found at the Kings Head among the private holdings of the Nigel Henderson Estate. They include: a memorandum that was circulated at the ICA, dated 27 March 1953; a press release, titled *Parallel of Life and Art: Indications of a new visual order*, dated 31 August 1953; an invitation to the private view, titled *Parallel of Life and Art: An exhibition of documents through the medium of photography*, for an opening on 10 September 1953; and the catalogue, titled *Parallel of Life and Art*, which was distributed at the gallery when the exhibition opened on 11 September 1953.

⁴ Press release, *Parallel of Life and Art: Indications of a new visual order*, 31 August 1953. Nigel Henderson Estate.

⁵ Nigel Henderson, Ronald Jenkins, Eduardo Paolozzi, Alison and Peter Smithson, *Parallel of Life and Art* (London: Institute of Contemporary Arts, 1953).

⁶ Quoted in Victoria Walsh, *Nigel Henderson: Parallel of Life and Art* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2001), 89.

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- ⁷ Tom Hopkinson, 'Parallel of Life and Art: An Exhibition of Photographic Enlargements', *Manchester Guardian*, 22 September 1953.
- ⁸ Hopkinson.
- ⁹ David Sylvester, 'Round the London Art Galleries', *The Listener*, 24 September 1953, 512.
- ¹⁰ Sylvester, 512.
- ¹¹ Nigel Henderson, handwritten notes for talk on *Parallel of Life and Art*, titled 'A discussion on the implications of the exhibition' during the 'Evening Forum 3' at the Architectural Association School of Architecture, 54-6 Bedford Square, 2 December 7pm, 1953. Tate, TGA 9211.5.1.5.
- ¹² Nigel Henderson, handwritten notes for talk on *Parallel of Life and Art*. Tate, TGA 9211.5.1.5.
- ¹³ Reyner Banham, 'Parallel of Life and Art', *The Architectural Review* 114, no. 682 (October 1953): 259.
- ¹⁴ Banham, 259.
- ¹⁵ Banham, 259.
- ¹⁶ Banham, 259–61.
- ¹⁷ Banham, 259.
- ¹⁸ Banham, 260.
- ¹⁹ Banham, 260.
- ²⁰ Banham, 260.
- ²¹ Mark Fisher, *The Weird and the Eerie* (London: Repeater Books, 2016), 13.
- ²² 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 (1 August 2013): 226.
- ²³ Walsh, *Nigel Henderson*, 95.
- ²⁴ Walsh, 'Reordering and Redistributing the Visual', 235.
- ²⁵ Walsh, 237.
- ²⁶ Walsh, 237.
- ²⁷ Ben Highmore, *The Art of Brutalism: Rescuing Hope from Catastrophe in 1950s Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 30.
- ²⁸ Highmore, 31.
- ²⁹ Highmore, 32.
- ³⁰ Highmore, 32.
- ³¹ Highmore, 32–33.
- ³² Roberts, 'Art and Its Negations', 290.
- ³³ Roberts, 291.
- ³⁴ Roberts, 297.

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- ³⁵ Roberts, 289–90.
- ³⁶ John Roberts, *Revolutionary Time and the Avant-Garde* (London: Verso, 2015), 56.
- ³⁷ Roberts, ‘Art and Its Negations’, 291.
- ³⁸ Roberts, 291.
- ³⁹ Roberts, *Revolutionary Time and the Avant-Garde*, 52.
- ⁴⁰ Roberts, ‘Art and Its Negations’, 289–90.
- ⁴¹ Roberts, 294.
- ⁴² Roberts, 302.
- ⁴³ Roberts, 302.
- ⁴⁴ Walsh, ‘Reordering and Redistributing the Visual’, 225–26.
- ⁴⁵ Even today, the archive of the early ICA, the material trace of its past, is housed off-site at Tate. Thus, the ICA remains hollowed of its own history.
- ⁴⁶ Jones, *Machine in the Studio: Constructing the Postwar American Artist*, 72.
- ⁴⁷ Fred Orton and Griselda Pollock, ‘Jackson Pollock, Painting, and the Myth of Photography’, *Art History* 6, no. 1 (1983): 117.
- ⁴⁸ Orton and Pollock, 119.
- ⁴⁹ Peter R Kalb, ‘Picturing Pollock: Photography’s Challenge to the Historiography of Abstract Expressionism’, *Journal of Art Historiography* 7 (2012): 5.
- ⁵⁰ Kalb, 14.
- ⁵¹ Kalb, 4.
- ⁵² Kalb, 4.
- ⁵³ Kalb, 4.
- ⁵⁴ Kalb, 14.
- ⁵⁵ Kalb, 1.
- ⁵⁶ Kalb, 1.
- ⁵⁷ Kalb, 4.
- ⁵⁸ Kalb, 2.
- ⁵⁹ Kalb, 6.
- ⁶⁰ Orton and Pollock, ‘Jackson Pollock, Painting, and the Myth of Photography’, 118.
- ⁶¹ Nigel Henderson, handwritten notes for talk on *Parallel of Life and Art*, titled ‘A discussion on the implications of the exhibition’ during the ‘Evening Forum 3’ at the Architectural Association School of Architecture, 54-6 Bedford Square, 7pm, 2 December 1953. Tate, TGA 9211.5.1.7.

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- ⁶² Henderson also used a M. P. P. Micro-Press 5 x 4 inch plate camera at this time. His photographs (positive prints and negatives) of *Parallel of Life and Art* demonstrate that he used both cameras to capture the installation at the ICA.
- ⁶³ Orton and Pollock, 'Jackson Pollock, Painting, and the Myth of Photography', 119.
- ⁶⁴ Kalb, 'Picturing Pollock: Photography's Challenge to the Historiography of Abstract Expressionism', 7.
- ⁶⁵ Kalb, 7.
- ⁶⁶ Kalb, 12.
- ⁶⁷ In such slideshows, sheets of glass were inserted into a lantern sequentially, with light projected through the device to reveal their images, much like Henderson's use of glass negatives in his photographic enlarger.
- ⁶⁸ Nigel Henderson, handwritten notes for talk on *Parallel of Life and Art*. Tate, TGA 9211.5.1.7.
- ⁶⁹ John Roberts, 'Art and Its Negations', *Third Text* 24, no. 3 (1 May 2010): 297.
- ⁷⁰ Roberts, 298.
- ⁷¹ John Roberts, *The Intangibilities of Form: Skill and Deskilling in Art After the Readymade* (London; New York: Verso, 2007), 24.
- ⁷² Roberts, 89.
- ⁷³ Roberts, 'Art and Its Negations', 299.
- ⁷⁴ Roberts, 299.
- ⁷⁵ Roberts, 299.
- ⁷⁶ Nigel Henderson interviewed by Chris Mullen, *Norwich Now* film recording, 1983.
- ⁷⁷ Nigel Henderson interviewed by Chris Mullen.
- ⁷⁸ Roberts, *The Intangibilities of Form*, 97.
- ⁷⁹ Roberts, 98.
- ⁸⁰ Roberts, 55.
- ⁸¹ Roberts, 55.
- ⁸² Roberts, 56–57.
- ⁸³ Roberts, 56.
- ⁸⁴ Roberts, 62.
- ⁸⁵ Roberts, 56–57.
- ⁸⁶ Dawn Ades et al., *Marcel Duchamp* (New York, N.Y.: Thames and Hudson, 1999), 89–90.
- ⁸⁷ Ades et al., 94.
- ⁸⁸ Ades et al., 89–90.
- ⁸⁹ Duchamp made the *Coffee Grinder* as decoration for his brother's kitchen.

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- ⁹⁰ Anne d'Harnoncourt and Kynaston McShine, *Marcel Duchamp* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1973), 256.
- ⁹¹ Sidney Janis and Harriet Janis, 'Marcel Duchamp: Anti-Artist (1945)', in *The Dada Painters and Poets: An Anthology.*, ed. Robert Motherwell (New York: Wiltenborn, Schultz, 1951), 312.
- ⁹² Janis and Janis, 312.
- ⁹³ Roberts, *The Intangibilities of Form*, 24.
- ⁹⁴ Roberts, 25.
- ⁹⁵ Roberts, 25.
- ⁹⁶ Memorandum, ICA, 27 March 1953; Press release, *Parallel of Life and Art: Indications of a new visual order*, ICA, 31 August 1953; Invitation to the private view, *Parallel of Life and Art: An exhibition of documents through the medium of photography*, ICA, 10 September 1953; *Parallel of Life and Art*, exhibition catalogue, ICA, 11 September 1953. Nigel Henderson Estate.
- ⁹⁷ Craig Buckley, *Graphic Assembly: Montage, Media, and Experimental Architecture in the 1960s* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2019), 41.
- ⁹⁸ John Roberts, 'Collaboration as a Problem of Art's Cultural Form', *Third Text* 18, no. 6 (1 November 2004): 564.
- ⁹⁹ Frank Zachary, George S. Rosenthal, and Alexey Brodovich, eds., 'Jackson Pollock', *Portfolio; the Annual of the Graphic Arts* 1, no. 3 (Spring 1951): 76–80.
- ¹⁰⁰ Robert Goodnough, 'Pollock Paints a Picture', *Art News* (May 1951).
- ¹⁰¹ Kalb, 'Picturing Pollock: Photography's Challenge to the Historiography of Abstract Expressionism', 7.
- ¹⁰² Kalb, 13.
- ¹⁰³ Sigfried Giedion, *Space, Time and Architecture: The Growth of a New Tradition* (Cambridge, USA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1942), 14.
- ¹⁰⁴ Giedion, 648.
- ¹⁰⁵ Giedion, 5–6.
- ¹⁰⁶ Gregor Harbusch, 'Work in Text and Images: Sigfried Giedion's Space, Time and Architecture, 1941–1967', *The Journal of Architecture* 20, no. 4 (4 July 2015): 596.
- ¹⁰⁷ Harbusch, 605–6.
- ¹⁰⁸ Harbusch, 597.
- ¹⁰⁹ Harbusch, 598.
- ¹¹⁰ Memorandum, ICA, 27 March 1953; Press release, *Parallel of Life and Art: Indications of a new visual order*, ICA, 31 August 1953.
- ¹¹¹ Press release, *Parallel of Life and Art: Indications of a new visual order*, ICA, 31 August 1953.

¹¹² Nigel Henderson interviewed by Dorothy Morland, 17 August 1976. Edited transcript of a tape of Nigel Henderson talking about the early years of the Institute of Contemporary Arts c. 1940s to late 1950s. Tate, TGA 955.1.14.6 2/3.

¹¹³ Roberts, 'Art and Its Negations', 293.

¹¹⁴ Roberts, 'Collaboration as a Problem of Art's Cultural Form', 557.

¹¹⁵ Fisher, *The Weird and the Eerie*, 54.

¹¹⁶ Walsh, 'Reordering and Redistributing the Visual', 235.

¹¹⁷ Roberts, 'Art and Its Negations', 292.

Chapter four: The negative time and space of photography

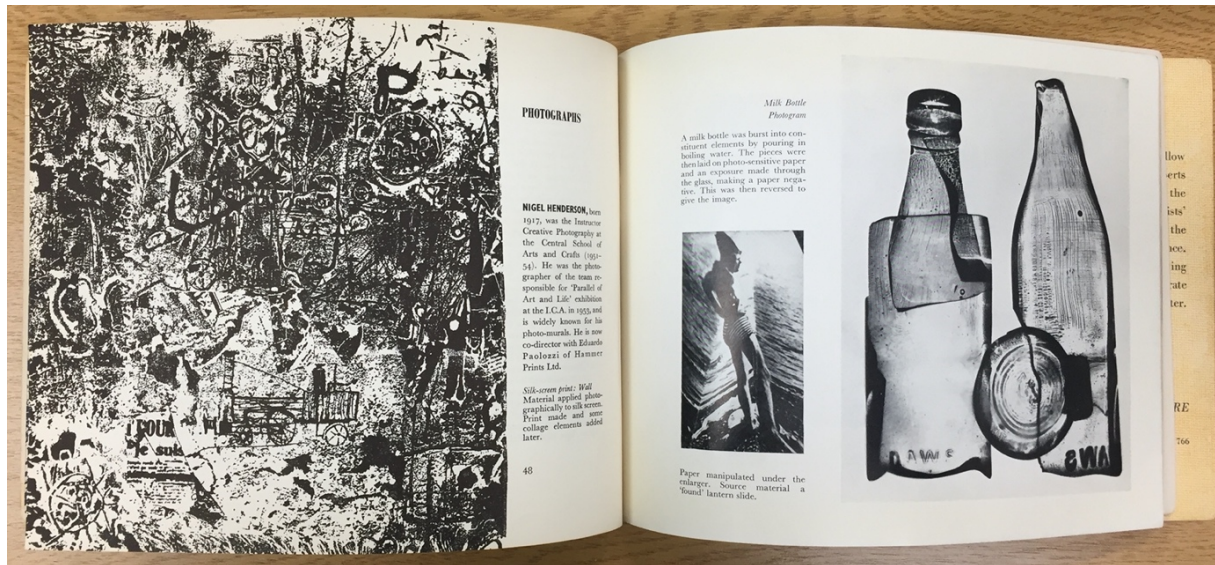


Figure 88. Nigel Henderson, 'Photographs', *Ark*, July 1956. Royal College of Art. Photo: Rosie Ram.

Among the remnants of Henderson's library at the Kings Head is issue seventeen of *Ark*, the student journal of the Royal College of Art (RCA) in London, published in July 1956. A contribution by Henderson, simply titled 'Photographs', is found towards the end of the issue [fig. 88].¹ Here, six of the artist's black and white photographic images are illustrated across two double-page spreads. Among this selection is an untitled photographic distortion depicting an anonymous male figure standing on an unknown shore. His profile is sharply defined against an endless horizon of sea, and his body is poised in contrapposto, with hands on hips. Cast in chiaroscuro, the figure's form stretches across the image like a shadow. The pattern on his striped bathing trunks echoes the striated waves, while a pile of discarded garments lies crumpled at his feet. Below, a brief caption reads 'Paper manipulated under the enlarger. Source material a "found" lantern slide.'² The image of the bather is doubly distorted by two concertina-like folds that warp the coastal scene down a vertical and diagonal axis. In the top right corner, it is cropped by a shard of black, where the manipulated paper and the 'found' slide that the artist used to make a negative are misaligned. This gestures to a disjunction between the negative and the positive when the two were held – momentarily – in parallel in the darkroom, allowing the image to transition between these states. The contortions of Henderson's bather indicate the malleability of the image as it is projected through the negative, and the creased texture of the print highlights the materiality of the photosensitive paper upon which the positive is fixed.



Figure 89. Left: Detail of Nigel Henderson, photograph of dresser at 46 Chisenhale Road, 1953. Nigel Henderson Estate. Right: Detail of Nigel Henderson, photographs of *Parallel of Life and Art*, ICA, 1953. Nigel Henderson Estate. Photos: Rosie Ram.

The distorted bather featured in *Ark* offers an echo of one we have seen elsewhere. A photographic print of the same figure was positioned within the informal, miniaturised, and highly partial staging of *Parallel of Life and Art* that was presented along the shelves of Henderson's dresser at 46 Chisenhale Road [fig. 89, left]. And it derives from the same series as the triptych of distorted shots of male bathers that was pinned onto the gallery wall within the official presentation of the exhibition at the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA) in 1953 [fig. 89, right]. Whereas in *Ark* the 'source material' used to create the distorted bather is described enigmatically as having been 'found', in the catalogue for *Parallel of Life and Art* slightly more detail is provided. Here, the shots are categorised under the heading 'Stress' and classified as 'Distortion of Victorian Lantern slide. Nigel Henderson'.³

Later, Henderson reflected that, in the early 1950s, he often 'bought glass slides', and that 'From one of these Victorian slides (an amateur shot of swimmers) I did a lot of distortions.'⁴ This was also an activity he recommended to those attending his Creative Photography classes in his underground darkroom at the Central School. In his teaching notes from 1951, he writes, 'To intensify visual consciousness good negatives (19th cent. Lantern slides excellent) can be very highly magnified. The student can then examine the "field" & "re-photograph" by accepting parts of the image upon small pieces of sensitised paper.'⁵ For Henderson, it seems that these 'excellent' negatives are of more value than the small pieces of sensitised paper upon which their various positive iterations are printed, which proliferate from the negative in the darkroom.

Henderson's distorted bather images are now widely dispersed: versions are woven through his photographs of *Parallel of Life and Art*, as well as appearing in the associated collage studies; replications survive in his photographs of 46 Chisenhale Road; an example circulates within the issue of *Ark*; a grouping of prints remain in the holdings at the Kings Head; and two are held in the collection at Tate and presented on the museum's website, becoming exponentially reproducible in digital space.



Figure 90. Nigel Henderson, *Stressed Photograph of a Bather*, c. 1950. Tate. Left: P79311. Right: P79310. Photos: Tate.

In the collection at Tate, both iterations are titled *Stressed Photograph of a Bather* and dated c. 1950. One, P79311 [fig. 90, left], is the exact same version of the distorted bather that is reproduced in *Ark*; the other, P79310 [fig. 90, right], shows an alternative treatment of the image, this time differently distorted and tonally inverted into the negative. It is significant that these photographs were purchased by Tate in 2007 as artworks for the collection. At their time of production in the early 1950s, however, the Tate Gallery, as it was then titled, would not have considered such photographic works to be worthy of collecting. Today, stored within the collection and presented on the

museum's website, these photographic prints appear unequivocally as artworks. Yet, their elevation to the level of the collection obscures their relationship to the vast quantity of Henderson's photographic negatives and positives that are submerged within the archive at Tate or that remain in the holdings at the Kings Head. These photographic materials – which comprise the 'shadow archive' or 'missing mass' of his practice, to adopt Gregory Sholette's terms – disrupt the binary divisions of collection from archive, artwork from documentation, and product from practice.



Figure 91. Nigel Henderson, distorted photographic prints of bathers, c.1949-56. Nigel Henderson Estate. Photos: Rosie Ram.

At the Kings Head, the shifting, and unresolved nature of these bather images can more readily be observed [fig. 91]. Studied collectively, the prints suggest an intensive, manipulative interaction with the images of the bathers within the darkroom, as they transition between the materiality of the negative to the immateriality of the projected

image, to the materiality of the positive print. This is a process mediated by the photographic enlarger, which suspends and illuminates the negative and projects the image as light onto the photosensitive paper below.

Across this sequence, the varying folds in the photosensitive paper distort and alter the images, squeezing and bulging some of the figures' limbs, while leaving other characters undisturbed. Different crops isolate some of the young men and eliminate others, splintering the coastal scene to extract multiple, contorted realities from the single source, thereby 'accepting parts of the image' as Henderson describes. The pictures flip between positive and negative, in some instances bleaching out the bodies and casting the water behind them into inky darkness. Throughout the sequence, the photosensitive paper and negative frequently misalign, creating concertinaed edges and crops inside the images, and giving a sense of internal superimpositions and divisions. With every alteration, Henderson pursues a kind of strenuous extraction process, pitilessly pulling and twisting the image, and wringing emphasis from different aspects of the composition. In the holdings at the Kings Head, these prints are kept in a somewhat tattered condition. They do not seem to have been treated as artworks, but rather as the material residues from a concentrated process of photographic investigation.

Suspended at the centre of all of Henderson's distorting experiments with these bather figures are the photographic negatives that he made from the found glass lantern slides. Henderson kept many of these negatives and slides in small glassine envelopes marked 'Bathers', carefully preserving these technologies as a vital source of experimentation. Several of the negatives and slides, with their accompanying glassine envelopes, are now held in the archive at Tate [fig. 92]. Studying them there gives a sense of the distinctive materiality of these central elements of Henderson's practice, and their marked difference from the opaque, positive photographic prints. The negatives are strikingly small and delicate items. Not only are they imprinted with intricately detailed, ghostly pictures in miniature, but these pictures are tonally inverted and translucent. This translucency gives them a spectral materiality, and an unfixed sense of temporality and spatiality.



Figure 92. Top row: Nigel Henderson, envelopes labelled 'bathers'. Tate, TGA 2011/5/2. Middle row: glass slide and glass negative. Tate, TGA 2011/5/2. Bottom row: plastic film negatives. Tate, TGA 2011/5/2 and TGA 201011/5/1. Photos: Rosie Ram.

Despite the ephemerality of these items, their primary position as the source from which Henderson's printed distortions of bathers proliferated challenges the conventional understanding of the negative as having a secondary status in relation to the positive print. Instead, it is apparent that these more elusive materials operated as a critical locus for Henderson's artistic research practice in the 1950s.

However, these bather negatives and the slides from which they derive speak of photographic materialities, temporalities and spatialities that are highly unstable and thus irreconcilable with the logic of the museum. They do not operate according to the chronological time of art-historical lineage nor the capitalistic time of the art market, in which authorial attribution, origin points, and provenance can be secured. As images, they are permeable, reproducible, and reversable, and as objects they are similarly mercurial [fig. 93]. The technology of the negative was conceived as an impermanent conduit of the photographic image prior to its realisation as a positive print. It does not, therefore, lend itself to museological preservation and posterity. Indeed, many of Henderson's negatives are kept frozen in the archival cold storage at Tate to prevent their deterioration. This, of course, impedes access, handling, and curatorial visibility.

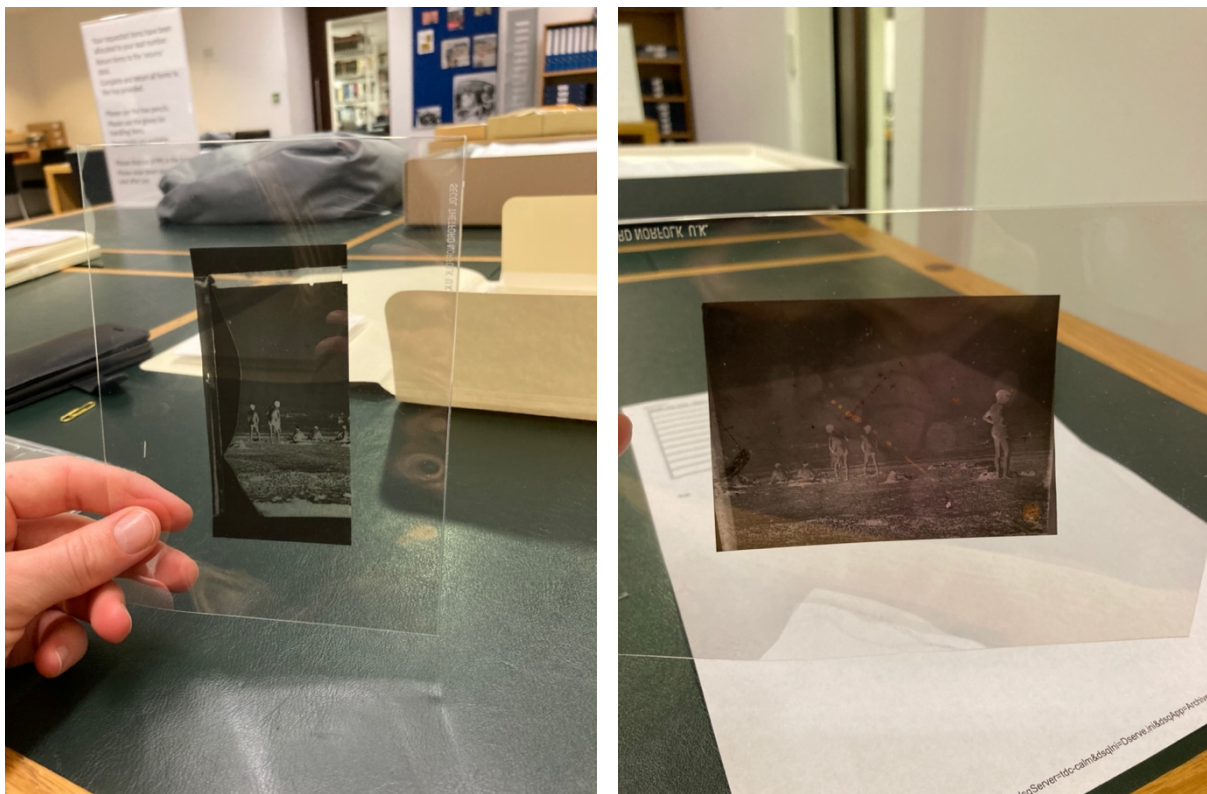


Figure 93. Nigel Henderson, plastic film negatives of bathers. Tate, TGA 2011/5/2. Photos: Rosie Ram.

Furthermore, these negatives speak of a hidden kind of practice, which does not readily offer itself to public display. The bather negatives convey a sense of privacy, which is accentuated by the voyeuristic perspective from which the figures are caught undressing, as well as the inverted, unnatural tonality and intimate scale of these scenes. Henderson later described how 'There is something a bit secret and shuttered about making an image. I am almost ashamed and very unsure. Assurance seems almost fraudulent where the light airs of conviction flip around in a jerky vortex'.⁶ Here,

in a series of oblique references to photographic technology, he appears to allude to the dark, shuttered space behind the camera's lens as well as the light that flips an image from negative to positive. Evidently, Henderson's engagement with the positive-negative duality of photography imbued his practice with a conception of images as inherently unstable, partially concealed interfaces between materialities, immaterialities, spatialities and temporalities, rather than as finite artistic forms.

In my introduction, I argued that Henderson's practice in post-war London should be reconceived as artistic research. Understood as such, I proposed that closer attention could be paid to the parts of his work that eschewed fixed attribution and the finality of artistic form and were instead oriented towards a processual mode of inquiry, which was authorially complex, replete with readymade elements, and highly technologised. Across my first three chapters, I have demonstrated that photography provided Henderson with a critical arena for interaction and negation, offering a means for this practice to both invoke and depart from the conditions it occupied, and to inhabit an interstitial position between the traditional category of art and other professional and academic fields. Throughout each of these chapters, the photographic images that Henderson deployed are not presented as artworks, but rather they are mobilised methodologically, as things that are procedural in character rather than products. In this chapter, I argue that Henderson not only adopted photography materially and technologically, but he also invoked its conceptual logic as a theoretical framework for his multi-sited and temporally extended practice in post-war London. Furthermore, I show how the photographic negative operated as the hidden nexus of this investigative work.

The negative-positive duality of photography

Whether on Tate's website, in the literature, or in exhibitions, Henderson's negatives are almost universally published as positive images. Consequently, the critical role of the negative within his work has been fundamentally neglected. In Geoffrey Batchen's book, *Negative/Positive: A History of Photography* (2021), he argues that, while photography is defined by the dualism of negative and positive, this inherent coupling is largely dismissed. Negatives are commonly treated as subsidiary to the positives they produce, Batchen observes, due to the former's perceived status as 'utilitarian tools, redolent with potential, remaining incomplete entities until and unless their tones are reversed'.⁷ Contrastingly, positive prints are understood to be 'entirely whole and

complete, an end product in and of themselves.⁷⁸ Thus, he argues, the negative is relegated to the shadows; it is ‘invisible, hidden away, without public presence, until such a time as a print is generated from it. That print is, strangely, a copy of an origin point that it does not resemble, a copy that is an othering of the negative image from which it is derived.’⁷⁹ This negative-positive duality maintains a fracture within the material, immaterial and conceptual foundation of photography, he asserts, meaning that photography is ‘always simultaneously divided and multiplied.’ For Batchen, the positive print cannot be understood without addressing the spectral presence of the negative as ‘the dark inverted other to the light-filled photograph,’¹⁰ which invites ‘an inversion of our usual way of looking.’¹¹

Photography’s state of suspension between division and multiplication poses a profound problem for the museum, which gives greatest credence to the singularity and stability of artworks, particularly when it comes to the identification of origin points, authorial attribution, and provenance. However, Batchen argues that photography’s negative-positive fracture ‘makes the search for the original print, or the privileging of the singular photograph or moment of exposure, a mission that is both illusory and ahistorical.’¹² Instead, he argues, ‘the complexity of photography’s identity is to be found in the spacing that separates and yet joins the negative to the photograph, the photograph to its image, and photography’s material aspects to its immaterial ones.’¹³

However, art histories of photography demonstrate a desire to pinpoint a moment of production, which is commonly aligned with the notion of the ‘vintage’ print.¹⁴ Yet, Batchen argues, ‘this emphasis on origins and a single exemplary print is precisely the political economy disrupted by the introduction of the medium of photography into modern culture.’¹⁵ Due to this privileging of the ‘vintage’ print as embodying the ‘original’, the negative is relegated to an inferior position; ‘although it comes first, temporally and spatially, the negative is almost always regarded as a secondary entity’¹⁶ Similarly, Daniel Palmer sees the ‘vintage print’ as embodying ‘all of the fetishizations of art objects: a single point of origin, a singular artistic vision, and the artist’s crafting hand,’ albeit a hand crafting the click of the camera’s shutter.¹⁷ Palmer also identifies the notion of the ‘vintage print’ as evidencing the efforts of the art market and the museum ‘to bridge the gap between conception and realization of an image’. As such, the ‘vintage print’ represents an attempt to elide photography’s temporalities and

spatialities by denying the lag of the photographic image as it moves from the dark cavity of the camera into the darkroom and onto the surface of the positive print.

Importantly, the spatial and temporal gap between negative and positive opens a zone for collaboration and authorial complexity. Palmer argues that there is ‘a crucial capacity for collaboration running through all photographic practice’.¹⁸ For Palmer, each stage of photographic image-making might involve multiple practitioners, in which ‘the act of seeing and recording an image is only the first.’¹⁹ Subsequent stages include, he suggests, ‘the selection of the latent image through a process of editing, the translation of that negative (or digital file) into a finished print (or viewable image), and its circulation through physical or virtual display’.²⁰ However, Palmer observes a tension between photography’s capacity for collaboration and the privileging of individual attribution by the museum and the market. Conforming to these priorities has, he argues, ‘prevented a better understanding of how photographs circulate and operate in the world, and severely limited the type of photographs considered worthy of study.’²¹ Furthermore, Palmer writes, this conformity ‘has fuelled the powerful stereotype of the solitary photographer’.²² Similarly, Batchen argues that art-historical accounts of photography predominantly adhere to a ‘masterpiece-driven form of narrative’,²³ whereby the history of photography is made to ‘obediently emulate the histories of non-reproducible mediums, such as painting’.²⁴ As Batchen states, ‘to decide who did what, to find the truth of the image by deciding which individual it properly belongs to, is a standard art-historical desire’, making ‘interpretation easier (meaning and biography are so quickly collapsed into each other) but also enhanc[ing] a picture’s value in the marketplace’.²⁵ Thus, the evidence of photography’s propensity for collaborative labour and collective authorship is critically and historically disregarded.

Because it poses a threat to the authority of the museum, as well as to the economies of art, the negative is not merely overlooked by the dominant narratives of art history, Batchen argues, it is actively suppressed. The negative is, he writes, an ‘unwelcome reminder of the act of reproduction [...] of photography’s lack of singularity, of its capacity for multiple copies and therefore for multiple authorship and divided ownership.’²⁶ Indeed, within the negative ‘every potential outcome is available but none is assured’.²⁷ Consequently, Batchen argues, the negative is ‘feared as the source of photography’s reproducibility and, therefore, of its potential for promiscuity and

impurity.²⁸ It thereby becomes ‘photography’s most dangerous element, the element to be feared, controlled, and, if possible, suppressed.’²⁹

More than that, negatives are framed by ‘pejorative language and metaphysical prejudice’,³⁰ Batchen observes, ensuring that they remain ‘the repressed, dark side of photography.’³¹ This implements a hierarchy, he claims, whereby ‘the very language used to make that division, *negative* and *positive*, is rhetorically infused with prejudice. The distinction between them therefore comes with a disparity in value; it represents a *political* as well as technical hierarchy.’³² Henderson’s practice, however, seems to invert this hierarchy and, in doing so, to destabilise the value disparity between the negative and positive. Instead, he invokes the ‘promiscuity and impurity’ of the photographic negative to activate images methodologically. Furthermore, the positive-negative duality of photography is critical for the dispersal of his research work across its spatially, temporally, and materially disparate zones of activity. In what follows, I consider how this inversion of the hierarchy that privileges the positive over the negative allows an inverted understanding of Henderson’s work in the post-war period and of the question of artistic research itself. Rather than approaching his practice through the positive images that are more commonly associated with his name, I investigate how his work might instead be analysed through the negative.

Photographic time and space

Batchen argues that the negative poses a fundamental threat to the authority of the positive print because it bears witness to the spatial and temporal divisions and dispersals inherent in photography. As both Batchen and Palmer assert, the negative also documents a period – a temporal and spatial lag – in photographic production that creates an opening for intervention and ‘retouching’, thus rupturing the claims of the positive print to immediacy and veracity as the direct, authorial representation of the scene captured by the photographer’s unique vision at the click of the camera’s shutter. For Henderson, such problems of photography’s temporality and spatiality were critical for his engagement with the image in its negative state.

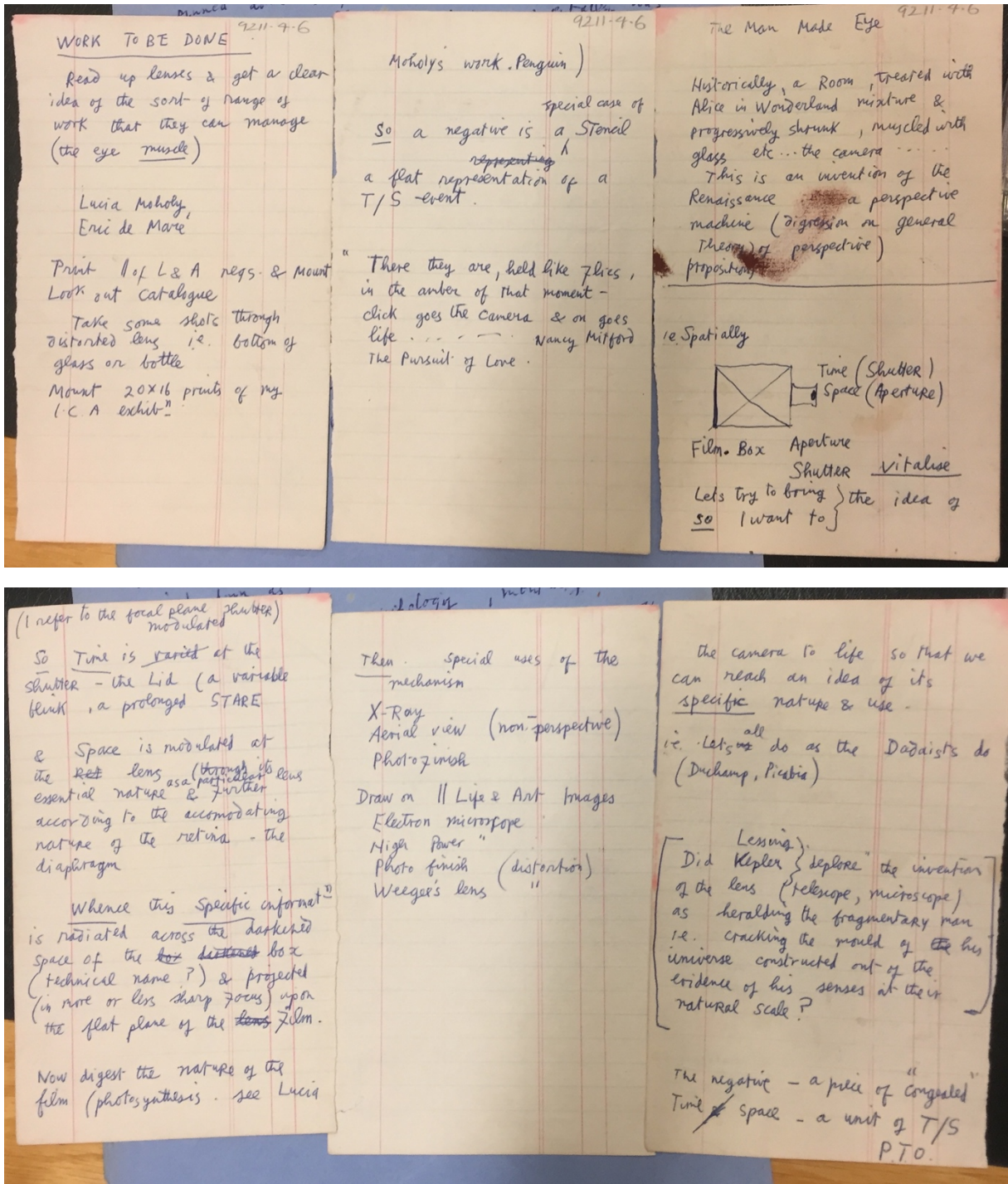


Figure 94. Nigel Henderson, three sheets of undated manuscript on photography, showing recto and verso of each sheet. Tate, TGA 9211/4/6. Photos: Rosie Ram.

In the archive at Tate, there are three, double-sided, loose manuscript sheets, which are grouped together [illustrated in fig. 94, rectos and versos].³³ Across these pages, Henderson grapples with the temporality and spatiality of photography and the function of the photographic negative within his practice. On one sheet, he writes “The negative – a piece of “congealed” Time/Space – a unit of T/S”. On the other side of this sheet, he

adds a rudimentary diagram of a camera, with annotations alongside that explain ‘Time (Shutter) Space (Aperture)’. On another sheet, this line of thought is extended further,

‘So Time is varied at the shutter – the Lid (a variable blink, a prolonged STARE D] & Space is modulated at the lens (through its essential nature as a particular lens & further according to the accommodating nature of the retina – the diaphragm [.] Whence this specific information is radiated across the darkened space of the box (technical name?) & projected (in more or less sharp focus) upon the flat plane of the film. Now digest the nature of the film (photosynthesis. See Lucia Moholy’s work. Penguin) So a negative is a special case of a stencil [.] a flat representation of a T/S event’³⁴

Here, he appears to be formulating an understanding of photographic time and space that is shaped by the mechanical and chemical properties of photography, whereby the shutter dissects time, and the lens modifies space. Once inside the camera, the representation of time and space that these technologies extract and internalise becomes ‘congealed’ within the negative itself, fused within the hidden, inverted zone inside photographic technology. Importantly, Henderson then returns this ‘flat representation’ of time and space to a tool more conventionally associated with technical draughtsmanship, describing the negative as ‘a special case of a stencil’.

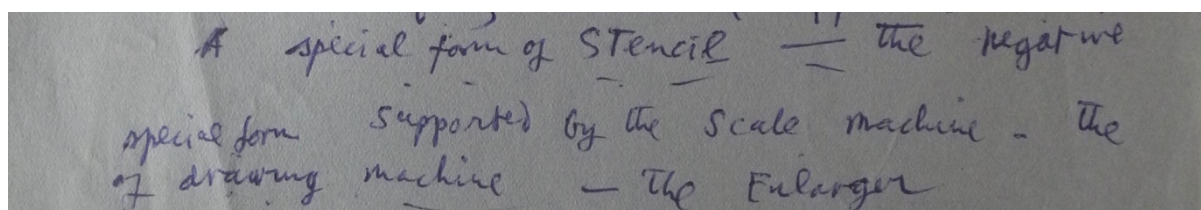


Figure 95. Nigel Henderson, undated manuscript on photography. Nigel Henderson Estate. Photo: Rosie Ram.

On two related manuscript sheets found in the holdings at the Kings Head, he reiterates this thinking. Here, he notes, ‘A special form of Stencil – the negative’. [.] Supported by the Scale machine – the special form of drawing machine – the Enlarger’ [fig. 95].³⁵ This idea of the negative as ‘a special case of the stencil’ speaks to its perceived lack of value as an ephemeral tracing of the image, a ghostly residue that charts the transition of the image between states. Yet, Henderson imbues this otherwise subsidiary tool and throwaway material with ‘special’ status, suggesting that it is not a stencil that enacts a direct transfer but rather a potential site of artistic intervention and experimentation.

These dual conceptions of the negative as both a congealed unit of time and space and as a special kind of stencil are critical for understanding Henderson's practice during the post-war period and his reiterative dispersal of images across otherwise disparate contexts. Bringing his distorted bather images back into focus, this idea of the negative also emphasises the incompatibility of these photographic works with the logic of the museum. The congealment of time and space is not conducive to the notions of origin points and provenance, and the invocation of the 'stencil' disrupts the status of the image as a unique entity.

John Roberts argues that establishing other forms of time and space is critical for the unfolding research programme of the artistic avant-garde. For Roberts, this research work releases alternative temporalities into the present, which rupture 'the routinizations of capitalist time'.³⁶ These splintering temporalities carry the traces of what he terms 'revolutionary futures past'.³⁷ He writes,

'the revolutionary time under capitalist time is concerned with releasing the present from the necessities of chronological time. The time of the "now" contains presciently, prefiguratively all temporal possibilities. The dead-time of capitalist time, accordingly, is an illusion, a consequence of the vicious temporal squeeze of commodity relations; the value form is the unforgiving law of unilinearity. Indeed, capitalism cannot operate without *killing* time, the time of co-temporalities and of futures past.'³⁸

According to Roberts, capitalist time is dictated by the 'the repetitions of the commodity form, its chronological returns to the new as the same' thereby obliterating the possible 'intersection of past, present and future'.³⁹ In contrast, the time of the avant-garde is composed of multiple temporal registers. On the one hand, it is imbued with the shattering temporalities of historic struggles, with the memories of 'revolutionary futures past'. On the other, it is oriented ahead of its own time, occupying temporalities beyond the present, which stand 'in *advance* of what prevails as bourgeois "culture," bourgeois "meaning" and bourgeois "value"'.⁴⁰ It 'defines itself *in advance of capitalism itself*'.⁴¹ Yet, Roberts is quick to caution that 'being in advance of capitalism does not mean that the avant-garde is in the *vanguard* of anti-capitalism or the vanguard of art'.⁴² By reaching simultaneously back to revolutionary futures past and forward, past bourgeois culture and capitalism, the avant-garde occupies what he terms a 'suspensive'

temporality in the present. For art to maintain a position of autonomy, he writes, ‘it has to “hold something back” to create other ways of being, thinking and doing’.⁴³ It has to be ‘*in* the world and not *of* the world’.⁴⁴ For Henderson, this state of suspension, of being *in* the world and not *of* the world, appears to have been afforded by the inverted temporality of the photographic negative.

In tandem with this conception of time, Roberts argues that the problem of space is also a central preoccupation for the research work of the avant-garde. He writes ‘Making and occupying space is as important as the transformation of materials and representations; indeed, it defines how the avant-garde makes its way in the world.’⁴⁵ Yet, he also adds that the spaces created or inhabited by these practices are always constrained, thereby delimiting the ‘social possibilities and critical contours of art’s autonomy.’⁴⁶ In Henderson’s work, the unstable spatiality of artistic research plays out through photography and across the interface of the negative, in particular, as the surface upon which multiple registers of time and space become imprinted and projected. The negative can be conceived as occupying an always displaced non-space – the decentred centre of the photographic image – which documents its division between states. It is migratory and excluded as it has no space of its own. This is emphasised where Henderson identifies the negative as a ‘special’ kind of stencil. A stencil, like a negative, is a translucent carrier of an image that allows it to be transferred and translated across time and space, superimposed onto other surfaces, forming a transient, highly ephemeral layer, and leaving a graphic trace. Once used, the stencil becomes wastage, surplus, and the excluded other of the official image. This idea of the negative as a stencil – as a kind of provisional placeholder that remains mobile and open to being overlaid, altered, replaced or displaced – allows Henderson’s work in post-war London to be conceived as an ever-shifting, multi-sited research practice, and one that operates, importantly, through the time and space of the photographic negative itself.

The devaluation of darkroom labour and the invisibility of negatives

On one of the pages of Henderson’s notes on photographic time and space, he jots down the name ‘Lucia Moholy’.⁴⁷ On another scrawpily inscribed sheet on photography found at the Kings Head, he again cites Moholy’s name.⁴⁸ This repeated referencing of Moholy – rather than her more famous husband, László Moholy-Nagy – is significant, as it speaks to problems of photography’s visibility and value that are critical for an

understanding of Henderson's own photographic practice and the status of the negative in his artistic research in post-war London.

At the Bauhaus, Moholy had worked in close collaboration with Moholy-Nagy on the production and theorisation of his photographic work. However, as Robin Schuldenfrei writes, Moholy 'failed to receive credit for her contributions'.⁴⁹ Jordan Troeller explains that 'Moholy was cast as the passive, supportive wife in contrast to her active, productive husband'.⁵⁰ Yet, as both scholars argue, the couple 'depended entirely on Lucia Moholy's darkroom and technical skills'.⁵¹ Consequently, Moholy-Nagy was keen to dismiss this aspect of photographic image-making. As Troeller elucidates,

'It was not simply that her husband had no interest in the technical knowledge around photographic reproduction [...]. It was rather that he, like his male colleagues, viewed such knowledge as derivative, the work of "technicians," in comparison to the more consequential work of the painter and architect. Or, as Moholy-Nagy put it succinctly in explaining why he would not be the one to set the darkrooms at the New Bauhaus in Chicago: "I am not a photographer, but a painter."⁵²

Her concealed contributions may explain why Moholy-Nagy was so insistent upon the 'productive' nature of his artistic efforts in contrast to the 'reproductive' role of her technical labour. As Troeller states, his self-mythology 'distracted attention away from his wife's actual role in the realization of his artworks'.⁵³ Troeller writes: 'Coded as "reproductive," [...] Moholy's photography was not maliciously ignored so much as it was naturalized as a labor of love on the part of a devoted wife'.⁵⁴ Troeller argues that this hierarchization of 'productive' over 'reproductive' work rested upon a 'devaluation of physical labor as artistic meaning'.⁵⁵ By invoking this ideology, Moholy-Nagy amplified ideas of artistic genius, individual authorship, and originality within 'the very medium whose technology posed the greatest threat to those conventions'.⁵⁶ In doing so, he 'repressed the full threat of photography' whereas his wife 'embraced this aspect of the medium, with all the consequences that it entailed for her own self-effacement'.⁵⁷

Contrastingly, Moholy was, Troeller argues, 'able to mount a more powerful critique of traditional forms of artistic authorship, precisely because she was working from a position of marginality'.⁵⁸ While Henderson did not, of course, suffer marginalisation

due to his gender, his photographic labour may nonetheless have been perceived as primarily supportive or supplementary rather than creative. However, his practice might better be conceived as occupying an interstitial position between production and reproduction, hence the visibility of certain elements of his output and the invisibility of others. While ‘production’ can be mapped against chronological time and geographic space, the temporality and spatiality of ‘reproduction’ is always multiple and divided.

The devaluation of Moholy’s photographic labour extended beyond her collaboration with Moholy-Nagy. As Schuldenfrei recounts, when she fled Berlin for London, arriving in 1934, Moholy ‘was forced to leave behind the five to six hundred glass negatives representing her entire photographic oeuvre to date’.⁵⁹ These negatives found their way into Walter Gropius’ collection, having been shipped to America. Once there, Gropius actively withheld them from Moholy for nearly two decades, despite her frantic efforts to regain them. Gropius ‘retained the images because he believed that, given the photographs were of his school and his buildings, he had a right to their usage; that his authorship (of the referent) therefore outweighed hers (of the image)’.⁶⁰ He saw Moholy’s photographs, Schuldenfrei argues, ‘as somehow “his” [...] Architectural authorship, in this way, extended to the photography of it.’⁶¹ In his hands, Moholy’s negatives played a pivotal role in the construction of the Bauhaus’ legacy. Yet, she failed to be credited or paid for this work.⁶² Gropius’ dismissal of Moholy was, Schuldenfrei writes, partly rooted in the architect’s attitude to photography, which he never formally recognised as an artistic medium. It was not only Gropius but also Herbert Bayer, Sigfried Giedion and Moholy-Nagy, who disputed Moholy’s right to be recognised and remunerated for her images, Troeller argues, because they believed ‘her authorship was qualitatively different from theirs.’⁶³ To have acknowledged the alternative, ‘would have been to admit that her authorship – her embrace of the medium’s realism, its replicative nature, and its mechanical limitations – was on an equal footing with theirs’.⁶⁴ And such an admission would, Troeller writes, have deeply ‘destabilized the myth of nonmimetic representation [...] a myth on which they had built entire careers and one that continues to underpin histories of the avant-garde and its “originality.”’⁶⁵

During this period, Moholy became acutely aware of questions over whether a photograph is primarily representative *of* an object or operates *as* an object itself. Such questions are made more poignant in conditions of exile, Schuldenfrei argues, when images are substituted for lost objects and the photograph becomes the ‘last tangible

asset, the last link, to the inaccessible or destroyed work.⁶⁶ As a result of exile, Moholy's authorship was, therefore, doubly overwritten: first, 'due to her loss of control over the negatives and thus over the means of their reproduction'; and second, 'in the way that that the physical objects signified within the photographs – Bauhaus buildings and products – were given to act as more important referents than the media that carried them (glass negatives, printed reproductions).'⁶⁷ Ultimately, Schuldenfrei concludes, 'the circulation of the *object* photographed took precedence over the authored *photograph* as object.'⁶⁸ Again, this account speaks to the way that the photographs generated by Henderson's artistic research practice seem to teeter at the brink of these two potential photographic states, as images of objects or as objects themselves.

Although Henderson is unlikely to have been aware of the specifics of Moholy's collaborations with Moholy-Nagy or the historical episode of her lost negatives, he will have been exposed to the impact these experiences had upon her understanding of photography. In his notes on the medium, he makes repeated reference to Moholy's concise survey, *A Hundred Years of Photography: 1839-1939*, which was published by Penguin Books as a 'Pelican Special' in 1939. Moholy finished work on this text while living in Bloomsbury in London, where she had been become part of a social and professional milieu⁶⁹ She was acquainted with 'photographers and those in photography-related fields, such as photojournalists, editors, agents and leaders of photographic documentation projects'.⁷⁰ Significantly, at this time, Henderson was also affiliated with a Bloomsbury-centred network of creative practitioners and intellectuals, so it is possible their paths will have crossed. As Schuldenfrei describes, *A Hundred Years of Photography* is a 'consolidation of material packaged for a very general readership. Less a theoretical consideration of the place of photography within culture than a remarkably succinct technological and artistic history of the field'.⁷¹ The text, which is fewer than 200 pages and cost just six pence, soon became a commercial and critical success, and was popular with both amateurs and professionals. It was also, as Schuldenfrei notes, 'an important contribution to the work of a circle of authors and photographers [...] who were attempting to draw up histories of photography from multiple angles – aesthetic, technical, historical, cultural and theoretical'.⁷² It was also valued by 'practising photographers working in London', Henderson himself included.⁷³

In *A Hundred Years of Photography*, Moholy demonstrates a heightened sensitivity to photography's uncertain status and its implications for the field of art. She writes,

‘Every art has its technique. So has photography. But the relation between photography and its technique is a peculiar one; there is more equality of rights between the two than there is between the other arts and their techniques. Hence the widespread conclusion that photography is not an art at all. The same argument is put forward by those who cannot reconcile their conception of art with what they call mechanical means, that is mechanical tools. The tools generally used in the arts since centuries, such as pencil, chalk, brush, chisel, etc., carry out what the hand wants them to do. The hand again carries out the will of the mind. Whether – or not – the result will be a work of art, depends mainly on the mind, partly on the hand, and to a negligible degree only on the tool. If a mechanical tool, such as a camera, is used, the tool’s share grows more important, while the hand’s share is reduced to a minimum. The mind’s share, on which the result mainly depends, upholds its position as the *primum mobile*. The result may be a work of art – or may not.’⁷⁴

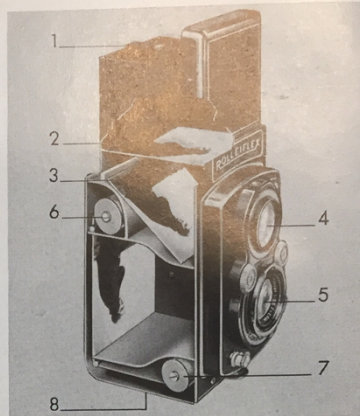
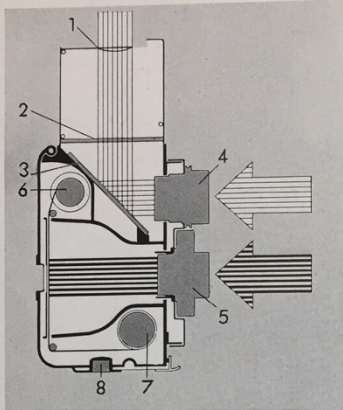
This leads Moholy to conclude that ‘Photography is an art *and* a technique.’⁷⁵ Like Henderson, she aligns the conception of the photographic image with the mechanical and chemical constitution of photography inside the camera, the darkroom, and the negative itself. The traditional role of the hand is minimised. Moholy’s analysis that there is more of an ‘equality of rights’ between the photographer and their mechanical tools is critical for understanding Henderson’s analysis of the negative as a stencil with ‘special’ status. Given the episode with her own negatives, Moholy will have understood that the photographer’s ‘equality of rights’ with their tools had the potential to place them into a position of risk, facing the possibility of authorial elision or the loss of control. Their hidden work in the darkroom might, therefore, remain hidden. Intriguingly, Henderson’s artistic research practice appears to court this invisibility, disappearing into the darker recesses of photographic image-making and reappearing only partially or obliquely. In doing so, his work invokes the full threat that photography poses to the authorial identity and the status of the artist.

The standard tools of Henderson’s photographic work

Many photographers of the pre- and post-war era located their creative agency in the precise moment of taking a photograph, thereby demarcating photographic time and

space at the click of the camera. Henderson's acquaintance, Henri Cartier-Bresson, for instance, had little interest in developing, printing, or editing his work after its moment of capture, preferring his images to remain uncropped and to avoid any signs of darkroom labour. From 1950, Cartier-Bresson outsourced the printing of his photographs and the filing of his negatives entirely to Pictorial Service in Paris. Subsequently, in his 1952 book, *Images à la sauvette*, published in English as *The Decisive Moment*, he identifies photographic artistry with the instantaneous perception and shooting of an image. By privileging the immateriality of the image's contents over the materiality of the negative and the technical production of the print, photographers such as Cartier-Bresson define photographic time and space pictorially.

In contrast, Henderson's understanding of the temporality and spatiality of the medium, and in the negative as a 'special case of the stencil', was rooted in his direct engagement with the technologies of photography. Although Henderson began taking photographs in 1947 with a borrowed Leica camera, in 1949 he purchased his own Rolleicord II, 2 ¼ inch-plate, dual lens camera [fig. 96, top and middle]. In comparison with the 'point and shoot' Leica, which Cartier-Bresson had favoured, Henderson preferred the way the Rolleicord allowed him to look down and away from the scene before him, observing his subject as it moved in miniature on the camera's horizontal viewing screen. Inside the Rolleicord, the image is internalised, reversed, and flipped across multiple surfaces [fig. 96, bottom left]. First, it is received through the finder lens, then it is observed on the focusing screen, before being captured by the taking lens, reflected on the reflex mirror, and then projected, upside down, across the internal cavity of the camera onto the roll of film therein, where it becomes a latent imprint until it is developed within the darkroom to make a dark, tonally inverted negative that can be contact printed or projected and enlarged to create a positive image.



Division into Taking- and Viewing-Camera (Diagram and Photograph)
 1. Focusing magnifier; 2. Focusing screen; 3. Reflex mirror; 4. Finder lens; 5. Taking-lens (Tessar);
 6. Film Take-up spool; 7. Film feed spool; 8. Tripod Bush.



Figure 96. Top & middle rows: Nigel Henderson's Rolleicord camera. Nigel Henderson Estate. Photos: Jon Law. Bottom left: Illustration from Dr Walther Heering, *The Rollei Book: A Manual of Rolleiflex and Rolleicord Cameras*, 1939, 14. Photo: Rosie Ram. Bottom right: Rollei advertisement in Nigel Henderson's copy of *U. S. Camera 1953*, edited by Tom Maloney. Nigel Henderson Estate. Photo: Rosie Ram.

By 1951, Henderson had added a M. P. P. Micro-Press 5 x 4 inch plate camera to his photographic arsenal [fig. 97]. Compared to his Rolleicord, this was a boxier and more cumbersome camera, which took larger, rectangular negatives. For Henderson, the plate camera served as a 'scrutiny box' which he could use to 'rack right in on a subject rather like dive bombing, resulting in a quick change of scale.'⁷⁶

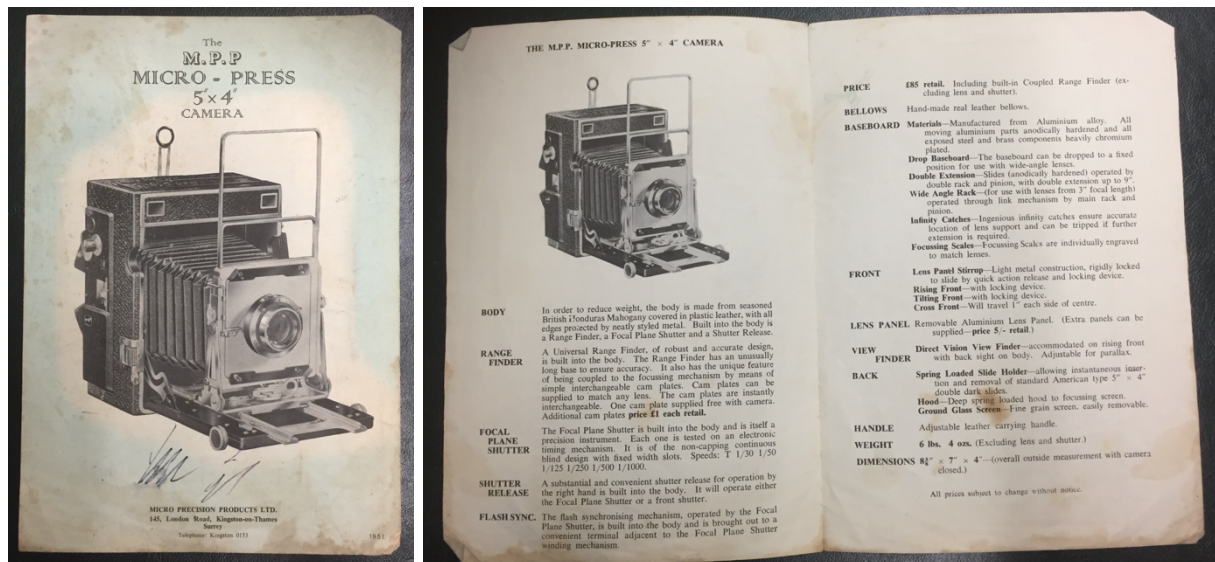


Figure 97. M. P. P. Micro-Press 5x4" Camera manual, 1951, belonging to Nigel Henderson. Tate, TGA 201011/3/3. Photos: Rosie Ram.

Around the same time that he purchased his Rolleicord camera, Henderson also acquired two vertical enlargers, one large and one small, which he used to project and print images in his darkroom. When inserted into the photographic enlarger, the negative image is again replicated across material and immaterial states [fig. 98]. This process is explained in a handbook from the period, entitled *Enlarging: The Technique of the Positive*, which states 'Films to be enlarged are placed in the *negative carrier* of the instrument. This carrier contains two glass plates between which, with its emulsion side turned towards the lens, the film is pressed in order that it lies absolutely flat.'⁷⁷ Once the negative is inserted into the carrier (or any material intended to be used as a negative is placed between the glass plates), a diffuse light inside the enlarger is used to evenly illuminate the image. This light passes through the negative and the tonally inverted image is projected downward through a lens and onto the photosensitive paper placed on a baseboard below.



Figure 98. Left: Illustration from C I Jacobson, *Enlarging: The Technique of the Positive*, 1954, 143. Centre: Advertisement from *The British Journal of Photography*, 28 January 1949, vii. Right: Advertisement from *The British Journal of Photography*, 7 October 1949, v. Photos: Rosie Ram.

For Henderson, these four pieces of equipment – the Rolleicord, the plate camera, and his two photographic enlargers – became the ‘standard tools’ of his practice.⁷⁸ As the photograph is transferred through such technologies it is extracted, resized, converted into monochrome, tonally inverted, reflected, projected, multiplied, and divided. For photographers working with such technologies, therefore, the photographic image is inherently unstable; it is materially and immateriality mediated, malleable, and always already multi-spatial and multi-temporal.

Unlikely negatives and junk elements

Henderson’s interaction with the negative as a ‘special’ kind of stencil can be further elucidated by a closer inspection of the article in *Ark* from the summer of 1956, in which the image of the distorted bather can be found. This article further demonstrates the complex role that the artist afforded the negative in his work during the 1950s, which departed from the conventional photographic practices and discourses of the period. In handbooks for photographers that were popular with both amateurs and professionals in post-war Britain, the negative is generally described as a subsidiary component of photography, a necessary but temporary technical state that the image must pass through in its journey to become a positive print. As C. I. Jacobsen writes in *Enlarging: The Technique of the Positive* (1954), ‘a negative is merely an intermediate stage, the sole purpose of which is to produce a positive image’.⁷⁹ Jacobsen states,

‘A photographic negative is only an intermedial product, for it shows all the tone values of natural objects in a reversed relationship. To those unaccustomed to dealing with negatives, the reversed tone scale appears most unusual, and does not seem to have any natural relationship to the original tones of the subject.’⁸⁰

Jacobsen continues that the ultimate ‘result of the photographer’s work is a *positive*’ print.⁸¹ Yet, in the article in *Ark* the negative is defined and deployed in ways that depart from this sentiment. Instead, across these pages, the negative seems to refuse its relegation to the shadows and thus threatens to rupture the surface and status of the positive image, rather than remaining submerged in the darker zones of photographic labour. Henderson’s treatment of the negative as a ‘special’ kind of stencil allows this project to be pursued. Here, the negative traces and transfers the image, but it also allows for an experimental kind of intervention that extracts, amplifies, and distorts certain properties of the subject matter, which it brings into dialogue with the technologies, materialities and immaterialities of photography itself.

To create the distortion of the bather, for instance, the negative used is not Henderson’s own glass plate or plastic film from his camera, but rather a ‘found’ Victorian lantern slide, which he has converted into a negative and cropped to produce this partial version of the scene. The two folds in the photosensitive paper drag the image up and down vertical creases to create harsh, artificial waves within the articulation of the picture. As if to emphasise the potential for the photographic enlarger to take spatiality and scale into its own control and out of human hands, the distorted bather is dwarfed by a pair of towering glass forms, which loom over the diminutive figure. They depict the splayed parts of a glass bottle, which is titled *Milk Bottle Photogram* [fig. 99]. To produce this image, Henderson first used the glass of the bottle itself as a kind of negative, creating ‘an exposure made through the glass.’⁸² The resultant print was then adapted to become a paper negative, generating an image that was again reversed. To the left, a description succinctly states: ‘A milk bottle was burst into constituent elements by pouring in boiling water. The pieces were then laid on photo-sensitive paper and an exposure made through the glass, making a paper negative. This was then reversed to give the image.’⁸³

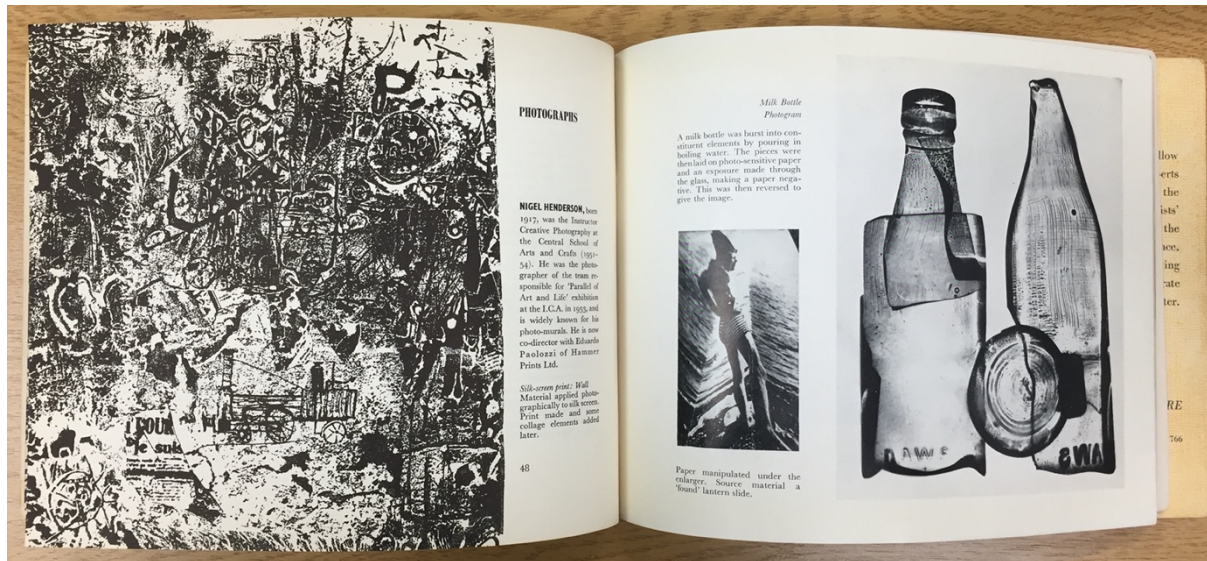


Figure 99. Nigel Henderson, 'Photographs', *Ark*, July 1956, p. 48-49. Royal College of Art. Photo: Rosie Ram.

In his notes on photography, Henderson instructs himself: 'Take some shots through distorted lens i.e. bottom of glass or bottle'.⁸⁴ Here, that bottle-as-distorted-lens is laid bare, placed at the foot of the ghostly glass segments. Together, *Milk Bottle Photogram* and the distorted bather speak not only of photographic technologies – negative, enlarger, lens – but also of the materialities and immaterialities of the medium: the translucency of glass as light passes through, the textured surface of photosensitive paper, and the liquidity of darkroom solutions and baths.⁸⁵

On the opposite page within this *Ark* spread, an image titled *Silk-screen print: Wall* fills three quarters of the first page, featuring scratched marks, scrawlings and fractured cuttings strewn across the scarified surface of a dilapidated wall [fig. 99]. The intermedial production of the image is described in an accompanying caption, which states: 'Material applied photographically to silk screen. Print made and some collage elements added later.'⁸⁶ Importantly, the pictorial ground of *Silk-screen print: Wall* is not the positive photograph of a scratched wall, but a tonal inversion that switches the shot into negative. This is overlaid with fragments of positive prints, suturing negative and positive together within the broken composition. By including *Silk-screen print: Wall* under the heading 'Photographs', the mesh weave of the silkscreen is subsumed into an expanded conception of the photographic negative.



Figure 100. Nigel Henderson, 'Photographs', *Ark*, July 1956, p. 50-51. Royal College of Art. Photo: Rosie Ram.

Overleaf, a photograph titled *Laundry Window* shows a gridded East London shop window with scrappy signage touting the services offered inside [fig. 100]. The rectilinear glass windowpanes echo both the glass negatives Henderson used, the glass panes in his enlargers, as well as the glass viewing screen of his Rolleicord. The final page of Henderson's *Ark* contribution features two images: an abstract work titled *Photogram to suggest microscopic life* and a photographic composite simply called *Wood*, featuring adjacent shots of a charred log and a weathered billboard [fig. 100].

Photogram to suggest microscopic life combines contact printing, photogram production and a negative-positive reversal. Beneath, the caption explains: 'Made by contact printing "junk" elements and projecting cellular texture from the enlarger probably by using loose-woven bandage as negative. Then the print was reversed.'⁸⁷ Here, a tatty piece of fabric performs the work of the negative. However, his choice of the word 'probably' here, throws the exact nature of the negative into doubt, while this admission of uncertainty – in tandem with his description of the pictorial subject matter as 'junk' – playfully contrasts with the scientific precision implied by the image's clinical titling.

Below, the creation of *Wood* is described in comparable terms: 'Two paper negatives were combined in a single print. [...] One is a positive; the other a negative.'⁸⁸ In *Wood*, paper negatives are again used to show the tonally inverted images in tandem [fig. 100]. Paper negatives generate less clearly defined prints, with the grain of the paper overlaying a granular texture across the image, like the coarse surface of a canvas. In *A Hundred Years of Photography*, Moholy describes nineteenth-century photographers David Octavius Hill and Robert Adamson as embracing the 'grain of the paper' and

using it 'like painters to build up the tone values, avoiding hard lines and sharp contrasts.'⁸⁹ The texture of paper negatives, she writes, meant that the 'grainy quality of the prints suppressed most of the detail, leaving a composition of lights and shades, more like a painting than a photograph.'⁹⁰ Moholy observes that 'Photographers who took up this line were called "artist photographers," while the rest simply remained "photographers."⁹¹ It is telling therefore that despite the fact that more refined glass and plastic technologies had superseded paper negatives, Henderson returns anachronistically to this more rudimentary method. It is also worth noting that all the images are given italicised titles other than the anonymous bather, who seems to stand somehow both here and elsewhere. Moreover, none of the illustrations are dated, furthering the sense that they exist beyond chronological temporality, within an alternative zone of photographic time and space congealed within the negative.

Other than the short and chiefly technical text captions, the only written explanation that accompanies Henderson's 'Photographs' piece in *Ark* is a brief biography that highlights the photographic aspects of his career, including his post as tutor in Creative Photography at the Central School and his role as 'photographer' in the collaborative production of *Parallel of Life and Art*. In addition, the biography notes that Henderson is 'widely known for his photo-murals',⁹² none of which seem to survive today. It is, in fact, likely that a photomural featuring the distorted bathers was presented at the 10th Milan Triennale in 1954. Henderson gestures to this in a letter from 1956, in which he describes an example of his distorted bather image as:

'A "stressed photograph" [...] a detail taken from a found negative of some bathers, which I had blown-up and used in the last Milan Triennale.

"Stressed" seems the best way to describe the optically distorted photographic image. The effect (which we would now call "cinemascope") is in some degree to destroy the boundaries of the image, by appearing to lap them round the seeing eye, thus drawing it within the frame.'⁹³

At the Kings Head, only one other trace of Henderson's contribution to the Milan Triennale survives. This is a certificate titled 'Diploma di Collaborazione' that was awarded to Henderson from 'Decima Triennale di Milan'. Other than this certificate, there appears to be no further evidence of his participation in the event. This is indicative of the status of the negative and the positive in his practice. While the

positive is widely dispersed in ever varying iterations – often appearing transiently and subject to loss or destruction, as in the case of this mural – the negative, which holds the latent potentials for photographic replication and distortion, is carefully retained.

Accounts published during Henderson’s lifetime further elucidate the alternative notions of the negative deployed within his work. In 1977, for instance, in the catalogue for a monographic exhibition at Kettle’s Yard Gallery, Frank Whitford writes,

‘Henderson’s work starts not so much with the film in the camera, as in the darkroom where, often literally, anything will do to make a print: not only a dirty, torn or crumpled negative, but also the most unlikely objects which, when placed directly on light-sensitive paper and exposed, work themselves as negatives. Bottles (“glass has more of the proper quality of glass than when conventionally photographed”), torn tissue paper, pieces of string and wool, even large blocks of ice (“the darkroom floor was covered in water”) have been pressed into service. Often such “photograms” provide only the beginning for further manipulations of reality. Double exposures, combinations of objects, conventional negatives and collaged elements, distortions by warping and bending and chemical baths can, together or singly, create the illusion of an imagined reality which is the more potent because it continues to bear fragments from a more familiar world.’⁹⁴

Here, pieces of household detritus become unconventional negatives, while the conventional negative is detached from its role as the reliable source of a mimetic print; instead, it is threaded through photographic image-making in more intricate ways.

Crucially, in Henderson’s contribution to *Ark* and in the account of his darkroom practice provided above, photographic technology is not presented as clean, concise, accurate and efficient. Neither is it shown as futuristic nor even particularly modern. Instead, his photographs are created from material in various states of dilapidation and destruction: the scarified surface of a wall is overlaid with fractured shards of image and text; a human form is disconcertingly misshapen; milk bottles are melted; signage fades into illegibility on dirty windowpanes; bandages unravel amidst broken junk; wood is burnt and rots away. Here, photographic time is the materialised temporality of erosion

and decay, and photographic space is comprised of post-war ruins and littered with stranded piece of wreckage in disjointed disarray.

Four years after his *Ark* contribution, in 1960, Nigel Henderson published a sequence of photographs in issue 3 of *Uppercase*, a journal designed and edited by Theo Crosby.⁹⁵ The sixteen photographs include bombsites in Bethnal Green and buildings in various stages of dereliction as well as detailed shots of degenerating materials. Alongside these, Henderson published a text in which he expands upon the negative conception of time in his photographic work,

'I thought I would try to write directly to illuminate my work. But I found I couldn't do it. [...] Then I tried to write about time. The Rodent Time, I called it. Erosion, the saliva, the Lick of Time; Corrosion, the Teeth. Agents of Destruction. Agents of Revelation. The calligraphy of Time that reveals, for instance, the sinews, the fibrous quality of wood – the lines of retreat of weakness of materials that reveal its innate quality: as sand subsides into water; as cracks canter across walls, or stains seep up like explosions flowering out like pancakes. Or as boots broach, their layers arching under uneven strain like geological strata; their leather the rind of fruit, pithy, the cobbler's tacks eager to be out and off, like seed pips. A new boot is a fine monument to man – an artefact. A worn-out boot traces his image with heroic pathos and takes its part as universal image-maker in the suburbs of the mind. Time works like an analytical chemist with its tinctures and titrations. It gives us intimations of the reality of things.'⁹⁶

In the final lines of this statement, Henderson conceptualises the transition of eroding materials into images, which become residues in the human mind. He charts a translation of objects to monuments, to artefacts, to images. The final stage of analytical chemistry, with its tinctures and titrations, alludes to the photochemical work of image extraction within the darkroom, manipulating the space and time of the image.

This use of the negative to disrupt the chronologically linear and positive time of progress can be read as a disruption of capitalist production through a critique of modern technology. As Roberts argues, in the capitalist drive for efficiency and exponential profit, modern technology in the workplace operates in service of capital. He

argues, the ‘relentless development of technology in the workplace is not the inevitable outcome of scientific progress but an expansion of capitalist domination over the worker.’⁹⁷ The efficient technologization of the workplace requires the ‘subjective skills of the worker’ to be ‘minimised and controlled’.⁹⁸ This is a process in which, he asserts, the ‘collective labour of a number of specialised workers disappears to be stored as the “natural form” of a higher technological power.’⁹⁹ Technology is, therefore, ‘anything but neutral. It is the means by which the dominant relations of production and class-relations reproduce themselves.’¹⁰⁰ In response to these modern conditions, the avant-garde critique of technology is not rooted in a romantic defence of art’s sensuousness and a retreat from technology. Rather, Roberts asserts, it emerges from the alternative use of technology itself through collaborative forms of practice, whereby ‘the critical interdisciplinarity of the group, and as such the breakdown of the separation between manual and intellectual labour, is an attempt to challenge the one-sided development of technology, to reforge it in the interests of collective spontaneous subjectivity.’¹⁰¹ This allows ‘a critique of capitalist social relations of technology’,¹⁰² from a position both within art and within the social and technological conditions of the period.

Building upon Roberts’ theoretical position, Henderson’s reappropriation of the negative technology of photography critically misaligned his practice with the acceleration of capitalist production and consumption, progress and prosperity, while deviating from museological temporality of chronological lineage. By repurposing the interior zones of photographic technology in this way, the artist’s research practice remained other to the advanced conditions of mechanised and managed labour under post-war capitalism, fostering instead the aberrant temporalities of latency, belatedness, and deterioration.

Latent images: from *Parallel of Life and Art* to *Patio and Pavilion*

In his drafted and redrafted notes for his talk on *Parallel of Life and Art* at the Architectural Association, Henderson makes several references to the ‘Ideas latent in the exhibition’.¹⁰³ By repeatedly returning to this notion of latency, the artist invokes the analogy of the latent imprint of the image on the undeveloped negative, as it awaits revelation in the darkroom. By placing the ‘ideas’ of the exhibition into this latent state, *Parallel of Life and Art* itself is inverted into the negative. Such a reading elucidates Henderson’s assertion that the ‘conception’ of the exhibition was ‘inseparable from the

medium'.¹⁰⁴ Here, he implies that the conceptual impetus of the exhibition is inextricable from photographic technologies, and from the photographic negative, specifically. Crucially, Henderson states that *Parallel of Life and Art* itself did, in fact, exist in negative prior to its realisation in positive form within the gallery space at the ICA. Over the course of the group's weekly meetings at 46 Chisenhale Road, he explains, 'We continued to select and sometimes replaced an image with one which suited us better and having copy negatives made as we went'.¹⁰⁵ Henderson gestures to the existence of these copy negatives on a loose sheet of notes now in the Tate archive, on which he jots down 'Print II of L&A negs & Mount'.¹⁰⁶ Alongside Henderson's assertion that the 'conception' of the exhibition was 'inseparable from the medium', these negatives – many of which are now stored at Tate with their carefully labelled glassine envelopes – locate *Parallel of Life and Art* outside the ICA exhibition, placing it into the alternative materiality, temporality and spatiality of the photographic image in its miniature, darkly inverted, negative state. This is crucial for understanding the premature, simultaneous, and belated appearances of images related to the exhibition throughout Henderson's work during the post-war period, such as the distorted bathers.

Latency is a critical aspect of the mechanical and chemical operation of photography, whereby the image imprinted onto the photographic film remains latent in the gap between exposure and development. In a contemporary manual for photographers titled *Developing: The Negative-Technique* (1950), written by C. I. Jacobsen and published by Focal Press, this notion of latency is explained,

'If we expose a photographic plate or film in the camera the closest visual examination fails to disclose any perceptible change in the sensitive coating which, in general, consists of a suspension of silver bromide in gelatine and to which the name *emulsion* is given. Yet we all know there has been a change and that the application of a developer will reveal it. We say that the action of light on the sensitive material has produced a *latent image*. Latent here means unrevealed or undeveloped. [...]. In order to render the latent image visible we make use of certain substances known as developers, which have the property of changing the exposed *silver bromide* into black *metallic silver*. [...] the latent image, is changed or reduced to metallic silver and so rendered visible.'¹⁰⁷

Even after having been developed and rendered visible, however, the negative still retains the latent potential for replication, which remains dormant until it is subjected to photographic exposure. This notion of latency offers a new reading of the way that the residues of Henderson's practice appear positioned between visibility and invisibility, courting their disappearance into the dark recesses of photographic image-making, sometimes only emerging later or at a distance. Furthermore, rethinking the role and status of the negative in Henderson's practice throws new light onto the notion of parallelisms at play within *Parallel of Life and Art*. The negative is defined by its parallel position: within the camera, it is held in parallel with the exterior world; in the darkroom, it is placed in parallel with a photosensitive surface in order to produce the positive print; once printed and divorced from one another, the positive and negative bear the traces of their parallel roles. However, the parallelism of photography is commonly concealed; it is itself a latent kind of parallelism. For instance, the negatives from *Parallel of Life and Art* are kept in a dormant state at Tate today, where access to these materials is restricted and positive proxies are provided in their place.

This sense of *Parallel of Life and Art* as existing in a latent, negative state provides a critical key to understanding the ways in which images from the hang continued to resurface in Henderson's work in the exhibition's wake. In the *Ark* spread, for instance, the distorted bather partially evokes *Parallel of Life and Art* while operating at a lag in time and space. Henderson's article in *Ark* was published in July 1956. And in turn, the following month, on 9th August, the exhibition *This is Tomorrow* opened at the Whitechapel Art Gallery in East London. The show featured twelve installations, created by twelve 'teams' of collaborators, comprising various combinations of artists, architects and designers. Henderson was a member of team six, alongside three of his *Parallel of Life and Art* collaborators, Eduardo Paolozzi and Alison and Peter Smithson. Together, they conceived and constructed the installation *Patio and Pavilion*, which featured a three-sided, makeshift hut with a corrugated Perspex roof, cordoned off with haphazard, crisscrossing wires [fig. 101]. This hut was contained within an enclosure built from reflective, aluminium-faced plywood, within which a walkway was provided directing visitors around the unsettling environment. Ambiguous objects, collaged images, rudimentary sculptures, and plaster reliefs were also scattered throughout this desolate zone, and the floor was covered with sand.



Figure 101. Nigel Henderson, photographs of *Patio and Pavilion*, presented as part of *This is Tomorrow*, Whitechapel Art Gallery, 1956. Nigel Henderson Estate. Photos: top row: Nigel Henderson Estate; bottom row: Rosie Ram.

Crucially, the proximity between Henderson's 'Photographs' article in the summer 1956 edition of *Ark* and his contribution to *Patio and Pavilion* the following month facilitates a reading of the installation in relation to photography and, more specifically, Henderson's engagement with the photographic negative as both a 'special' kind of stencil and as a 'congealed' unit of time and space.

Three large collages populated *Patio and Pavilion*. One was Henderson's monumental, disembodied *Head of a Man* [fig. 101, top left], whose fractured face is made from shards of photographic prints, which have been collaged together, photographed, enlarged, cut

up, and collaged together again. Another was *Collage for Patio and Pavilion (cycle of life and death in a pond)* [fig. 101, top & bottom right, & fig. 102, left & centre], which was positioned on the floor to suggest a bubbling ecosystem of broken lithographic and photographic imagery within a garden pond, surrounded and partially submerged by sand. The third represented botanical life and was titled *Collage for Patio and Pavilion (the growth of plant forms)*, and similarly comprised a composite of lithographic forms and found illustrations. Importantly, as discussed in the introduction to this thesis, *Collage for Patio and Pavilion (cycle of life and death in a pond)* featured an image that had also been included in *Parallel of Life and Art* [fig. 102, bottom right], which had appeared in the catalogue as ‘Excavated figure, Pompei. F. Romano, Naples’. It was listed under the category of ‘Art’ alongside Henderson’s ‘Etruscan funerary vase’, his ‘Disintegrating mirror (contact print)’, and the photograph of ‘Jackson Pollack in studio’.



Figure 102. Left: Nigel Henderson, photograph of *Patio and Pavilion*. Nigel Henderson Estate. Photo: Rosie Ram. Centre: Nigel Henderson, *Collage for Patio and Pavilion (cycle of life and death in a pond)*, 1956, Tate. Photo: Tate. Top right: Nigel Henderson, photograph of *Parallel of Life and Art*. Tate, TGA 9211/5/2/71. Photo: Tate (negative reproduced as digital positive). Bottom right: Image used for panel 29 from *Parallel of Life and Art*, listed as ‘Excavated figure, Pompei. F. Romano, Naples’. Tate, TGA 9211/5/2/10. Photo: Tate.

In photographs of the hang of *Parallel of Life and Art* at the ICA, the excavated figure from Pompei could be seen positioned just above the double doors through which visitors entered the gallery. In one shot, Henderson’s daughter Justin stands sullenly just below fig. 102, top right]. The photograph of the excavated figure from Pompei is by the commercial photographer Giorgio Sommer and was taken in 1882. It shows the cast of a young boy which had been made by pouring gesso into the impression left in the soil by the victim’s body, who had been thrown from a building by his mother as the ash from Mount Vesuvius descended on Pompei. In *Patio and Pavilion* this image appears again, this time positioned face down in the pond surrounded by found and broken forms.

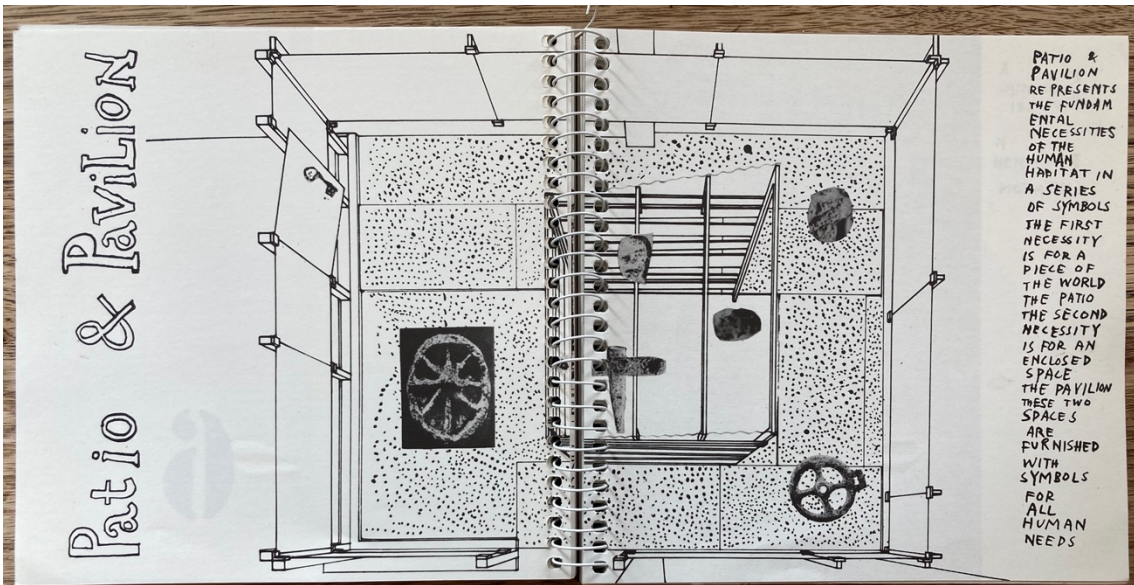


Figure 103. Nigel Henderson, Eduardo Paolozzi, and Alison and Peter Smithson, entry on *Patio and Pavilion* in the exhibition catalogue for *This is Tomorrow*, Whitechapel Art Gallery, 1956. Photos: Rosie Ram.

As if to emphasise the role of the figure from Pompei within *Patio and Pavilion*, the catalogue featured another of Sommer's images, this time depicting a watchdog who had been chained to a building and was thus unable to escape the volcanic ash [fig. 103, bottom image, seen top left corner of the page on the left]. Henderson's inclusion of these images within *Patio and Pavilion* does not just indicate the latent presence of the photographs from *Parallel of Life and Art*, which continued to surface within his work thanks to the fact he retained them as negatives, but it also speaks to the latency of such images as photographic relics within the modern world. More than that, these Pompeian casts created from pouring gesso into the impression of absent bodies – into their negative space – offer an analogy of the photographic negative itself as a 'special' kind of stencil, as an inverted tracing that speaks of the absence of the positive thing.

What remains striking about *Patio and Pavilion* is the sense that the installation was located out of time and out of space. Somehow both post-apocalyptic and primordial, it was unnerving for visitors and critics precisely for its sense of temporal and spatial ambiguity. Reyner Banham remarked that while most of the exhibits in *This is Tomorrow* could be placed on a spectrum from pop art to geometric abstraction, 'the Henderson/ Paolozzi/ Smithson exhibit cannot be fitted neatly into this sequence at any one point.'¹⁰⁸ He continues,

'the innumerable symbolic objects made or gathered by the group were laid out on beds of sand in a manner reminiscent of photographs of archaeological sites with the finds laid out for display. One or two discerning critics, who knew their Smithsons and were acquainted with Henderson's preoccupations with the folkways of the East London poor, described the exhibit as "the garden-shed aesthetic" but one could not help feeling that this particular garden shed, with its rusted bicycle wheels, a battered trumpet and other homely junk, had been excavated after the atomic holocaust, and discovered to be part of the European tradition of site planning that went back to archaic Greece and beyond.'¹⁰⁹

More recently, in her analysis of the exhibition, Victoria Walsh identifies it as 'a-temporal', writing that 'the installation suggested a presence now removed, leaving the spectator to dwell in the space like a late witness at the scene of a terrible event. This disconcerting sense of a past disinterred and left exposed permeated the installation'.¹¹⁰

Similarly, Ben Highmore states, ‘One of the problems that greeted commentators in 1956 was that of knowing whether *Patio and Pavilion* looked backwards or forwards, or whether it was looking at the near future from some point even further in the future, or whether it was looking into some sort of imagined eternity. [...] It is, I think, this unfixed temporality which gives *Patio and Pavilion* a precise but confused historicity.’¹¹¹

Rather than post-apocalyptic or primordial, I would argue that *Patio and Pavilion* can be interpreted as temporally and spatially inverted through photographic negativity. It operates in relation to Henderson’s conception of the negative as a congealed unit of time and space, a ‘special case’ of the stencil that allows images to be endlessly altered, looped, divided, replicated, reiterated, and distorted across disparate zones. Considered in this light, *Patio and Pavilion*, can be located in the visual world that has emerged after the advent of photography has profoundly altered the perception and representation of time and space, a world in which photographic technologies – with their capacities to flatten and congeal history and geography – are inextricable from post-war reality. This is a world haunted by the latency of all the photographic images humankind has ever made and one in which all images are already photographic. This conception has echoes of Moholy’s conclusion in *A Hundred Years of Photography*, in which she writes,

‘The aim of this book has been to establish the connection between photography and life, and to describe a development from its early beginnings as a kind of magic art, one hundred years ago, to the status of a world power which it has now reached. Life without photographs is no longer imaginable. They pass before our eyes and awaken our interest; they pass through the atmosphere, unseen and unheard, over distances of thousands of miles. They are in our lives, as our lives are in them.’¹¹²

Given the episode with her Bauhaus negatives, Moholy’s identification of the absent, ‘unseen and unheard’ presence of photographs is particularly poignant. Drawing upon her conclusion, *Patio and Pavilion* might be read as zone in which photographs constitute modern reality, in which they ‘are in our lives, as our lives are in them’. On entering *Patio and Pavilion*, the viewer steps inside the inverted and fractured image world constituted by photography. Building upon Walsh’s analysis of the installation as ‘a-temporal’ and Highmore’s sense of its ‘unfixed temporality’ and ‘confused historicity’,

my reading of *Patio and Pavilion* attributes these temporal dislocations and distortions to Henderson's critical engagement with the photographic time and space of the negative, within which past and present, here and there, become 'congealed'.



Figure 104. Left: Nigel Henderson, photograph of *Patio and Pavilion* at Whitechapel Art Gallery, 1956. Nigel Henderson Estate. Photo: Rosie Ram. Centre: Nigel Henderson, *Head of a Man*, 1956. Tate, T01939. Photo: Tate. Right: Smaller version of *Head of a Man*, 1956. Nigel Henderson Estate. Photo: Rosie Ram.

Describing his method of making *Head of a Man* [fig. 104], Henderson details the process as a relay between photography and collage across the interface of the negative: 'Head made as collage of more than 1 head. Copy negative printed in combination with another. Further elements (photo-prints) added as collage again.'¹¹³ Like the photographs included within *Ark*, this is a deployment of the negative that brings it closer to the surface of the image, threatening to rupture the more 'natural' reality of the positive print. At the Kings Head, there is a smaller head that was used as the source for one of the copy negatives. It is comprised of photographic prints that have already been replicated, resized, cut apart and altered by manual and mechanical intervention. The shards of the 'photo-prints' that comprise the head depict dilapidated materials, included rotting wood and an old boot. As in *Ark*, these are photographic residues that connote the inverted, negational time and space of destruction and decay.

Building upon this photographic reading of the installation, *Patio and Pavilion* itself might be understood as staging a confused reality inside the darker recesses of photographic production and reproduction. If *Head of a Man* can be read as humankind inverted into the congealed, fractured, negative state of photography, then the zone surrounding this figure might be conceived as a kind of darkroom or a rudimentary camera, in which the world only exists as internalised photographic imagery [figs. 101 &

105]. In *A Hundred Years of Photography*, Moholy describes an early iteration of the camera obscura. She writes,

‘The most popular use for the camera obscura was the “camera obscura portabilis,” which served as a sort of support for drawings, mainly landscapes. [...] It soon became a fashion, not only among professional painters, but also among amateurs in upper-class circles, and was given all kinds of fantastic shapes and camouflages. A lens was built in the top of a travelling coach or the roof of a pavilion, thus transforming it into a camera obscura. By means of a mirror placed in the right position to reflect the incoming light, the picture of the country outside, or a cutting of it, appeared on a board where a drawing could easily be made if desired’¹¹⁴

With its pavilion structure and mirrored walls, as well as its strange shapes and semi-camouflaged forms, *Patio and Pavilion* certainly has echoes of this description.

Furthermore, Moholy notes that the camera obscura had ‘no lens, but only a tiny hole, through which the sunlight penetrated into the inside of the room or box (camera).’¹¹⁵ In a reiteration of these thoughts, Henderson writes in his manuscripts on photographic time and space that are now in the Tate archive, ‘Historically, a room, treated with Alice in Wonderland mixture & progressively shrunk, muscled with glass etc. ... the camera ...’¹¹⁶ He expands upon this position on a related sheet in the holdings at the Kings Head, ‘Historically a room (Italian. CAMERA) has been concentrated, its window muscled with glass & equipped with a variable blink (shutter).’¹¹⁷



Figure 105. Nigel Henderson, photographs of *Patio and Pavilion*, presented as part of *This is Tomorrow*, Whitechapel Art Gallery, 1956. Nigel Henderson Estate. Photos: Nigel Henderson Estate.

As if to emphasise the relationship between the installation and the technology of photography, in some of Henderson's shots the baseboard of his 5 x 4 inch plate camera is clearly visible at the foot of the image, thereby seeming to locate us inside the photographic device looking outwards [fig. 105, see also fig. 96]. If *Patio and Pavilion* can be read as a photographic room, which Henderson aligns with the interior of the camera, then the viewer has now entered the negative zone of photography in which all photographic images exist in a latent and inverted form. Here, the mirrored effect of the aluminium-faced plywood that enclosed *Patio and Pavilion* might also serve as the reflex mirror inside the internal cavity of his Rolleicord camera [fig. 97], where the reflected image becomes an imprint on the roll of film.



Figure 106. Left: Nigel Henderson, photograph of *Patio and Pavilion*, presented as part of *This is Tomorrow*, Whitechapel Art Gallery, 1956. Nigel Henderson Estate. Photo: Rosie Ram. Nigel Henderson, photograph labelled 'distortion ferrotype'. Tate, TGA 9211/8/1/13/2. Photo: Tate (negative reproduced as digital positive).

Alternatively, these mirrored walls might represent the ferrotype (also known as tintype) printing process in photography, as described by Moholy, in which a positive print is made directly onto the surface of a thin metal plate. This is suggested by one of Henderson's negatives in the archive at Tate showing Judith holding up and bending a comparable reflective surface, which he has titled 'Distortion Ferrotype' [fig. 106].

When read photographically, *Patio and Pavilion* also has further echoes of the alchemical zone of the darkroom itself, with the pond becoming a chemical or water bath for developing, stopping, fixing, or washing prints. Inside the darkroom, photographic imagery emerges from its latent state, allowing the excavated Pompeian figure from *Parallel of Life and Art* to resurface, as if swimming up through the developer fluid. This photographic reading of Henderson's contribution is further supported by the catalogue entry for *Patio and Pavilion*, which identifies one of the necessities within the installation as 'the light box – for the hearth & family', directly aligning this element with the photographic technology of the light box, which would be used to study photographic negatives in their negative state. What is more, the loose arrangement of detritus placed onto the translucent, corrugated Perspex roof of the hut echoes the photogram experiments that Henderson pursued – often working with Paolozzi late into the night – in his darkroom-cum-bathroom at 46 Chisenhale Road [fig. 107], using household miscellany and debris from the East End bombsites nearby. Inside the house, he pinned the results of these photogram experiments to his ceiling; a placement that is repeated inside the *Patio and Pavilion* hut, where the detritus arranged across the roof cast shadows through the corrugated Perspex [fig. 105].



Figure 107. Left: Nigel Henderson, photograms, c. 1949-54. Nigel Henderson Estate. Photo: Rosie Ram. Right: Nigel Henderson, photograph of *Patio and Pavilion*, presented as part of *This is Tomorrow*, Whitechapel Art Gallery, 1956. Reproduced in Alison Smithson, 'Patio and Pavilion Reconstructed', *AA Files*, no. 47 (Summer 2002), 37-44.

The disconcerting sense of slippages in time and space created by the photographic attributes of *Patio and Pavilion* seem imbue it with an eeriness. In fact, Walsh describes the roof of the hut as allowing 'the eerie semitranslucent shapes of various man-made objects and found debris of industrial material to be felt inside'.¹¹⁸ This notion of a photographically inflected eeriness can be elucidated by Mark Fisher's writing. In tandem with his notion of the weird, Fisher posits a conception of the eerie, which he describes as 'a particular kind of aesthetic experience'.¹¹⁹ Like the weird, Fisher identifies the eerie as also fundamentally to do with the outside.¹²⁰ Yet, the relationship between the eerie and the outside is experienced more as 'haunting gaps, eerie intimations of the outside',¹²¹ or even as 'eerie ellipses' that drift towards an outside.¹²²

Crucially, this outside is beyond human knowledge, exterior or ulterior to the known. For Fisher, the eerie resides in 'gaps in the viewer's knowledge'.¹²³ As he argues, 'The eerie concerns the unknown; when knowledge is achieved, the eerie disappears. [...] There must also be a sense of alterity, a feeling that the enigma might involve forms of knowledge, subjectivity and sensation that lie beyond common experience'.¹²⁴ Fisher argues that this connects the eerie to questions concerning presence and absence, existence and non-existence. As he explains,

'the weird is constituted by presence – the presence of *that which does not belong*. [...] The eerie, by contrast, is constituted by a *failure of absence* or by a *failure of presence*. The sensation of the eerie occurs either when there is

something present where there should be nothing, or there is nothing present when there should be something.’¹²⁵

Fisher extends this idea the eeriness of absence through his conception of ‘negative hallucination’, which speaks to the hidden presence of the photographic negatives generated by Henderson’s work in the 1950s. Fisher writes,

‘Negative hallucination is a phenomenon that is in many ways more interesting – and more eerie – than “positive” hallucination. *Not seeing what is there* is both stranger and more commonplace than seeing what is not there. Failure to see, the involuntary process of overlooking material which contradicts – or simply does not fit in with – the dominant stories which we tell ourselves is part of the ongoing “editing process” through which what we experience as identity is produced.’¹²⁶

For Fisher, the most critical question elicited by the eerie is that of agency. He claims, ‘Behind all the manifestations of the eerie, the central enigma at its core is the problem of agency.’¹²⁷ The eerie, he claims, ‘turns crucially on the problem of agency’.¹²⁸ This problem of agency provokes questions, such as, ‘What kind of agent is acting here? Is there an agent at all?’¹²⁹ This problem of agency is why the eerie is associated, Fisher suggests, with spaces that are ‘partially emptied of the human’, which invite those who stumble upon them to ask, ‘What happened to produce these ruins, this disappearance? What kind of entity was involved?’¹³⁰

This question of agency is pertinent for analysing the role photography and found materials throughout Henderson’s practice in post-war London, in which the eerie absence of manual artistic labour was met the weird presence of other agencies. What is more, Fisher’s association of the eerie with new knowledge, obsolete frameworks and epistemological gaps is valuable for analysing Henderson’s investigative work, and the question of how his research might be said to generate an interstitial and obscure kind of knowledge. It is the uncertain and unsettled status of the photographic image – as maintained by its hallucinatory negative shadow – that imbues it with the potential to operate methodologically as a research material. This is not, however, research that progresses as a positive mode of knowledge production moving unilaterally towards a better, brighter future. Rather, this is research of a more divergent and disruptive kind,

a practice that manoeuvres through shadows and absences, through slippages and ruptures in space and time, operating against the current of progressive time. This is research into a dark, inversional post-war reality, producing instead images of a negative modernity.

Inversional sites of negative analysis



Figure 108. Top left & right: Nigel Henderson, photographs showing Ronald Jenkins' office at Ove Arup & Consulting Engineers, London, c. 1953, Tate, TGA 201011/3/1/72/1, TGA 201011/3/1/9/6 & TGA 201011/3/1/9/7. Photos: Rosie Ram. Bottom row: Nigel Henderson, photographs of Freda Elliot and Eduardo Paolozzi, London, 1951. Tate, TGA 201011/3/1/40/7, TGA 201011/3/1/40/4 & TGA 201011/3/1/41/1. Photos: Rosie Ram

Through Henderson's negatives, we can return to the sites of his practice in post-war London that I have studied throughout this thesis and observe these same scenes otherwise, through a dark, inversional lens [figs. 108 to 112]. Looking at his negatives of interior spaces, we can see the darkroom externalised, turning the engineer's office [fig. 108, top left & right] or the domestic interior [fig. 109] into darkened laboratories of pictorial and pattern extraction and analysis, where everything inside the image is

transformed into highly detailed visual data captured in miniature. Furthermore, by flipping light into dark and day into night, the negatives themselves become technologies of night vision and these darkened rooms becomes experimental night vision chambers, appropriating this militarised mode of perception for a stealthy kind of artistic investigation, beneath the visible surface of these scenes. In this covert form of interrogation, spectral human figures are exposed sharply against their backgrounds, overcoming the camouflaging of the silkscreen-printed patterning that surrounds them and seeing past their similarly patterned disguises [fig. 108, bottom row].



Figure 109. Nigel Henderson, photographs of interior of 46 Chisenhale Road, c. 1953. Tate, TGA 201011/3/1/69/1, TGA 9211/9/6/125, TGA 9211/9/6/126 & TGA 9211/9/6/127. Photos: Rosie Ram.



Figure 110. Top row: Nigel Henderson, photographs of Alison and Peter Smithson during installation of *Parallel of Life and Art*, ICA, 1953. Tate, TGA 201011/3/1/29/6-8. Middle & bottom row: Nigel Henderson, photographs of *Parallel of Life and Art*, ICA, 1953. Tate, TGA 9211/5/2/78, TGA 9211/5/2/56, TGA 9211/5/2/71, TGA 9211/5/2/77. Photos: Rosie Ram.

Henderson's negatives from the exhibition *Parallel of Life and Art* – including those created as a databank of copy negatives in advance of the exhibition, those shot to capture the informal installation process at the ICA, and those that show the complex hang itself [fig. 110] – retain the project in a latent state, suppressed beneath the surface of space and time, and awaiting future development. Looking at the negatives of *Parallel of Life and Art* installed at the ICA, it is evident that these images do offer a form of meta-analysis by photographically synthesising configurations within the hang

for further photographic ‘scrutiny’, to borrow Henderson’s term. But, in their negative state, the form of meta-analysis these images offer is not a direct elucidation of the materials; rather, the negatives create a translucent and inversional depiction of the show in miniature. They are a photographic othering of the exhibition as much as its representation, providing an even more unsettling portrayal of the project.

In *Patio and Pavilion*, the suppressed imagery from *Parallel of Life and Art* resurfaces darkly in the fragmented and eery scene constructed by Henderson and his collaborators, which ruptures the progressive, forward-looking idea of a post-war ‘future’ proposed by the title of *This is Tomorrow*. Conceiving of Henderson’s contribution to *Patio and Pavilion* as an extension of his investigation into the negational capacities of photography, the installation becomes an expression of negative time and space in a post-photographic reality, where everything is already a photographic image, and thus exponentially divisible and reproducible. Consonant with Moholy’s sentiment that photographs ‘are in our lives, as our lives are in them’, *Patio and Pavilion* becomes a staging of photography’s dark, two-way looking glass. In the negatives of *Patio and Pavilion*, the externalisation of photography enacted by the installation is internalised, returned to the latency of the photographic medium, where its negativity is extended [fig. 112]. The disembodied bust, entitled *Head of a Man*, is now cast against a black backing, working under the cover of darkness in the makeshift darkroom over which he presides. The objects and patterns that surround the head – some arranged like specimens on an examination table – are strangely illuminated, as if lit from within. So too are the forms on the hut’s translucent ceiling, which has now had its tones inverted to mirror the white-on-black tonality of the photograms illustrated above [fig. 107].

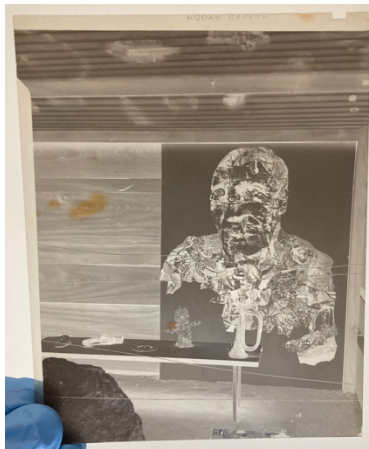
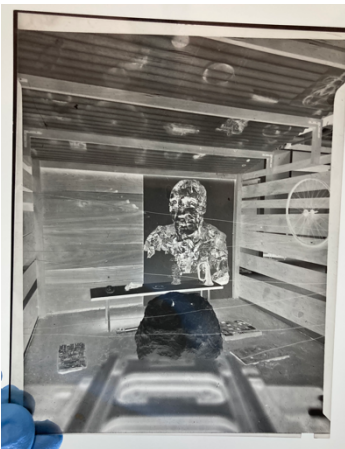


Figure 111. Nigel Henderson, photographs of *Patio and Pavilion*, Whitechapel Art Gallery, 1956. Tate, TGA 9211/9/5/35-46. Photos: Rosie Ram.

At Tate, among the negatives of *Patio and Pavilion* there are two that have had their tones re-inverted, creating negatives but with positive tonality. This indicates that Henderson had printed these images as positives with negative tonality. This gesture – in which negative and positive are deftly interchanged, switching their ontological positions – releases the negative from its previously subordinate state so that it becomes the positive’s negation. The image becomes an exercise in looking and looking again, differently, through the dark and inversional lens of photography, from a covert position in the shadows of traditional artistic work.

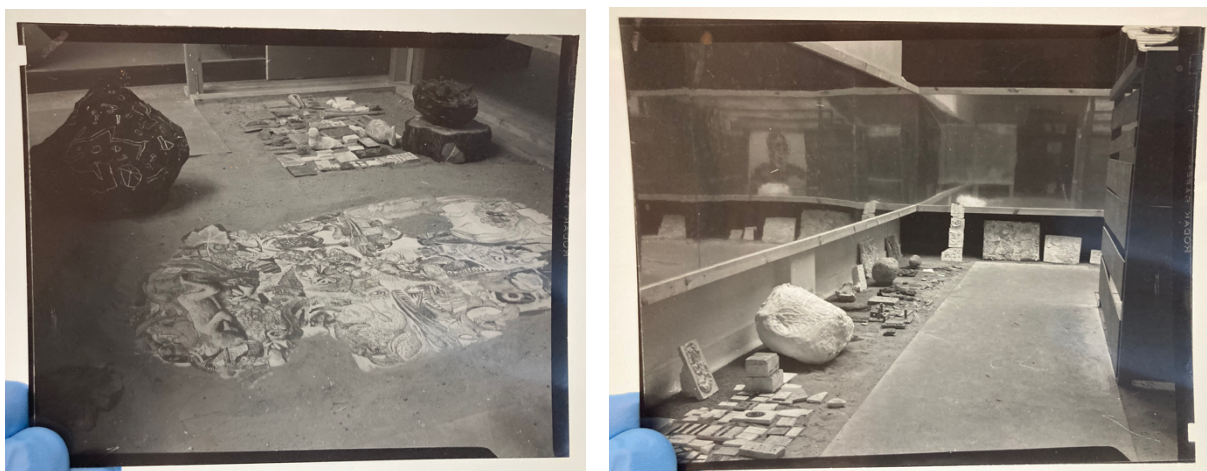


Figure 112. Nigel Henderson, photographs of *Patio and Pavilion*, Whitechapel Art Gallery, 1956. Tate, TGA 9211/9/5/35-46. Photos: Rosie Ram.

¹ Nigel Henderson, ‘Photographs’, *Ark, Royal College of Art Journal* 17 (July 1956): 48–51.

² Henderson, 49.

³ In the following year, 1954, Henderson exhibited several of these bather distortions at an intimate exhibition of his work titled *Photo Images*, held between April and May in the members’ room at the ICA.

⁴ Frank Whitford, *Nigel Henderson: Paintings, Collages & Photographs* (Cambridge: Kettle’s Yard Gallery, 1977), n. p.

⁵ Nigel Henderson, handwritten manuscript, c. 1951, in notebook kept between c. 1950-52. Tate, TGA 9211.3.1.

⁶ Nigel Henderson quoted in a typed thesis on Henderson by Charlie Jackson, 1973, p. 3. This thesis was written while Jackson was studying graphic art at Hornsey School of Art. Henderson was in written correspondence with Jackson while she was researching this text. Tate, TGA 7048.

⁷ Geoffrey Batchen, *Negative/Positive: A History of Photography* (London: Routledge, 2021), 5.

⁸ Batchen, 5.

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- ⁹ Batchen, 258.
- ¹⁰ Batchen, 246.
- ¹¹ Batchen, 5.
- ¹² Batchen, 258–59.
- ¹³ Batchen, 155.
- ¹⁴ Batchen, 112.
- ¹⁵ Batchen, 112.
- ¹⁶ Batchen, 15.
- ¹⁷ Daniel Palmer, *Photography and Collaboration: From Conceptual Art to Crowdsourcing* (London; New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), 5.
- ¹⁸ Palmer, 171.
- ¹⁹ Palmer, 5.
- ²⁰ Palmer, 5.
- ²¹ Palmer, 19–20.
- ²² Palmer, 19–20.
- ²³ Batchen, *Negative/Positive*, 159.
- ²⁴ Batchen, 162.
- ²⁵ Batchen, 160.
- ²⁶ Batchen, 157.
- ²⁷ Batchen, 88.
- ²⁸ Batchen, 258.
- ²⁹ Batchen, 88.
- ³⁰ Batchen, 258.
- ³¹ Batchen, 3.
- ³² Batchen, 4.
- ³³ Nigel Henderson, three sheets of undated, handwritten manuscript on photography, recto and verso. Tate, TGA 9211.4.6.
- ³⁴ Nigel Henderson, three sheets of undated, handwritten manuscript. Tate, TGA 9211.4.6.
- ³⁵ Nigel Henderson, undated manuscript on photography. Nigel Henderson Estate.
- ³⁶ John Roberts, *Revolutionary Time and the Avant-Garde* (London: Verso, 2015), 48.
- ³⁷ Roberts, 48.
- ³⁸ Roberts, 48.

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- ³⁹ Roberts, 48.
- ⁴⁰ Roberts, 30–31.
- ⁴¹ Roberts, 30–31.
- ⁴² Roberts, 47.
- ⁴³ Roberts, 36.
- ⁴⁴ Roberts, 36.
- ⁴⁵ Roberts, 46–47.
- ⁴⁶ Roberts, 46–47.
- ⁴⁷ Nigel Henderson, three sheets of undated, handwritten manuscript on photography, recto and verso. Tate, TGA 9211.4.6.
- ⁴⁸ Nigel Henderson, undated manuscript on photography. Nigel Henderson Estate.
- ⁴⁹ Robin Schuldenfrei, 'Images in Exile: Lucia Moholy's Bauhaus Negatives and the Construction of the Bauhaus Legacy', *History of Photography* 37, no. 2 (2013): 185.
- ⁵⁰ Jordan Troeller, 'Lucia Moholy's Idle Hands', *October*, no. 172 (Spring 2020): 71 note 5.
- ⁵¹ Schuldenfrei, 'Images in Exile: Lucia Moholy's Bauhaus Negatives', 185.
- ⁵² Troeller, 'Lucia Moholy's Idle Hands', 82.
- ⁵³ Troeller, 85.
- ⁵⁴ Troeller, 74–75.
- ⁵⁵ Troeller, 85.
- ⁵⁶ Troeller, 86.
- ⁵⁷ Troeller, 106.
- ⁵⁸ Troeller, 100.
- ⁵⁹ Schuldenfrei, 'Images in Exile: Lucia Moholy's Bauhaus Negatives', 189.
- ⁶⁰ Troeller, 'Lucia Moholy's Idle Hands', 106.
- ⁶¹ Schuldenfrei, 'Images in Exile: Lucia Moholy's Bauhaus Negatives', 201.
- ⁶² Troeller, 'Lucia Moholy's Idle Hands', 71.
- ⁶³ Troeller, 107–8.
- ⁶⁴ Troeller, 107–8.
- ⁶⁵ Troeller, 107–8.
- ⁶⁶ Schuldenfrei, 'Images in Exile: Lucia Moholy's Bauhaus Negatives', 202.
- ⁶⁷ Schuldenfrei, 202.
- ⁶⁸ Schuldenfrei, 202.

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- ⁶⁹ Schuldenfrei, 193.
- ⁷⁰ Schuldenfrei, 193.
- ⁷¹ Schuldenfrei, 191.
- ⁷² Schuldenfrei, 191.
- ⁷³ Schuldenfrei, 192.
- ⁷⁴ Lucia Moholy, *A Hundred Years of Photography, 1839-1939* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Published as a 'Pelican Special' by Penguin Books Limited, 1939), 15.
- ⁷⁵ Moholy, 16.
- ⁷⁶ As described in a text based on conversations with the artist, *Paintings, Collages & Photographs* (Anthony d'Offay).
- ⁷⁷ C I Jacobson, *Enlarging: The Technique of the Positive* (London; New York: The Focal Press, 1954), 104.
- ⁷⁸ As described in a text based on conversations with the artist, *Paintings, Collages & Photographs* (Anthony d'Offay).
- ⁷⁹ Jacobson, *Enlarging: The Technique of the Positive*, 43.
- ⁸⁰ Jacobson, 13.
- ⁸¹ Jacobson, 13.
- ⁸² Henderson, 'Photographs', 49.
- ⁸³ Henderson, 49.
- ⁸⁴ Nigel Henderson, three sheets of undated, handwritten manuscript on photography, recto and verso. Tate, TGA 9211.4.6.
- ⁸⁵ The pieces that comprise *Milk Bottle Photogram* have emerged from boiling water, like photographic prints that emerge from the liquid of chemical baths or are hung to dry after careful washing. Similarly, the figure of the bather, set again a backdrop of seawater, seems to swim up from the distorted surface of the image, developing like a reflection on rippled water. The coastal landscape also gestures to the use of saltwater in early photographic innovations, both Daguerre's use of saltwater and Fox Talbot's salt prints.
- ⁸⁶ Henderson, 'Photographs', 48.
- ⁸⁷ Henderson, 51.
- ⁸⁸ Henderson, 51.
- ⁸⁹ Moholy, *A Hundred Years of Photography, 1839-1939*, 61.
- ⁹⁰ Moholy, 158.
- ⁹¹ Moholy, 158.
- ⁹² Henderson, 'Photographs', 48.

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- ⁹³ Nigel Henderson, letter dated 29 January 1956, addressed to Michael Pearson, editor of *244* magazine, published by the School of Architecture at the University of Manchester. Nigel Henderson correspondence, Tate, TGA 9211.1.3.
- ⁹⁴ Whitford, *Paintings, Collages & Photographs* (Kettle's Yard).
- ⁹⁵ Nigel Henderson, 'Nigel Henderson', *Uppercase* 3 (1960).
- ⁹⁶ Henderson.
- ⁹⁷ John Roberts, 'Collaboration as a Problem of Art's Cultural Form', *Third Text* 18, no. 6 (1 November 2004): 560.
- ⁹⁸ Roberts, 560.
- ⁹⁹ Roberts, 560.
- ¹⁰⁰ Roberts, 560.
- ¹⁰¹ Roberts, 560–61.
- ¹⁰² Roberts, 560.
- ¹⁰³ Nigel Henderson, handwritten notes for talk on *Parallel of Life and Art*, titled 'A discussion on the implications of the exhibition' during the 'Evening Forum 3' at the Architectural Association School of Architecture, 54-6 Bedford Square, 7pm, 2 December 1953. Tate, TGA 9211.5.1.6 & TGA 9211.5.1.7.
- ¹⁰⁴ Nigel Henderson, handwritten notes for talk on *Parallel of Life and Art*. Tate, TGA 9211.5.1.6.
- ¹⁰⁵ Nigel Henderson, handwritten notes for talk on *Parallel of Life and Art*. Tate, TGA 9211.5.1.6.
- ¹⁰⁶ Nigel Henderson, handwritten notes for talk on *Parallel of Life and Art*. Tate, TGA 9211.5.1.6.
- ¹⁰⁷ C I Jacobson, *Developing: The Negative-Technique*, 10th ed. (London; New York: The Focal Press, 1950), 17.
- ¹⁰⁸ Reyner Banham, *The New Brutalism: Ethic or Aesthetic?* (London: Architectural Press, 1966), 64.
- ¹⁰⁹ Banham, 65.
- ¹¹⁰ Victoria Walsh, *Nigel Henderson: Parallel of Life and Art* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2001), 115.
- ¹¹¹ Ben Highmore, *The Art of Brutalism: Rescuing Hope from Catastrophe in 1950s Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 142–43.
- ¹¹² Moholy, *A Hundred Years of Photography, 1839-1939*, 178.
- ¹¹³ Nigel Henderson, letter to Colin St John (Sandy) Wilson. Wilson archive, Pallant House Gallery. WIL/ 10/ 12a.
- ¹¹⁴ Moholy, *A Hundred Years of Photography, 1839-1939*, 12–13.
- ¹¹⁵ Moholy, 12.
- ¹¹⁶ Nigel Henderson, three sheets of undated, handwritten manuscript on photography, recto and verso. Tate, TGA 9211.4.6
- ¹¹⁷ Nigel Henderson, undated manuscript on photography. Nigel Henderson Estate.

¹¹⁸ Walsh, *Nigel Henderson*, 115.

¹¹⁹ Mark Fisher, *The Weird and the Eerie* (London: Repeater Books, 2016), 61.

¹²⁰ Fisher, 11.

¹²¹ Fisher, 128.

¹²² Fisher, 106.

¹²³ Fisher, 104.

¹²⁴ Fisher, 62.

¹²⁵ Fisher, 61.

¹²⁶ Fisher, 74–75.

¹²⁷ Fisher, 63.

¹²⁸ Fisher, 64.

¹²⁹ Fisher, 11.

¹³⁰ Fisher, 11.

Conclusion

From his Creative Photography darkroom at the Central School of Arts and Crafts, to the interior of the house at 46 Chisenhale Road, to the exhibition *Parallel of Life and Art* at the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA), to the dark, inverted zone inside the photographic negative itself, to the eerie externalisations of photographic technologies within *Patio and Pavilion* at the Whitechapel Art Gallery, Nigel Henderson's research practice in post-war London operated through ever-shifting and semi-concealed positions of negativity. Indeed, across these dispersed settings, negativity emerges as the critical hinge of this research work. Yet, significantly, the forms of negativity evidenced throughout Henderson's practice are not infused with the iconoclastic heroics popularly associated with the anti-art gestures of the avant-garde. Rather, this mode of artistic research remains materially, technically, and conceptually rooted in the negative, and is therefore perpetually disassociated and displaced. In Henderson's work, negation is revealed as a searching, unsettled and unsettling process of visual and cognitive investigation rather than as a performative act. Not only is this negative kind of analysis processual, but it is also highly provisional, obfuscating, and uncertain. Its questions and outcomes imprecisely defined. The value of this practice does not, therefore, conform to the modernist ideals of progress and productivity. Rather, it provides a critical lens through which to see things otherwise; it offers a negative image of modernity itself. As this thesis has shown, this negatively analytical kind of practice can only be interrogated by reconceiving of the artist's work as a form of research itself, thereby allowing the most unstable elements of his output to be studied not as artworks or as archival documentation, but as methodological devices.

As the critical hinge of Henderson's artistic research, this processual form of negativity inflected the strategies of subversion and subterfuge within the art school; the disruption and destabilisation of visual acuity and rational comprehension inside the home; and the negation and deflation of traditional artistic identity, skill, and form within the gallery. Across the inverted, two-way mirror of photography's positive-negative divide, it fostered spatially and temporally extended manoeuvres of displacement, distortion, latency, and delay. Working between these settings, the negative strategies enacted throughout Henderson's practice enabled his research work to maintain an interstitial position, occupying a place of partial self-elision and internal exile. This allowed the artist to conform neither to the traditional category of 'Art', as he

saw it, and nor to the codes and conventions of the private and professional sites he inhabited. Not only does this mode of research deflate artistic tradition, therefore, but it is also self-deflationary, pursuing, as Henderson jotted down in a notebook in 1950, 'Greater and greater negation of self, the self acting, self-seeking, s[elf] regulating, autonomous self.'¹ This negativity, therefore, allowed the artist to sustain the 'No-man's land' necessary for his critically tentative position of being 'not "a real artist"', as he deemed himself, whose practice grappled with the ongoing uncertainty and irresolution of employing art as a mode of visual and cognitive analysis.² By operating in critical proximity with other forms of work, however, this kind of artistic negativity does not pursue a notion of art's exceptionalism or defend its detachment from reality; it is not a retreat into a romantic ideal of art for art's sake. Rather, this is a negativity that upholds the precarious position of artistic inquiry at a nexus between other professions and disciplines – and their established ways of knowing – where its activities of alignment and exchange must remain enduringly negative to eschew instrumentalisation, co-option, or subsumption into non-art fields.

In my introduction, I quoted a definition of research as the 'detailed study of a subject, especially in order to discover (new) information or reach a (new) understanding'.³ Ultimately, this thesis has demonstrated how artistic research might generate new knowledge negatively through an unstable and disjointed practice of departure and diversion, restlessly seeking to discover *other* information or reach *other* understandings. The mode of study pursued by Henderson was a negational investigation into the established ways of looking at and thinking about the modern world, which inverted the spectacular optics of progress and productivity, and undermined the dominant ideals of certainty and finality. In contrast to the utopian imaginings of the pre-war avant-garde and the patriotic visions of building a better, brighter Britain after the war, his research practice grappled with a darker, inversional image of post-war reality, picturing instead a negative modernity.

This thesis has shown that to appreciate Henderson's work as research requires an inverted apprehension of the work of art itself, which sees it switch position from something to be looked at and thought about, to something that should be looked through and thought with, thus activating its latent, negative potential to counter established modes of perception and comprehension. Not only does this conclusion have crucial implications for the treatment of the material and technological residues of

Henderson's practice, but it also raises essential questions about the avoidance or suppression of negativity within the contemporary contexts that would otherwise purport to support artistic research, including the museum and the academy, where terms such as 'practice-based research' and 'research-based practice' are increasingly prevalent. Indeed, when conceptualised as artistic research, the example of Henderson's practice in post-war London offers an important contribution to – and contestation of – dominant understandings of artistic practice as a form of research in the UK today.

Furthermore, my conclusions pose challenges to practices of curating that seek to work with the materials generated by historic examples of artistic research, such as the remnants of Henderson's multi-sited investigations in post-war London. As my thesis has demonstrated, it is necessary to return the residues of this kind of work to their sites and conditions of mobilisation in order to reactivate them methodologically. By adopting this approach, my four chapters have revealed strategies of invocation and opposition across different professional and private settings, which must themselves be recast as unlikely scenes of research. Crucially, as I have shown, these scenes departed from the idealistic laboratories and workshops of the avant-garde as much as they did from the trope of the isolated artist's studio. By extending this approach into the present, the holdings of Henderson's work at Tate and at the Kings Head, must also be recast not as archives or collections, but as more dynamic research contexts, in which questions and outcomes are understood as critically uncertain.

Not only does this thesis demonstrate the intricate processes of inquiry applied through and around the images that comprised Henderson's research work, but it also reveals the disruptive, inversional, ulterior, and, fundamentally, negative character of the knowledge produced. Curatorially, therefore, the processual negativity of such research materials must be sustained for them to continue to function methodologically. Rather than securing their identity as either artworks or documentation and stabilising their characteristics according to classificatory conventions, these materials must be stored and presented in ways that maintain their negativity, both materially and conceptually.

Sustaining the negative status of artistic research materials

The highly ephemeral images that I foreground throughout this thesis – the negative showing the shard of silkscreen-printed paper, the cutting of the photographic reproduction of the pair of sculpted eyes, Henderson’s copy of Hans Namuth’s photograph of Jackson Pollock painting, the negative made from the found slide of the bathers – do not conform to the conventions of museological classification. They are authorially complex, serving as interfaces between Henderson’s work and the work of others; they circulate as elements through the more individualised parts of his practice as much as between his collaborative interactions. Furthermore, their photographic status implies that they cannot be understood as singular entities. Rather, they should be read as images suspended between photography’s inherent states of division and multiplication, materiality and immateriality. Moreover, these images remained active parts of the artist’s multi-sited research practice over an extended period, hence fixing their origin to a single date or linear provenance would prove to be misleading.

While such items might be acquisitioned by the museum and assimilated into the archive as photographic documentation or miscellaneous ephemera, or even elevated to the position of artworks within the institution’s collection, the compartmentalisation and codification implemented by the acquisitional process would render the complexities of the investigative labour surrounding their use almost invisible. Crucially, such images therefore demand a kind of anti-classificatory classification, which identifies them according to their negative status as neither artworks nor documentation.

Furthermore, it is significant that these images bear partial connections with forms that cannot – in their entirety – be acquisitioned by the museum and assimilated into either its archive or collection: from the collaborative refurbishment project encircling Ronald Jenkins’ office at Ove Arup; to the semi-covert and experimental interactions of the practitioners within and around the Central School; to the arrangements of images and patterns throughout 46 Chisenhale Road; to the spatialised hang of *Parallel of Life and Art*; to the desolate environment of *Patio and Pavilion*, with its makeshift hut cordoned off by wire, sandy floor, and detritus littered enclosure. Given the museum’s incapacity to take possession of these long-lost forms, Henderson’s photographic images risk serving as a kind of compensation for the works that cannot wholly be owned. They are

made to perform the role of documentation or to provide a kind of visual synecdoche, becoming partially representative fragments that stand in for the unpossessable whole.

Significantly, the photograph's own image-object status must be elided to maintain the dominance of the subject matter depicted over the photographic form of the depiction, the latter of which carries the negational echo of its negative counterpart. The photographic negatives are almost universally converted into positives by Tate, both on its website and in the sheets of positive proxies provided in the archival Reading Rooms. This obscures the methodological function of the artist's photographs as both images and objects, positives and negatives. Moreover, it suppresses their role as active, negational research materials that belong to more than one context, interconnect artistic and non-artistic modes of labour, and mediate multi-authorial and anti-authorial interactions. Importantly, Henderson did not turn to photography to become a professional photographer; rather the indefinite status of photography after the Second World War and its unresolved relationship to art cultivated the negativity of his practice. For a full understanding of his work, it is therefore critical for the uncertain status of his photographic output to be retained, rather than being elevated to the level of artwork or relegated to that of documentation.

Not only has my thesis revealed the importance of returning these materials to their sites of mobilisation, but it has also shown the value in reconceiving these sites themselves as dynamic scenes of a searching and highly provisional kind of artistic research. Rather than being cast as a place for discipline-specific training, academic qualification, and professionalisation, the art school can instead be understood to provide the conditions for destabilising interactions and disruptive experimentation, whereby those on the premises depart from the didactic hierarchy of tutors and students to become co-researchers. As a field station for research, the family household is similarly reformulated. This sees husband and wife repositioned as visual analysts working in tandem, thereby eschewing the gender roles conventionally connoted by feminised ideas of domesticity as much as by the masculinised trope of the artist's studio. The exhibition space undergoes a similar inversion when rethought as a context for processual research. Rather than being the seat of connoisseurial appreciation and taste, it becomes an opportunity for the category of art to be negated, using ambiguous photographic research materials to usurp traditional artistic forms. Furthermore, by refusing to see the photographic negative as a subsidiary material, such negatives can

be repositioned at the nexus of this multi-sited research practice and the source of its spatial and temporal extension. However, reconceiving each of these sites as scenes of artistic research, poses further problems for the museological acquisition and display of this kind of practice, given that it throws wide open the scope of what is deemed to constitute the work of art. In Henderson's practice, non-art elements within these settings become critical catalysts for the negative function of his work, thereby inverting their non-art status and implicating them in this negational mode of artistic research.

Additionally, by reorienting the definition of artistic work from the manual production of finite artistic forms to the discursive, cognitive, and perceptual activity of research as a processual means of knowledge production, this thesis has shown that alternative understandings of artistic collaboration and authorship become possible. When read and reconnected as a kind of artistic research work, Henderson's practice in post-war London demonstrates modes and moments of collaborative interaction, shared authorship and anonymity that are inconsistent and unclear. Throughout his work, collaboration was not always explicitly named as such or attached to concrete outcomes, and hence these interactions have remained semi-concealed. The surviving materials that pay testament to such fleeting and fragmented forms of collaboration have an inexact authorial status today that casts doubt on the logic of attribution itself. Indeed, throughout this thesis, Henderson's name operates as a kind of placeholder for authorial complexity and an ongoing openness to collaboration. As such, his example elucidates the reductive capacity of fixed attribution. While collaborative inconsistency and lack of authorial clarity are inconvenient for the classification of the materials that comprised his practice, these complexities are some of the most critical elements of his work, which must be preserved to properly comprehend its ongoing openness. These materials, therefore, demand a kind of negative attribution, which denies fixed authorship and refuses to foreclose the possibilities of further, indeterminate collaboration.

Fundamentally, the extended kinds of collaboration and authorial complexity fostered by Henderson's research practice derived from his engagement with the dark, inverted form of the photographic negative. By situating the negative as its nexus, Henderson's work not only negates a notion of fixed authorship, but it also negates a delimiting idea of artistic collaboration. In the post-war period, the negative served as a hidden interface, a ghostly, translucent stencil, which permitted modes of collaboration and collective authorship to filter through his research practice. The negative therefore

relocates collaboration and authorship from external reality into the darkened timelessness and spacelessness internal to photography, where further forms of creative interaction become latent potentials. However, because of the threat that such potentials pose for the stability of authorial attribution as well as for the originality, uniqueness, and provenance of positive images – and ‘vintage’ prints, in particular – photographic negatives are commonly dismissed or suppressed as artistic materials.

Neither capitalistic labour nor traditional artistic work

As this thesis has demonstrated, none of the most critical sites of Henderson’s practice in post-war London conformed to the traditional model of the artist’s studio. His work within and between these contexts thus forgoes the authentication of the studio as a valorising guarantor of its status as art. However, when observed across these disparate settings, his investigative labour is undoubtedly artistic. Yet, it emerges as such negatively by dint of its lack of adherence to other forms of work. It appears suspended in a parallel and negative position, grappling as much with the codes and conventions of ‘Art’ as with the restrictive epistemologies that govern the production of accepted forms of knowledge with predetermined disciplinary domains. The notion of artistic research thus becomes a conceptual apparatus in which to hold the artistic and non-artistic elements of his practice in a state of critical exchange and contradiction. Understood as artistic research, his work can be held in its unresolved process of inquiry, engaged in the ongoing activity of creating knowledge negatively, through ever-shifting manoeuvres of looking and thinking differently about art and about the modern world. Roberts argues that ‘what distinguishes art from other practices – whether social, scientific, philosophical or artisanal – is that it is the only practice that operates out of a direct sense of its own impossibility and impermanence.’⁴ The notion of research offers a means of naming – and sustaining – an otherwise impossible and impermanent mode of artistic practice, which is simultaneously art and not art, operating negatively at the interface between these states.

For Roberts, as I have discussed, artistic negation is driven, by ‘the very “asociality” of art under capitalism’, whereby ‘for art to remain art (rather than transform itself into architectural design, fashion or social theory *tout court*) it must experience itself as being “out of joint” both with its official place in the world and with its own traditions.’⁵ At the Central School, Henderson’s darkroom fostered this kind of ‘out of joint’

positioning by offering a space of semi-concealed slippage between art and non-art, accommodating an uncertain mode of practice that evaded the post-war instrumentalisation of avant-garde 'research work' and the institution's own orientation towards industry. The 'out of joint' position of Henderson's research – its suspended state between artistic tradition, capitalist labour and academic disciplinarity – was further fostered by the conditions within 46 Chisenhale Road, which served as an East End outpost for him and his colleagues, set apart from the typical locations of artistic labour and middle class living during the period. Judith's employment on Discover Your Neighbour framed the house as a 'field station' for socio-anthropological observation, informed by the officious precedent of Mass Observation. Yet, Henderson's artistic research methodology departed from his wife's academic training, further emphasising the oblique, disjointed relationship of his work to established modes of visual analysis.

Furthermore, Roberts argues that the research programme of the avant-garde carves out recursive 'trajectories of escape' which extend away from the established category of art and its institutions and into the territories of non-art and the assimilated content of capitalism. Yet, he argues, this negational departure is 'subject to the hailing effect of art as art',⁶ and is coupled immanently with a looping route of return. The installation of *Parallel of Life and Art* at the ICA provided the critical context for a staging of this kind of negational trajectory of departure and return. The exhibition emptied the gallery of artistic materials and inserted non-art photographic reproductions into the vacated space, thus negating the traditions of artistic identity, skill, and form. Henderson's personal contributions to the exhibition presented his photographic research practice – which he had developed at the Central School and at 46 Chisenhale Road – as art and, concurrently, as non-art, as its negational photographic counterpart.

Across these sites, the artist's practice occupied a layered position, just slightly removed from these scenes – associated yet disassociated, placed yet displaced – suspended in a parallel state of proximity and exchange between artistic tradition and non-artistic labour. As my final chapter reveals, this position of parallel proximity was permitted by Henderson's use of the photographic negative as the technological and conceptual locus of his practice, the hidden interface of his research work. By locating his practice across the dark, inverted, two-way mirror of the negative, I argue that Henderson's work operates through the alternative temporalities and spatialities of photographic technology. In doing so, it demonstrates a critical reappropriation of modern technology

in order to implement a temporality not aligned with the acceleration of capitalist production, nor consumption, nor lending itself to the chronological lineage of museological tradition. By repurposing the interior zone of photographic technology, Henderson's research practice therefore also remains other to the advanced conditions of mechanised and managed labour under capitalism.

Crucially, this thesis conceives of artistic research as a parasitic kind of practice that gleans support from the infrastructures and resources provided by both art and non-art fields. In post-war London, Henderson's practice was dependent upon the art school, the private household (through his wife's employment), the art gallery, and the technologies of photography. However, his research subverted the conditions within these sites, disrupting their infrastructures, and infiltrating their gaps. In doing so, it generated knowledge that deviated from the epistemologies of artistic tradition as much as from the optics and logics of capitalism and from official forms of social research sanctioned by the state. This kind of practice does not produce products that can be fully instrumentalised in service of the settings it occupies, but instead offers inversional ways of seeing and thinking from within dominant structures and systems. If artistic research is to be fostered in the present, therefore, this may require a provision of spaces and support systems that operate in tandem, critically, with the tacit permission to deviate from a position inside the regulations governing such sites and structures.

Unclear analyses and negative knowledges

The unacademic, unprofessional, interstitial, inversional and, ultimately, negative conception of artistic research that emerges across my four chapters departs from the overwhelmingly positivistic definition of this mode of practice in the UK today. Henderson's work, therefore, offers an important counterpoint to dominant understandings of the relationship between artistic practice and research in the contemporary moment. In the UK, creative practice – including artistic practice – is now formally subsumed into the Arts and Humanities Research Council's (AHRC) definition of the research it supports. Indeed, the AHRC positions itself as 'a world leader in supporting the development of the emerging area of practice-led research'.⁷ The AHRC describes legitimate and, therefore, publicly fundable research as driven by 'clearly-articulated research questions, issues or problems, set in a clear context of other

research in that area, and using appropriate research methods and/or approaches.’⁸ Such research must be positively motivated: contributing ‘to the advancement of creativity, insights, knowledge and understanding’; appropriately answering its questions; and generating ‘outcomes’ beneficial to other researchers and to broader audiences. The value of collaborative work is emphasised, as is the importance of ‘knowledge transfer’ and exchange with other fields.⁹ In this context, artistic research is mobilised to serve the AHRC’s commitment to ‘contribute to the economic competitiveness of Our United Kingdom and the effectiveness of public services and policy, and to enhance the quality of life and creative output of the nation.’¹⁰ Research is intended to stimulate growth, boost innovation in the private and public sectors, enhance productivity, feed the labour market, contribute to creative industries and knowledge economies, and enrich cultural, social and intellectual capital.

As recipients of AHRC funding, this definition of research is echoed by arts and humanities departments in art schools and universities, as well as in public museums and galleries throughout the UK. In universities, this has led to a recent proliferation of programmes and projects that are variously described as practice-based research, practice-led research, arts-based research, practice-centred research, studio-based research, and research-led practice, among other terms.¹¹ In combination with the influence of the AHRC, the institutionalisation of artistic research within higher education has been shaped by alterations to research degree regulations, which have meant that practical elements can be submitted for an award. As Robin Nelson reflects,

‘The term arts “Practice as Research” would probably not have been coined had artists not got involved with modern higher education institutions in respect of programmes of learning, particularly at PhD level. The emphasis on studio practice in art schools or academies has found itself in tension with university protocols in respect of degree-awarding powers and the question of what constitutes knowledge in research.’¹²

Nelson describes the increasing capacity within higher education institutions ‘for arts, media, and other practices to be recognised as knowledge-producing and submitted as research for PhDs and professional research audits (RAE, REF, RQF)’.¹³ To be recognised as research, Kristina Niedderer and Seymour Roworth-Stokes argue that

creative practice must conform to the tenets of ‘objectivity, reliability, and validity [...] as essential criteria for the rigorous conduct and dissemination of research.’¹⁴

Beyond arts and humanities departments, artistic practice is also instrumentalised as research in the social sciences, where such practices provide data. Patricia Leavy defines ‘arts-based research (ABR)’ as ‘research that adapts the tenets of the creative arts in a social research project to address social research questions in holistic and engaged ways; a generative approach that places the inquiry process at the centre and values aesthetic understanding, evocation, and provocation.’¹⁵ Using ABR, researchers can ‘tap into the unique capabilities of the arts as a way of knowing,’¹⁶ motivated by ‘the belief that the arts and humanities can facilitate social scientific goals.’¹⁷ Leavy writes, ‘ABR is useful for tapping into issues that are otherwise out of reach.’¹⁸ In particular, she highlights the ‘resistive and transformational capability’ of photography and collage as tools within ABR research, explaining that they have ‘the capacity to promote defamiliarization’ and, therefore, hold ‘a great appeal for social researchers.’¹⁹ However, she notes, the ‘messy process’ of art can be a barrier for ‘students trying to get their thesis work approved, for researchers applying for social science grants, and so forth.’²⁰ To entice funders, Leavy recommends that arts-based researchers should use language that ‘emphasizes emergence and/or the resistive nature of art, including words and phrases such as *explore, create, play, emerge, express, trouble, subvert, generate, inquiry, stimulate, illuminate, unearth, yield, and seek to understand.*’²¹

The institutional assimilation and formalisation of artistic research is also prevalent within the contemporary museum. In October 2019, Tate published the *Tate Research Strategy* page on their website, which begins with the subheading ‘Research is the Engine that Drives the Museum’.²² This page addresses the necessity of implementing the AHRC’s definition of research within the art museum, which, as an Independent Research Organisation, must make ‘at least one successful funding application to the AHRC every three years.’²³ While research is identified as having been ‘an integral element of practice across Tate arguably since the formation of the museum in the late nineteenth century’, it is acknowledged that the institution’s contemporary conception of research has only been formalised in more recent years, partly in order to enable ‘the organisation to apply directly to the different Research Councils for funding for projects, fellowships and Collaborative Doctoral Partnership studentships’. Echoing the AHRC’s own rhetoric, innovation, experimentation, collaboration and cross-disciplinarity are

promoted as vital components of a ‘vibrant research culture’ within the museum. The outputs of this research culture are positively characterised as having the capacity to ‘generate original insights and new knowledge’ that enrich, enhance, and empower, while conveying ‘value, rigour and relevance’. Practice-based research is mobilised within this context in order to contribute to the ‘intellectual capacity of the museum’.²⁴

In Britain, a notion of artistic practice as a mode of positive and productive research has therefore become successfully assimilated into the academy and the museum, as well as into the public funding bodies upon which these institutions depend. In the highly competitive financial environment that faces the arts and humanities in the UK, the conception of artistic research that becomes dominant is one that is most fundable and conforms most closely to the AHRC’s preferred definition, which emphasises clarity, measurable outcomes, and predetermined domains of knowledge. In this context, ‘practice-based research’ or ‘research-based practice’ is valued on the basis of its contributions to the economic, social or cultural wealth of the nation. Furthermore, such research is legitimised according to the scientifically inflected criteria of ‘objectivity, reliability, and validity’, as highlighted by Niedderer and Roworth-Stokes.²⁵ Outside these institutions of art, the conception of artistic practice as research is also shaped by its instrumentalisation within other fields, such as the social sciences, which are keen to tap into its ‘unique capabilities [...] as a way of knowing’²⁶ and to harness its potential to ‘facilitate social scientific goals.’²⁷ In such instances, some of the most attractive attributes of artistic practice are its resistive energies and its defamiliarizing capacities; its disruptive potential becomes a rich resource to be mined.

When cast against this contemporary backdrop, my reading of Henderson’s artistic practice in post-war London as research becomes a pertinent counterpoint to more positivistic conceptions of art’s relationship to research, which see artistic research practices legitimised by the doctrines of clarity, objectivity, reliability, and validity, and valued according to their sociocultural and economic benefits. Moreover, when set against the apparent enthusiasm of the social sciences for art’s perceived ‘resistive’ potential, my reading of Henderson’s artistic practice as a fundamentally negational form of research demonstrates a further, critical area of divergence. The ‘resistive’ character of Henderson’s research is shrouded in uncertainty and obfuscation. It therefore remains incessantly resistive to assimilation or instrumentalisation. This is what makes his work at the Central School, at 46 Chisenhale Road, within *Parallel of*

Life and Art, inside photographic technologies, and throughout *Patio and Pavilion* so mercurial. Its negativity is unresolved and ongoing. It cannot, therefore, be readily ‘tapped into’ by social scientists or other professionals. It fails forcefully to generate consolidated research outcomes. This research practice is disjointed, partially concealed, highly ephemeral, authorially ambiguous, uncertain of its status as art, and always on the brink of disintegration – via collage and photography – into other forms. Yet, this is also how it produces new knowledge, via a negative relationship to clarity, objectivity, reliability, and validity. Ultimately, it negates research to define research anew.

Negative dialectics and non-identity

At the outset of this thesis, I asked how the photographic images mobilised reiteratively and provisionally throughout Henderson’s work in 1950s London might be conceived neither as artworks and nor documentation, but rather as constituting a research practice. As my chapters have demonstrated, these highly ephemeral, collaboratively mobilised, ambiguously authored and technologically replicated materials provide the key to understanding Henderson’s work as a form of extended, multi-sited investigation. The value of these materials is thus methodological rather than canonical or economic; and the challenge is how to make this methodological value visible, while sustaining the uncertain, interstitial, inversional and fundamentally negative character of the knowledge associated with these materials. Building upon the conclusions from this thesis, I will now propose an approach for working with the residues of Henderson’s research practice that draws upon Theodor Adorno’s theorisation of negative dialectics, as formulated in his lectures from 1965 and 1966 and in his subsequent book *Negative Dialectics* (1973), published as the theorist’s own ‘doctrine of method’.²⁸ For Adorno, ‘the truth content of the intellectual experience’ generated through negative dialectics is itself ‘a negative one.’²⁹ His writing therefore offers an approach to working with Henderson’s research materials that holds their negativity in play.

Crucially, Adorno argues that negative dialectics provides a theoretical method that operates against the dominant tendencies of modern society towards positivity and affirmation. As he observes, the term ‘positive’ has a dual meaning. On one hand, it implies ‘what is given, is postulated, is there – as when we speak of positivism as the philosophy that sticks to the facts.’ While on the other hand, it is ‘furnished with the good, the higher, the approvable attributes’ and ‘in a certain sense, the ideal.’³⁰ In

opposition to this valorisation of positivity, Adorno asserts, ‘when I speak of “negative dialectics” not the least important reason for doing so is my desire to dissociate myself from the fetishization of the positive”³¹ Crucially, Negative dialectics refuses the Hegelian negation of the negation that provides a path back into positivity. Instead, for Adorno, negative dialectics is ‘unswerving’ in its negativity.³² His theoretical model for remaining within the negative, therefore, offers a critical means for navigating the negativity that defines the material, technical and conceptual basis of Henderson’s artistic research practice, without delimiting its negational potential.

Importantly, Adorno argues that negative dialectics provides a methodology that is anti-systematic and that opposes ‘the claustrophobia of a systematised society’.³³ He describes this approach as a means of working against ‘the untruth, the mania’ of systematising,³⁴ which he describes as a bureaucratic impetus ‘to stuff all things into their categories.’³⁵ For Adorno, the drive to insert things into ‘prefabricated categories’ operates as a reductive and exhaustive force,³⁶ which denies the complexity and immanent connectivity of reality.³⁷ Instead, he posits negative dialectics as a ‘tentative, experimental’ method,³⁸ which ‘avoids systemization by remaining inconclusive’.³⁹ In tandem with this anti-systematic approach, Adorno roots negative dialectics in a premise of ‘non-identity’. As with the need to systematise, he is highly critical of the ‘insatiable’ desire to identify.⁴⁰ Indeed, he describes identity as ‘the primal form of ideology’,⁴¹ which perpetuates the ‘untruth’ that objects and concepts can ever be fully aligned.⁴² Starting from a position that is ‘suspicious of all identity’,⁴³ negative dialectics proceeds via a ‘consistent sense of nonidentity.’⁴⁴ It ‘sets out’ he asserts, ‘to be a dialectics not of identity but of *non-identity*’ that articulates ‘the divergence of concept and thing, subject and object, and their unreconciled state.’⁴⁵ This ‘turn towards nonidentity’ is, he argues, ‘the hinge of negative dialectics.’⁴⁶ Crucially, he offers an alternative method, ‘not of identifying an object, but of identifying with people and things’,⁴⁷ which constructs definition through affinities, contrasts and contradictions.

As Terrence Thomson has argued, negative dialectics ‘gives weight to “the neglected, the excluded” without attempting to transform it *via* identity.’⁴⁸ Adorno’s method therefore offers a pertinent means of approaching the highly ephemeral, unattributable materials that Henderson mobilised within his research practice. For Adorno, ephemerality fuels negative dialectics. Indeed, he argues that the negative dialectician ‘should seek refuge in ephemeral objects not yet overdetermined by intentions.’⁴⁹ Adorno’s theorisation

draws upon what he describes as the ‘dregs’ and ‘dross’ and ‘the absurd, the irrational’ elements that are cast as the discarded remainders within reality.⁵⁰ These remainders are, he argues, repressed because of their incompatibility with established systems, identities, and demarcated knowledge domains. Countering this repression, Adorno advocates an approach that is ‘attracted by the very things that pass unobserved or by what people prefer to regard as undeserving of scrutiny.’⁵¹ He continues, ‘If the method I am trying to describe to you constantly tends towards micrology, in other words to immerse itself in the minutest details, it does so not out of philosophical pedantry, but precisely so as to strike a spark’.⁵² As Thompson explains, ‘it is Adorno’s rejoinder to critically engage this remainder, to investigate non-reductively the difference excluded from the identifying process – what resists identification and is cast-off as surplus’.⁵³

Invoking Adorno’s thinking, Thompson proposes that ‘we must engineer ulterior environments of the conceptual conducive to the negativity of the nonconceptual.’⁵⁴ Taken almost literally, this statement might be read as a kind of curatorial call to arms, demanding a new approach to retaining the negative capacity of a research practice such as Henderson’s within museological space. In fact, Adorno argues that negative dialectics necessitates a spatialised approach, which suspends the negativity of objects and concepts within constellations.⁵⁵ Elucidating this approach, he writes,

‘Becoming aware of a constellation in which a thing stands is tantamount to deciphering the constellation which, having come to be, it bears within it. [...] The history locked in the object can only be delivered by a knowledge mindful of the historic positional value of the object in relation to other objects [...] Cognition of the object in its constellation is cognition of the process stored in the object.’⁵⁶

This permits an anti-systematic logic of non-identity to be implemented, which holds complexities and contradictions in play without pursuing resolution. Through this constellational approach, Adorno writes, ‘Everything does not become resolved; everything does not come out even; rather one moment sheds light on the other, and the figures that the individual moments form together are specific signs and a legible script’.⁵⁷ As Thompson further explains,

‘no definition or meaning as such is revealed. Constellations are nonhierarchical; concepts forming a constellation relate to one another in nonlinear, non-binary, horizontal webs. [...] by positioning concepts in related assemblages, monadologically circulating around the thing, each concept expresses a negated content transmitted from another concept and *vice versa*. Reflection upon this movement unravels a mimetic topological negative of the thing; the originality of Adorno’s constellation is that a multiplicity of concepts harmonize *for* negativity, *for* dissonance’.⁵⁸

The spatialised approach advocated by Adorno, which implements a negatively constellational logic, is one that speaks to the practice of curating, which is itself a spatialised and constellational mode of working that creates knowledge relationally and has the capacity to sustain contradiction. What is more, Adorno’s two key premises of nonidentity and anti-systematising provide a basis to counter the potentially reductive protocols of codification and ordering, which are implemented through conventional museological procedures of acquisition, classification, and display. Drawing upon Adorno’s methodology of negative dialectics, we can begin to imagine alternative approaches that would be non-systematic and would resist the drive to identify, thus suspending these materials in their in-between states of uncertainty and irresolution. Following Adorno’s thinking, the highly ephemeral, cast-off, and surplus elements of Henderson’s research practice – the ‘dregs’ and ‘dross’ of his work – can be revalued as reservoirs of negativity, from which new curatorial constellations can be constructed.

Invoking negative dialectics curatorially to present the material traces of Henderson’s research practice would require a negatively constellational logic to be applied to the concepts of authorial attribution, originality, medium specificity, and form. This would see the residues of his work encircled negatively by each authorial name affiliated with the materials in a constellation of non-attributions. All the dates of production, reproduction and use would articulate a notion of non-origin. And non-medium and non-form would be specified by the technological, material and immaterial translations associated with each item. Crucially, this approach would not replace an authorial name with a group of co-authorial names, or state the authorial vacancy connoted by the term ‘anonymous’, but instead it would speak to the authorial complexity of these materials as a critique of fixed attribution itself. Similarly, originality would not be reduced to a single date, specified as a date range, provided as a circa period, or articulated as an

absence of chronological knowledge by the wording 'date unknown'. Instead, a negative constellation of origin points would gesture to the exponential fracturing of production and reproduction across time and space as an acknowledgement of the falsity of the fetishized concept of originality. Furthermore, by working negatively in this way, the materials mobilised within Henderson's research practice would maintain their critical capacity to shift status, to flicker between image and object, to be mobilised inter-medially or anti-medially, and to function as both art and non-art simultaneously.

Imagining *Vital Fragments* otherwise: *Image as Method*

The title for *Vital Fragments: Nigel Henderson and the Art of Collage* at Tate Britain had been taken from a statement that the artist wrote to accompany an exhibition of his recent work at the ICA in 1961, which consisted primarily of collage and photography. My co-curators and I had created the term 'vital fragments' as a composite from elements of the following quotation: 'I feel happiest among discarded things, vituperative fragments cast casually from life, with the fizz of vitality still about them.'⁵⁹ Drawing upon this sentiment, we had sought to show the integration of these vituperative and yet fizzingly vital fragments into Henderson's collage work. The framed collages that populated the walls and plinths of *Vital Fragments* demonstrated the consolidation of these materials into forms recognisable as artworks and readily attributable to the artist's name. In our vitrines, however, we showcased a parallel part of Henderson's practice, which is defined by the reverse of this integrational logic and is characterised by an ongoing lack of consolidation. Had we wanted to foreground this latter, unresolved understanding of collage – to liberate it from the vitrines and instead position it at the centre of Henderson's practice – we might have selected an alternative quotation for our title. In the subsequent line of the same statement there is a quotation that speaks more directly to the conception of research that I have analysed in this thesis. Henderson declares: 'I want to release an energy of image from trivial data'. This latter assertion not only dematerialises the image, but it conceptualises it and, in doing so, mobilises it as a methodological process of extraction and release rather than positioning it as a stable product. Given that, for Henderson, the material, technological and conceptual basis of the image is negative, this methodological process becomes a darkly inversional and ulterior one, grounded in negativity. Building upon the findings of this thesis, we might therefore imagine an alternative exhibition, both a sequel and a

challenge to *Vital Fragments*, titled instead: *Image as Method: Nigel Henderson and the Art of Research*. Crucially, negativity would be at the crux of this display.

We might picture an exhibition devoid of vitrines, display cases, plinths, framing and glazing. The gallery would be populated by a series of incomplete and makeshift reconstructions of the sites in post-war London that I have reconceived as scenes of research across the four chapters of this thesis. These would not be faithful replicas or theatrical restaging of the art school, the domestic interior, the exhibitions, and the internal workings of photographic technology as such; rather, these highly partial reconstructions would include elements necessary to encounter the artistic research that took shape negatively within these contexts, while leaving gaps for the critical obscurity and irresolution of this work. Crucially, materials would migrate across these research scenes or be encountered sporadically in the undefined spaces between them. Silkscreen prints from the Central School and their photographic depictions, cuttings from the scrapbooks that Henderson kept at 46 Chisenhale Road, images from *Parallel of Life and Art*, photograms of bombsite debris, distorted photographs of boys on bicycles and bathers, and fractured elements from *Patio and Pavilion* would echo throughout the gallery as photographic reproductions, suspended somewhat sporadically at alternating angles and heights. Extending this logic of photographic reproduction and redistribution, visitors would not take away explanatory exhibition guides or catalogues; rather, they would be provided with photographs of *Image as Method* itself, captured from ever-shifting angles, which would frame and fix relationships within the display.

Most importantly, *Image as Method* would have at its centre a large, darkened compartment within the white walled and carefully lit gallery space of the museum. This internal chamber would be enclosed by mirrored walls, reflecting the surrounding partial reconstructions of the art school, the household interior, and the exhibition installations back at one another along with the viewers encountering these research settings. Positioned in the middle of the gallery, this darkened compartment would serve simultaneously as the artist's darkroom and as the internalised zones of the camera, the enlarger, and the negative itself, which would together be recast as comprising a single photographic research scene. Inside this chamber of photographic perception and cognition, Henderson's negatives could be studied in their darkly translucent, inversional state, presented across flickering light boxes, and projected intermittently as negative images onto the ceilings and walls, resized, contorted,

superimposed, and blurred. Interspersed among Henderson's negatives within this central, dark compartment would be further photographs of *Image as Method* itself, this time tonally reversed and internalised into negative photographic form. This final manoeuvre would complicate the relationship of the display to the time and space of photography. In doing so, *Image as Method* would enter into a state of critical complicity with Henderson's negative research practice, its authorial complexity, ongoing capacity for collaboration, its confusions of originality, ontological level and form.

¹ Nigel Henderson, handwritten manuscript, 1950, in notebook kept between c. 1950-52. Tate, TGA 9211.3.1.

² Nigel Henderson quoted in Frank Whitford, *Nigel Henderson: Paintings, Collages & Photographs* (Cambridge: Kettle's Yard Gallery, 1977), n. p.

³ 'Research', in *Cambridge Dictionary*, accessed 26 May 2021, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/research>.

⁴ John Roberts, *Revolutionary Time and the Avant-Garde* (London: Verso, 2015), 116.

⁵ John Roberts, 'Art and Its Negations', *Third Text* 24, no. 3 (1 May 2010): 289–90.

⁶ Roberts, 302.

⁷ Shearer West, 'Arts and Humanities Research Landscape' (AHRC UKRI, 2008), 12, accessed 27 April 2021, <https://ahrc.ukri.org/documents/publications/arts-and-humanities-research-landscape/>.

⁸ 'Definition of Research - Arts and Humanities Research Council', accessed 27 April 2021, <https://ahrc.ukri.org/funding/research/researchfundingguide/introduction/definitionofresearch/>.

⁹ West, 'Arts and Humanities Research Landscape', 11.

¹⁰ West, 9.

¹¹ Kristina Niedderer and Seymour Roworth-Stokes, 'The Role and Use of Creative Practice in Research and Its Contribution to Knowledge', The paper was given at the 2007 IASDR Conference: Emerging Trends in Design Research, November 12 -15 2007.

¹² Robin Nelson, *Practice As Research in the Arts: Principles, Protocols, Pedagogies, Resistances* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2013), 3.

¹³ Nelson, 4.

¹⁴ Niedderer and Roworth-Stokes, 'The Role and Use of Creative Practice in Research and Its Contribution to Knowledge', 11.

¹⁵ Patricia Leavy, *Research Design: Quantitative, Qualitative, Mixed Methods, Arts-Based, and Community-Based Participatory Research Approaches* (New York: Guilford Publications, 2017), 255.

¹⁶ Leavy, 191.

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- ¹⁷ Leavy, 195.
- ¹⁸ Leavy, 219.
- ¹⁹ Leavy, 208.
- ²⁰ Leavy, 191.
- ²¹ Leavy, 194.
- ²² Tate, 'Tate Research Strategy', Tate, accessed 27 April 2021, <https://www.tate.org.uk/research/strategy>.
- ²³ Tate.
- ²⁴ Tate.
- ²⁵ Niedderer and Roworth-Stokes, 'The Role and Use of Creative Practice in Research and Its Contribution to Knowledge', 11.
- ²⁶ Leavy, *Research Design*, 191.
- ²⁷ Leavy, 195.
- ²⁸ Theodor W. Adorno, *Lectures on Negative Dialectics: Fragments of a Lecture Course 1965/1966*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, English edition (Cambridge: Polity, 2008), xii.
- ²⁹ Adorno, xvii.
- ³⁰ Adorno, 18.
- ³¹ Adorno, 18.
- ³² Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton (London; New York: Routledge, 1973), 159–60.
- ³³ Adorno, 24.
- ³⁴ Adorno, 22.
- ³⁵ Adorno, 24.
- ³⁶ Adorno, 13.
- ³⁷ Adorno, 25.
- ³⁸ Adorno, *Lectures on Negative Dialectics*, 5.
- ³⁹ Terrence Thomson, 'Nonidentity, Materialism and Truth in Adorno's Negative Dialectics', *Cosmos & History* 13, no. 1 (January 2017): 346.
- ⁴⁰ Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 142–43.
- ⁴¹ Adorno, 148.
- ⁴² Adorno, 148.
- ⁴³ Adorno, 145.
- ⁴⁴ Adorno, 5.
- ⁴⁵ Adorno, *Lectures on Negative Dialectics*, 6.

⁴⁶ Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 12.

⁴⁷ Adorno, 150.

⁴⁸ Thomson, 'Nonidentity, Materialism and Truth in Adorno's Negative Dialectics', 352.

⁴⁹ Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 17.

⁵⁰ Adorno, *Lectures on Negative Dialectics*, 69.

⁵¹ Adorno, 70.

⁵² Adorno, 70.

⁵³ Thomson, 'Nonidentity, Materialism and Truth in Adorno's Negative Dialectics', 351.

⁵⁴ Thomson, 352.

⁵⁵ Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 162.

⁵⁶ Adorno, 163.

⁵⁷ Adorno, *Lectures on Negative Dialectics*, xvii.

⁵⁸ Thomson, 'Nonidentity, Materialism and Truth in Adorno's Negative Dialectics', 353.

⁵⁹ Nigel Henderson, *Recent Work Photographs, Paintings Collage* (London: Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, 1961).

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This thesis also has made extensive use of primary materials in the private holdings of the Nigel Henderson Estate, Tate Britain (particularly TGA 9211, TGA 201011, TGA 7048, and TGA 955), the Colin St John (Sandy) Wilson archive at Pallant House Gallery (WIL), and the Chris Mullen papers (in the author's possession).