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1969

UNIT

**JANUARY
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TWO VIRGINS
IS OUT
NOW**

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It isn't a trend,
and it isn't a trick,
Its just two of God's children,
Looking and sounding much as they did,
When they were born.
Only a little older.

UNIT

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In this edition of Unit we decided to explore the theme of environment. We have drawn together a collection of articles and interviews which represent differing reactions to environment, and which illustrate the ways in which the various people have attempted to come to terms with it. In all cases the individuals concerned have made some sort of analysis of their surroundings, in order to reflect or to change them, or both.

We have not attempted to make judgements – our role in producing this magazine has been to discover, through the medium of other people's experiences, what the word 'environment' can mean. We have become aware of close interrelations between personal and public aspects of environment, of the confluence which is taking place in the areas of art, architecture, sociology, psychology and other fields.

The cover was designed for us by Mike Cain, an artist who is at the moment working at the Stoke-on-Trent College of Art as a Technical Assistant.



In September 1955 a tube of Gibbs SR toothpaste in a block of ice (melting furiously under the arc lamps) appeared on fifteen million television screens. Since then about 50,000 TV commercials have bounced into our homes peering into our mouths, under our armpits, along our alimentary canals, leering at our scaly scalp, sluggish bowels, saggy breasts and tired blood. Like it or not they have become an integral part of the ring-a-ding swinging scene of today.

It takes about a day actually to film a 30 second commercial; it costs — in time, talent, ideas, actors, writers, composers, musicians, singers, artists, cameramen, prop-builders, hairdressers, agents, technicians etc. — about £2,000 or £3 for each frame of film (about

by Daniel Wiles

twice as much, second for second, as a top feature film, and that doesn't include the cost of showing them on TV at up to £6,000 per minute). Hundreds of people spend their time figuring out ways to prevent you from making the tea or going to the loo during their microscopic masterpieces of salesmanship.

Television commercial production is nowadays big business and one of the leading producers is Ewart and Company (Studio) Ltd. The driving force behind this organisation is dynamic Keith Ewart, who flies his own plane and plays the clarinet for relaxation, and who last year moved from a small studio in Chelsea to his new studio in Wands-

worth — “Cost? We stopped counting at £6000,000”. The studio includes cutting rooms and dubbing theatres provided with the best equipment that modern technology makes possible, and the design and decor is unique. Modern paintings hang in the passages and each visitor is provided with Japanese slippers “because we want our studio floors to stay the levellest in the world”. Ewart and his employees all wear a ‘uniform’ of slacks and sweater, although he has a reputation for independence and fiery unpredictability.

“I’ve been making commercials since 1954. When television commercials were threatened I gave up still photography and

started an experimental workshop for commercials, so I'd made about 200 before Independent Television started. In the early days there were more ideas and better ideas, but unfortunately they were irrelevant. Now commercials normally contain some relevance but no ideas. I don't think the plain-spoken hard-sell commercial will ever die. You get, say, the Archbishop of Canterbury to give a sincere endorsement for a product, and that will always be effective. But it's difficult to get people who are trusted and this is the reason why Arthur Godfrey in America makes more money than the President, because he's a really believable fellow.

There are two types of advertising, informational and 'puff'. Millions of pounds a year are wasted on useless puff. I'm in the business of communication, and puff isn't communication. You get people prancing through the woods in slow motion and riding horses into the sunlight for a dozen different shampoos, and I can't remember one of them. This technique is a sort of crutch - 'as we have nothing to say let's show a beautiful scene'. As soon as there is a generation of excellent writers, people who can really communicate in a concise and interesting way, those commercials will be out of the window fast. The only reason for their existence is that nobody can think of an idea. If one asks the advertising agencies about them they say they're increasing people's 'brand awareness' of the product, but I think there's a long step between knowing a product exists and actually going and buying it intentionally.

I think TV commercials are a writer's medium. We have then to communicate visually as best we can. People want to know, quite simply, what benefits will accrue to them if they spend their money on a particular product, and I don't think there's any substitute for that. There are plenty of commercials that I and others have made, and they're the ones that win the prizes which communicate very little and just create a nice rosy atmosphere; they say nothing at all and I think they are probably pretty valueless. Commercials which show cars

whizzing along the beach driven by a virile young man with his sexy girl don't persuade me to buy National Benzole petrol. If they want people to change they must provide something different, such as better service at their stations. If the petrol manufacturers can't improve their product then they should stop advertising. There are sometimes very good reasons why firms shouldn't advertise. Ask the tobacco companies how much they've lost by not advertising on TV - they're crying all the way to the bank! But when you get two giants who won't cooperate in this way like Procter & Gamble and Lever Brothers, then they have to keep advertising or bust, but they must couple this with constant product improvement to back up the advertising.

can't manipulate the public further than it's prepared to go. In the field of the pop music of my generation the ones who have lasted, Frank Sinatra, Ella Fitzgerald, have been the best - the public knows what it wants. Admittedly there may be manipulation at first, a group may get a record in the charts by sheer pluggery and so on, but that won't work in the long run. The public isn't as stupid as it looks. If a woman thinks a product's going to wash her clothes and they come out all stained it won't last for five minutes. Undoubtedly a housewife may buy a product for the first time because she's seen it on television (I believe advertising works) but a product which is not up to standard could have an initial sale of 50 million due to advertising and then go out of business; people won't go on buying a lousy product.

- Camera
and crew
in the
studio



I think a Freudian analysis of TV advertisements is often mistaken. It may be that in harnessing our basic sexual urges advertising can score a point, but take for example that extraordinary Regent petrol shot of a gigantic petrol pump penis being put into the car's petrol tank orifice. That never gives me any urges, but I can see what they're getting at and I think it's a bit silly. You

Commercials, like all design, can influence people's taste for the better. Sooner or later the ideas sink in and the housewives think 'Why not have a potted plant in my kitchen?', to this extent they do make society more aware.

Advertising is not the driving force behind our acquisitive society but it's an essential part of a materialistic society. I think it's absolutely sick, but nobody's found

a substitute. Mao might do it but I doubt that he'll live long enough; humanity is so unpleasant that it won't allow it. It hasn't even happened in Russia unfortunately. The system is sick, but it's easier to blame advertising or whatever than to say that humanity is sick, which is the truth. Advertising stimulates a demand for material goods, but this is an essential part of mass production in a materialistic society. Without advertising the standard of living (in terms of this society) would go down, but I'm willing to join you in attacking this society whenever you like.

Some people object to the use of children in commercials,

equating it with sending them up chimneys or down coal mines, but my children have been in commercials and they thoroughly enjoyed it. If the children aren't enjoying the day then they aren't much good because they don't look nice and they won't sell the product. If the parents are pushing their children for money then it's the parents who are to blame, not us.

My Fairy Liquid commercials have been running for a very long time, and the manufacturer and the agency of this product are certainly aware of the fact that their advertising should be subject to change; but it would be irresponsible of them to change without proving

that what they're putting in it's place is going to do a better job than before (revolutionary students please note). This product is the leader in its field and they haven't yet found anything that will do better as an advertising campaign than this one. Women might easily buy this product because they like the commercials (although I think on the whole they must be tired of them) but in the last analysis the reason why Fairy Liquid is the brand leader is because it's a better product. Look at Lux Liquid. They started first, they had a better name and their's was the 'quality' product; I think there was only one thing they didn't have. (and I hope



this isn't libellous) and that is a better product! Of course the advertising played a part, but people do have a chance to try different products and if they keep going back to Fairy Liquid there's only one possible reason — they find it works better. I mean let's face it, if when a housewife put her hands into that liquid her skin fell off, no matter how many times I show her that sickening mother and child, the moment her skin falls off she'll be onto another product fast. Anybody can make a fast buck with good advertising, but in the end the Rolls Royce must be a better engineered longer-lasting car than the mini.

may be) but it's a craft. A craft of communication. Funnily enough, about one in a million commercials move me as much as, say, Mahler, but I don't think it makes them very good commercials.

Feature film directors can earn up to £700 a day working on commercials and such people as Joseph Losey, Dick Lester, Clive Donner, Peter Brooke and John Schlesinger have been seduced by the 30 second epic. Dick Lester made 53 commercials between the first Beatles film and "The Knack". "That works out at about three a week" he calculates happily. "I enjoy making commercials because they provide me with an opportunity

who communicates concisely in 30 seconds, that each one is separate. I'm not terribly interested in the cinema, although I used to be before I was married, and I wouldn't make a feature film if I was offered a million pounds. It would be like asking a man who sends beautiful concise telegrams to write a book like Dickens — he'll just make a hash of it. Hitchcock has the ability to hold one in suspense for 90 minutes, but it would be extraordinary if he was also the very best man to communicate that Persil Washes Whiter in 30 seconds. It's a completely different medium. The fact that they both use cameras doesn't mean a thing. Picasso and the man who painted this wall both used brushes, but with very different results.

I never watch underground films, but agency people often go to them and get their ideas. There's no substitute for creativity. Often I've been asked to make "Last Year in Marienbad" or "Un Homme et une Femme" in 15 seconds, but they don't realise that the effect they're after probably needs 40 minutes of build up. Out of context it would be ludicrous.

I sometimes use well-known people in commercials such as Spike Milligan or Clement Freud. If the personality is relevant to the product, i.e.; if Clement Freud looks like a Great Dane and Milligan looks like a Fruit and Nut Case, then they will probably sell the product, but if they are inappropriate they are merely a distraction.

Sammy Davis Jr. and Bing Crosby have both done commercials for Shell; Orson Welles did a commentary for Shredded Wheat, and fees have escalated to the point at which a person like Benny Hill can earn half his annual income in just ten days making commercials. Dick Lester recalls Groucho Marx doing a cigar ad: "He was supposed to chase a girl up a corridor, pause and make a wisecrack. Anyway, on one take he missed all the cues, forgot the words and then took the cigar out of his mouth, gave me that sour, sideways look and rapped "I suppose you're gonna tamper with perfection?" "

Photographs reproduced by permission of Mr. Keith Ewart



We are refiners of commercials, not initiators. We are given the basic message by the advertising agency but we may influence enormously how the material is put over. Every day I have trouble with the agency people who don't appreciate the film medium. Their sense of timing as between sound and picture isn't all it should be. Take a commercial about a toilet roll. Given that you can't have a demonstration, what do you do? Well, for a start you can keep a sense of proportion. It's no good — as was once suggested to me — heralding the appearance of the article with a crash of Mahler which sounds as though a Messiah has genuinely arrived.

I don't think making commercials is an art (whatever that

for experimenting in film techniques. No feature could afford to do that". Lester is scornful of the 'superior' commercial maker: "I have to get involved in making a commercial, if I weren't emotionally involved I wouldn't be doing it. I prefer working with someone who gets enthusiastic about the idea, who says, in effect, 'this is going to be the greatest 30 seconds you ever had, baby!' to the one who says 'well it's only a commercial, hell why get worked up?'.

Keith Ewart thinks "Some feature film directors make very good commercials — Dick Lester did a brilliant series of After Eight ads, but making commercials is not a part time job, and there are sufficient differences between a person who makes a feature film and a person



Beneath the tense
the ripple sky
this earth
a riverbed

here I spider through
journeys
— clutch and investigate my
bubble of air

the widths of this bubble
is a horizon
a star is
the height of it

within it variety
of vegetation

such crops as require
the help of sun and rain

a shifting population too
components of which it is
said decay
even perish if
kept away from food

in this way you may
find no item here of
profit to itself

some doubt exists
if the bubble at all
has uses we
may call reasonable

yet in its
favour say most
things here

are to touch
and see to grow
glow
and die

and certain it is that here
you may breathe in
and out

reflect when the clouded surface
moves

and with the curious
life of swimming things

feel
at times
the river's depth
wind its currents in your blood

LEARNED DISCOURSE CONCERNING A BUBBLE

INVESTIGATING

BUBBLES

OF

AIR

As a younger child I often pictured God as a sort of harassed G.P.-figure and I used, if possible, to avoid prayer from the charitable if concealed notion that his in-tray was full enough, — my own requirements being less serious than those of (say) cabinet ministers or repentant catburglars. As I grew older and greyer, however, my position changed. I began instead to envy Him his omnipresence and to consider myself the careworn figure with two ears, one mouth, and a limited amount of time amid the nonstop baying of all the King's telephones.

This state of mind too has lost some of its terror and I can now even take pleasure in the differences between my small personality-and-art jumbleworld and the big paternal jumbleworld in which, I am persuaded, I exist. If something I write resembles what I see, I congratulate myself on a slice of faithful reporting, — if it does not I am duly delighted to have made up something new.

Nevertheless in the whispering of such cabalistic phrases as THE POET IN SOCIETY, THE ARTIST AND HIS ENVIRONMENT, I tend to hear the innocuous words ('in', 'and') hinting opposition rather than conjunction — 'the poet against society, artist v environment'.

by & about

The reason why these things disturb some people for a little while, others not at all and still others, myself included, perpetually — is not, again, that I am better at being God than anyone else, nor that it is at all noble to be worried by them rather than by a leak in the roof. (If a pipe were to burst as I write this, I would probably take an hour or two making a mess of the job, consulting an expert and stemming the tide. I should then sit down again and try to remember my train of thought.) The reason, as I see it, is that a poet's stock-in-trade is his sensitivity, his vulnerability — just as a military man's professional ability is based on a lack of such vulnerability. When asked to scale the cliff and take the redoubt, the good officer does not break off to expostulate on the sunset, the gillyflower and how they contrast strangely with the hoarse rattle of the machinegun fire, causing his irresistibility to brood on the condition of civilized man. Instead he scales the cliff and takes the redoubt, pausing only to put Perkins on a charge for improperly buckling his equipment.

Since my job, by contrast, requires me to hear everything, see everything and say a little more, it is hard for me to be content with the time honoured solution which is to build one's own pattern of limited, calculated objectives and achievements. So I am reduced to coddling my own sensitivity, the limit of my control being to nudge it into various situations which I rosily believe to be stimulating. At times this may be a steady job, at others complete insecurity, at others travel.

If I may be permitted another purple generalisation, — the certainty of environment's hugeness is often accompanied by the suspicion that it doesn't much like the individual and obviously doesn't understand him. (Despite its dossiers full of his intelligence quotient age occupation sex criminal record and level of resistance to political and commercial propaganda.) In other words the brain's inability to take in more than minute quantities of information at one go means that the remainder must be categorically lumped into big oppressive blocks and carried on the shoulders. Worse still, the categorical habit of mind makes the individual feel as predictable as his environment.

For this largely urban condition there appear to be a wide range of antidotes from suicide to hallucinogens, to posts of responsibility, to considering the lilies of the field.

For such general problems I have no suitably general solution to hand, — and in any case this article was originally supposed to be a personal statement only. The poems printed here are probably quite capable in themselves of providing that, — so I will conclude with a few loosely relevant attitudes:-

- that of the earth to its atmosphere, —
- that of an electric wire to its insulation, —
- of a waterspider to his airbubble, —
- of a seed to the Spring, — and a wave
- of Dame Nature to herself, —
- of Walt Whitman to America, —
- of Dr. John Donne to islands and bells.

As I have suggested already, one of the nastiest things about environment is its being too big for those of us whose godhead is still awaiting ratification. In order to read this article, you have to make secondary considerations out of certain personal puzzles and worries, not to mention the variable number of braincells lost and chinese born as you read. Also you are losing the opportunity to do an infinite number of things which you may never get round to, — because you have not been informed of the possibility of doing them, because in terms of space and time most things are impossible for one person and in terms of personality others are improbable.

peter dobson.

to the sea

PREDICTABLE THINGS

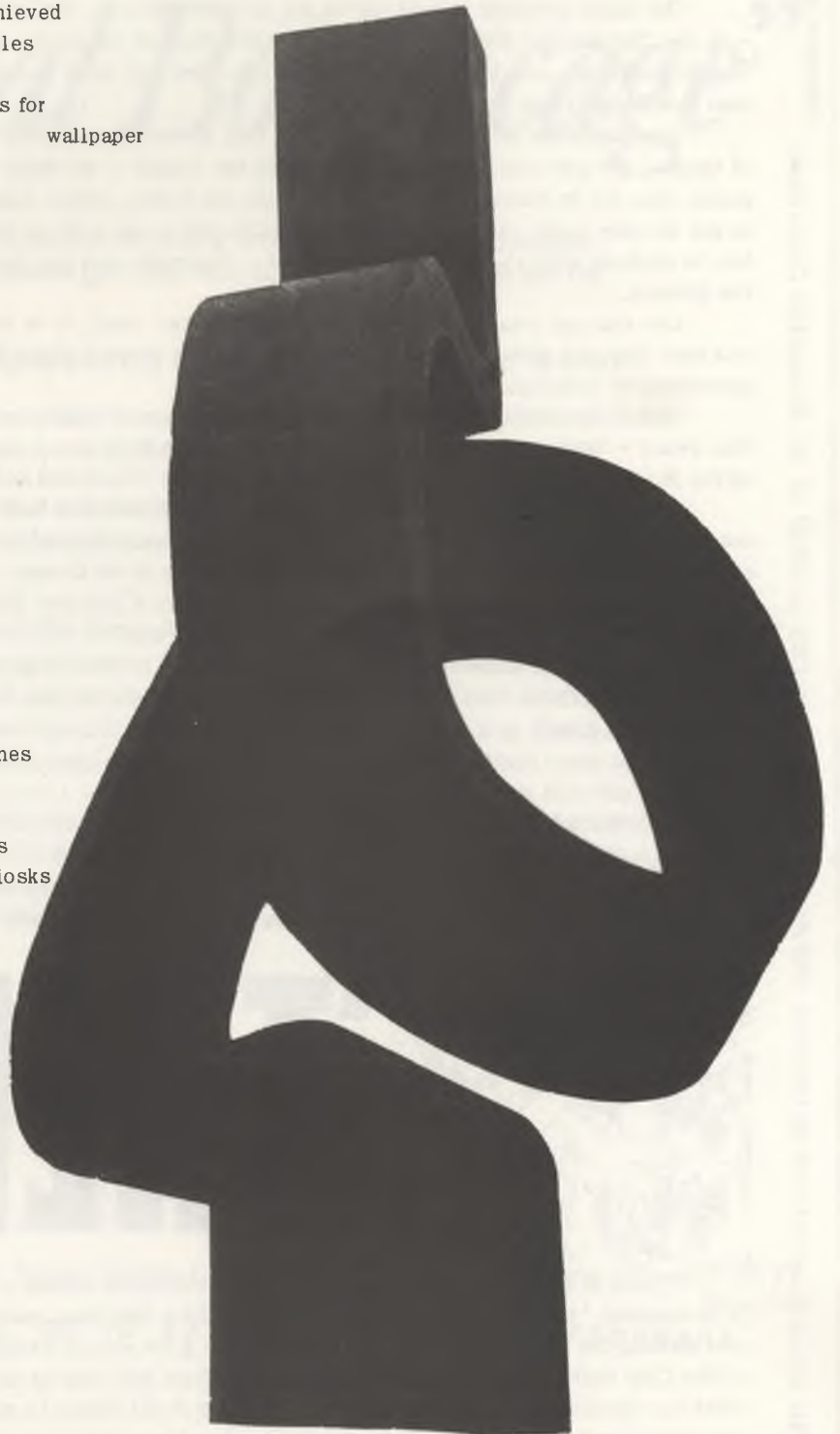
predictable things settle
kisses into pleats
tuck up to sleep
and a goodnight prayer

yes
and all that gone
 from your blithe
 kitbag
 onto highroads
 step out
 with a slogan
 soon enough
 some crosslegged slot
 achieved
 among turntables
 coffee
 posters for
 wallpaper
 where thin walls
 wail of the street
and your harmonies
would jingle
 sympathy
at the nearest coincidence of flesh

and thus
the kisses slide again
 in through slats
 and under doors
 comes the prayer too
incision through the winddust
and similarity of hours
 repeating
 Lord unlock our
 bodies from labels and leeches
 Lord walk with us by
 canals
 and kiosks

with us still past
 the empty houses
 where telephones ring

*Peter Dobson is a writer and poet
living in Newcastle, where he is
at present working on a novel.*





If you want to take the question of why one is in it, I'm in architecture basically because I'm interested in people, and it's from there that I start.

I look upon architecture as being very much a marriage, an integration of art with technology. But architecture is not a 'vacuomatic' art, and by this I mean that a painter, a sculptor, could live in a kind of bell-jar and produce something, irrespective of what is around him. But we can't start until we have a person, so we are a particularly social art.

One of the first things you have to realise is that Birmingham is the second largest city in the country, so that inevitably one faces enormous pressures, whether they be political, economic – or just whims, or the social pressures of people needing somewhere to live.

Our basic problem is that we've got to house people. The programmes set out for us are pretty tight – in the Chelmsley Wood area, which is something on the scale of a small town, the programme is for 15,000 dwellings, and the completion date has been cut back from 1971 to 1970. We have already built over 4,000 dwellings.

The important point here, though, is that we're not satisfied with just banging up a large number of houses. We put considerable emphasis on the tenant – we make sure that the landscaping – trees, grass, etc. are in when somebody moves into the house, rather than three years subsequently – and this is not an easy task; the tenants' halls must be there, as well as the shops. This is difficult because one has to contend with the state of the ground – the roads and the drainage and the general development of the Scheme.

One can get swamped by the 'bread and butter' stuff, it is true, but creative ideas about people and how they are going to live do not altogether get pushed under in the need for greater and greater quantities of housing.

One of the best ways of explaining what I mean is to take my own case. I was away from here for four years – kicking around a bit – sort of knocking up things here and there; and when I went back, one of the first things I did was to go and see a building which had not been completed before I left.

And when I saw it I was relieved to find that it was not bad. It was not brilliant by any means, and not a particularly big one – but at least it sits there and it's not too objectionable – you know, it's not ruining people's lives, and it gives them opportunity to do things.

Then I thought back to one of the buildings that I had just finished, which was in a small town – right in the middle and 250' high; and I thought: my God!

You know, an awful lot of people, consciously or otherwise are going to be influenced by that enormous thing there – by the time I left the town it had already become a landmark – and this humbles me. So looking back at a small aged person's bungalow, I try to retain this sort of feeling.

On the other hand, this feeling about people, rather than deterring one, can in fact be stimulating – I find it difficult designing a house from a written brief – I would much rather design a house for a family I've got to know. In an informal way, without getting involved scientifically, I'm trying to find out what influences people in buildings. I'm aware that research into the psychological effects of buildings upon people is just beginning. It is something that seems to me non-obvious, for example whether a roof has red tiles, or blue slates, seems to be immaterial in itself.



'THEM'



There is opportunity for using one's own initiative within a Department like this. There has been a tremendous 'ringing in' of new blood lately which has been putting pressure on the whole Department, and making the whole Corporation vibrate. I can give you an example. At the back of the Civic Centre of the City there is an intersection of canals. When you look at the history of Birmingham in terms of what the canals have done for the city, suddenly it all starts to mean something. The Department in fact has stimulated the Corporation to the extent that there is now a contract for the whole of that area to be

This article is edited from an interview with Mr. D. J. Sanger, Asst. City Architect for the Birmingham Corporation. (Interview by Maurice Hamble and Bob Cross)

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landscaped, and the canals are being opened up. Some old cottages which I think were about to be demolished are now being renovated and we've generally taken a strong hand on retaining the character of the place. There's a cafe going in, and a pub being built right down by the water-side so that the whole of that area, together with the Repertory Theatre when that is opened, will bring the old canals back into life. Added to this, a festival is projected for this year, trips on boats, a rally, films across the river. It's rather fun really, exciting, because although one sees very little of it — it takes about 1% of one's time — one keeps trying to throw in these little things whilst coping with this great bulk of work.

The degree to which an architect can be creative or individually-minded while working for a local authority depends upon the quality of the person involved. A colleague of mine had a remarkable opportunity to implement something he had been talking about for a long time. Suddenly EXPO 67 cropped up and he found himself with an opportunity. Up until then it was scruffy, rave drawings and hot air. He has brought it at last to literally concrete form,

What I would like to see is not the product of EXPO 67 produced in this city, but I feel that the quality of thought, the intent behind it, has made it a lot easier for us. Unfortunately, like anything you try to do in life the further you get from the problem, the slower it gets, because you have to take people with you. The most difficult thing — obviously, and this isn't restricted to architects at all — is to keep at it, and not let yourself be ground down by it. Looking at the work that's been done in Birmingham over the last few years, I think considerable strides have been made

I think that it is part of life generally that one has to have the Arcigrams*, the way outs, and be disconnected, this is essential. Things like inflatable walls and portable building Units you can carry around with you would get precisely nowhere with the Corporation, I agree, although you get the impression that somewhere in among that lot there is some really good stuff — there is an impression of nobility. Because it is technologically feasible to do these things, you can find change desirable: instead of a rigid structure, they make them flexible. Obsolescence is an obsolete word here.

I feel that there is an essential need for such activities, but it isn't difficult to produce one

* ARCHIGRAM:-

*an underground architecture
magazine which was posted
to us from the U.S.A.*

*Extremely futuristic and
way out ideas. We took it
along with us to the interview.*



world-shatterer. That's relatively easy. What is difficult is producing a hell of a lot in no time for an awful lot of people you don't know without making them all the same; and producing them to a higher standard than yesterday.

There is a problem of fashion — how much the same can you make it without people objecting? Different from what? Obviously the fact that you're putting in gas fired central heating instead of the kitchen kitchen stove is making it quite different from the way it was before.

You could reproduce a scheme that you already know — Kentish or Sussex cottages or Lakeside cottages which have been highly successful for hundreds of years and which some people in the comm-

unity would give away their eye teeth for. But the people you were offering them to would not see the so-called attributes that the others see. So what do *they* see? They see a planned outlook; a stainless-steel sink; a nice little garden, the bloke next door wants a bigger one though; the central heating's nice — lots of variety here. That little old lady down the road — "oh, it's so bright, it cost me so much to move in 'ere — it's the curtains you know." One old person may say she likes to be where the children are playing, but the lady next door writes to the Council complaining that the kids are playing outside until late at night.

What I'm getting to is that the biggest problem's a sociological one — the fact that you are uprooting a lot of people Demolish the slums — shake all the beings out — and throw them into a new situation.... it takes a long time for them to shuffle down and rebuild their community. It's terribly difficult to get an answer within a generation. People say 'new town builders — blah, blah, blah', but the limitations are there to be seen — when Harlow was built, in the late 40's everybody was striving for wide open spaces — open aspects etc. The sort of complaint which seems to be flying around now is: I'm too far from the neighbour, 'It's nice open spaces, but the wind blows like hell through them' — and so it goes on. It's terribly difficult to give what's wanted — you can only feel at any given moment what is appropriate and desirable.

When people come from houses which have doors that won't close, windows that won't open, but won't keep the draughts out; open fires which don't heat but draw a terrific draught across the room, carpets that are always squelchy from rising damp, or alternatively floorboards that have gone through, one of the biggest problems is educating these people into a new dwelling. It's not like buying a car — you can get out of an old car and get into a new one, the differences don't seem to cause very great problems. But take a person out of a dwelling, a home — and this is the point, it's not just a house, it's a home, and he's lost. Put him in a new one, and he doesn't know how to handle it. I'm talking internationally when I say that there's no programme of education for people going into new housing.

There is this critical problem of taking them away from an environment in which they've been established. It was there before them. If we were to put them into a stark, cold, clinical sort of position, into an environment where there's no trees, without paving, without decorating, it would be a hard slog and I would go so far as to say that you would break a lot of lives — so what we are trying to do is to give them a start.

What is heartbreaking, what gripes one, is the vandalism. I don't know how many telephone kiosks we put up in a certain area, but the day we put them in, they're out of order. We must replant all the trees we put in two or three times — we don't give up. We struggle on as long as we can persuade people that the money's well spent.

It doesn't matter what aspect you refer to — I saw a pathetic example the other week — a little play area on which again, we had spent a lot of money and effort in designing each of these little complexes for the children, the toddlers. Little Edie aged two, playing with her two friends picks up little pieces of a broken glass bottle which her brother aged fifteen had smashed against the implements on which she was playing.

One has seen on other developments which are completed — the first two years are the critical ones — you get a hell of a lot of vandalism and stupidity, but then it starts to settle off. People's front gardens begin to show evidence of care.

People create their own environment. I had to deal with a problem that caused me to go round a two year old development with which I had had no previous experience. I had to go and look round the houses. They were all out of the same literal mould, but inside they were not — the character of the family, the mode of life, they were all there. That's the fortunate thing — being individual. Somebody was talking about standardisation is building materials, and people like me out of a job — my attitude was to go on creating new components. This is creativity. Moving forward is always going to happen.

The point about progress and variety is that one can argue, one can struggle, but there is still the point that you've got to do it and at the same time argue. Whatever the attitude is there's no better weapon for arguing than to produce something. To produce something and argue is a much stronger case than to sit back and do nothing and argue, which tends to be destructive. Of course you have to compromise and curtail your ideas, but what you have to bear in mind is what you're here for. You've got to house people. There are people who are alive today, sitting back and theorising about producing the ultimate in fifteen years time — this is really little contribution. That is the advantage that Archigram have — they haven't a programme.



THE
FIVE
OF

THE PINK FLOYD TALK

There were four of them, of course, and more than that of us, all in a small room. If you've seen the Floyd, you'll know that the integration of their act is remarkable - on stage they become very much an entity, a single sound projector aimed at you. Talking to them gives much the same kind of impression; they don't disagree violently about anything very much, though only two of them were really prepared to talk - Nick Mason and Roger Waters - and these two seem to have a longstanding and fairly close friendship. After a while, it became clear that it was the group talking, not just them; for this reason none of the remarks are attributed to individuals.

group to have copied us, they would have had to spend a lot of bread, and anyway, from the musical point of view, it's fuckin' hard. Any group that wanted to do the same as us, found that in London, we were doing it already, and outside London, nobody wanted to know. At the time when it was at all popular, we were doing it pretty badly, but everyone else was doing it a lot worse. The emphasis is now on the sound, because we can't be bothered to fuck about with lights any more - until we've got enough bread to get them together and a stable place.....

You want a place of your own?

Yeah. If we had a theatre we'd get involved in light shows, but we don't really want a theatre anyway. We're not interested in travelling light shows that get broken in the back of the van, they're too much of a drag, and they're inferior.

You're going to stick to your normal show for a while?

We're going to do something in darkness, as a matter of fact. Basically, it's a...a work, I suppose - not a play or a series of pop songs. It'll probably last for an hour and a half to two hours, with an interval in the middle, because forty-five minutes or an hour is about as long as anyone can really be involved in anything. The audience will sit within a ring of about eight speakers, and the basis of the whole thing will be on tape. We'll be working live on our instruments, and doing other things as well, and then there'll probably be dancers. The whole thing is built around this machine we're had made, called a spacial co-ordinator; it can direct or focus the sound wherever we want it inside the circle.

Does this need a permanent place to work properly?

Ideally, we'd like a huge hall, with days to prepare things, and no-one else allowed near it.

You can't take it on the road then?

The scene is, if you've got a big enough place, it doesn't matter what the shape is, because you form your own circle, you just ask for a hall that's big enough across.

What part do lyrics play in your music?

On stage, not a very large part at all. On record, they reflect our attitudes to life.

Do they have any 'social' content?

When we were labelled as *the* underground group' we were expected to be involved with I.T., Black

You first made your name with music that was outside the context of conventional pop. Was this a conscious reaction to conventionality?

When we started, in fact, we were an extraordinarily ethnic blues group.

Your early renown was a result of your unconventional melodies.

Yeah - that's the reason we came into the public eye.

Was this what you were trying to do?

No, what actually happened was, we found it was becoming more and more boring to play twelve-bar numbers, and we stopped being at all interested in the lyrics and in singing them, and in the form, really, and we found we could get more out of seeing just how far we could take improvisation round the root chord. The thing about the twelve-bar is that you have to stick to the chords - we started working out our own chord sequences, playing what we felt like.

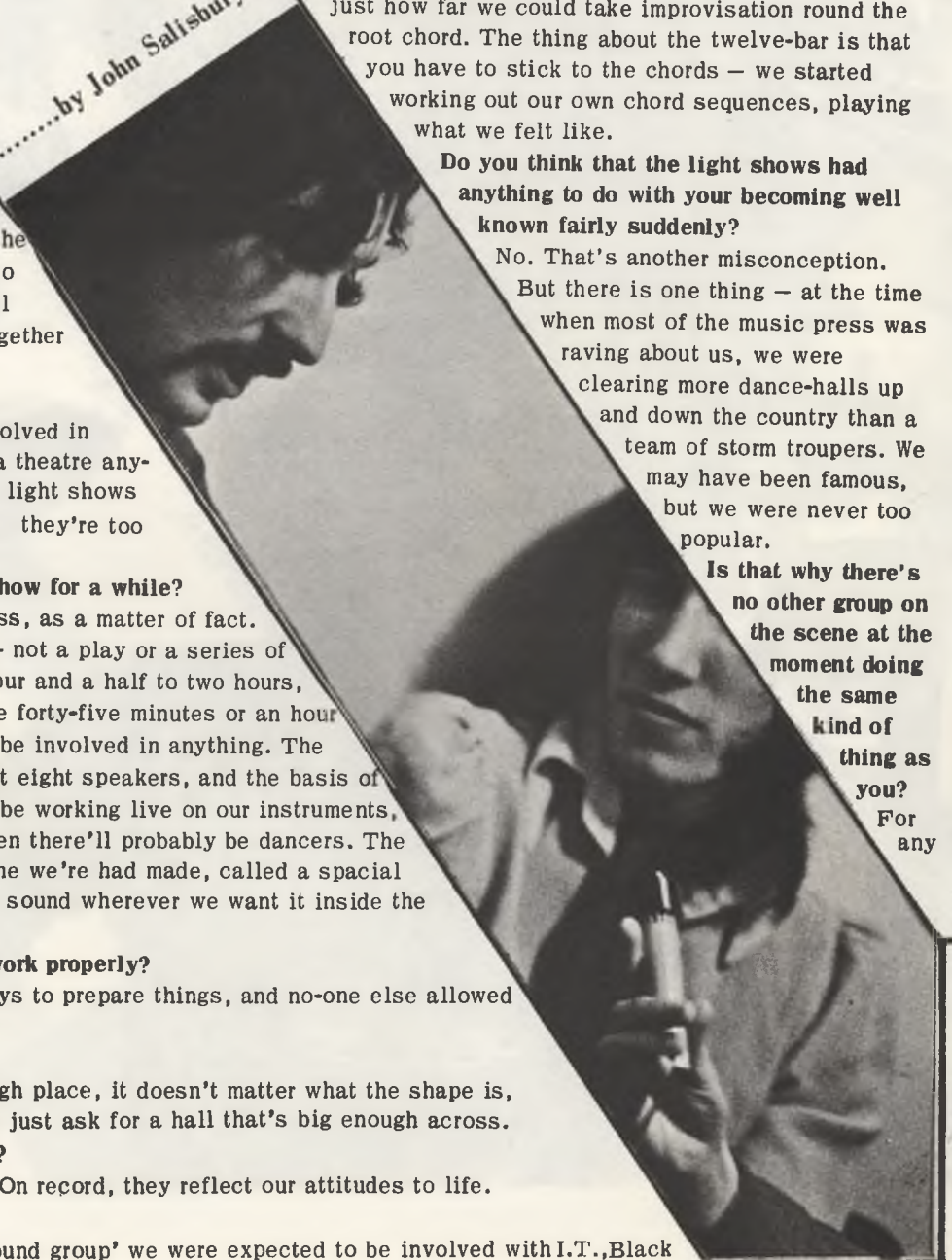
Do you think that the light shows had anything to do with your becoming well known fairly suddenly?

No. That's another misconception. But there is one thing - at the time when most of the music press was raving about us, we were clearing more dance-halls up and down the country than a team of storm troupers. We may have been famous, but we were never too popular.

Is that why there's no other group on the scene at the moment doing the same kind of thing as you?

For any

.....by John Salisbury



Maurice Hindle

Photographs by

Power, and all the rest of it, and to be experts on every kind of drug problem it's not that we're not interested, it's just that we don't choose to discuss it. You name it, we're in favour of it, so long as it's not reactionary, but we haven't got time to be militantly involved in it because we're doing this.

But this isn't reflected in your lyrics.

No. And writing lyrics with social comment in them is a very hard thing to do. If I could do it, I would - I try terribly hard to write incredibly moving and wonderful lyrics, in fact, I've spent minutes on end desperately trying to write sentences of mammoth social significance, and they always turn out to be incredibly shitty.

But now, I think lyrics play rather a small part in what we do.

What do your lyrics represent then?

Nothing. They're just the thoughts that one has.

What about doing other peoples' songs?

It's a joke. The only real bread is in publishing and songwriting, so if you write yourself, and sell it, there's no point.

Are you interested only in electronically modified instruments?

No. We'd be very happy, for instance, if there was a piano here tonight. But that, I suppose, would be modified to our purposes when we put a very trembly mike inside.

You must find it very limiting being on the road.

Very much so. All the time we're incredibly limited by the amount of things we can carry round, by the amount of stage room we can have.

So you can't really do what you want?

I get filled with fantasies all the time of doing pieces of music in which somebody tweaks away at a violin for about forty-five minutes, and then, out of the blue, I fire a twelve-bore into a dustbin full of broken glass. It's this kind of thing, terrifying, dynamic and entertaining as well, that we want to do to the audience.

Do you understand what you're doing?

.....Yes of course.

,,,,,,No, not at all.

.....You know, sometimes people interpret it in a rather extraordinary way. But we don't just say 'let's all

get on stage and mess about and hammer around, and we won't keep time, and you play in D and I'll play in E and we'll be alright and they'll call it a fantastic new art.'

The funny thing is that now, after two years, people are beginning to say 'These Pink Floyd chappies, they seem to be rather avante-garde.....' Yes, we're winning now.

Have you any aspirations to get out of the pop idiom into any other field?

Oh yes.

How?

All you have to do is something that's incredibly spectacular and rather hard to understand, and you immediately start being labelled as something else.

How much do you respond to a good audience?

Oh incredibly, - that was what was so good about America.

You know when you play badly?

Yes. It's a very bad feeling.

We're aware of it - we don't just think 'well fuck them, bloody teach them a lesson.'

You have a conscience about it then?

It's mainly to oneself, isn't it?

There are some occasions though

if there's a crowd, say, in the Starlight Ballroom, Greenford, and they expect us to give them 'Knock on Wood' followed by 'Ride Your Pony' and 'In the Midnight hour', we tend to think, it doesn't matter whether we play badly or not.

Where do you like most to play?

Anywhere they'll pay us. The choosing has been done for us, you see; if we had the choice we wouldn't play, for instance, the Top Rank or Mecca Ballrooms, or anywhere with a revolving stage, but we played them a few times in the past, and they've all made quite sure they'll never see us again.

Universities are nice - we don't immediately think 'I wonder if they'll throw bottles here.' The other place that one might feel some kind of identity with - the psychedelic underground club - well, you see everyone in their beards and beads and you think 'It's not really home is it?'. There are some places that are very nice, like 'Mothers' in Erdington; they're what one would like to see - a plug which is slightly avante-garde and which really digs what we do.

What are you going to do when you get too old for this game?

I don't know.



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Men should be the architects of their environments, not the creatures of them. Obviously, the distribution of power in what we call our 'society', and the system of economic and social relationships make it impossible for this to happen to any great degree. It is often artists, intellectuals and students — people who have considerable freedom, and who can make very much what they want of their lives — who realise this, and who fight most against the things that restrict them. But any restrictions they do have appear enormous next to some city environments where people are little more than victims.

Cannon Street has a new tarmac surface and new street lamps. It carries traffic from the Newport Bridge to the centre of Middlesbrough, a stretch of the three-quarters of a mile. Alien cars zoom through a depressed area. At the bridge end is a bundle of two-up two-down terrace houses, stretching up to the railway lines and down to the Newport Road, a busy main street. All the side streets have cobbled surfaces, and most have gas lighting. Beyond the gasworks and towards the town, buildings become sparse. Cannon Street runs through a wilderness. Six of us are engaged in full-time voluntary community service in Newport.

...by Marshall Colman



In two months I've got to know a little about the Cannon Street environment. To work more effectively, we need a far more complete understanding of it. We need the fruits of academic community studies. Unfortunately, we are too busy and too well known in the area to undertake them, and are all untrained anyway. And as such research is for entirely practical purposes, and not for the mere advancement of knowledge, it will probably never be done by anyone in a university.

The prevailing atmosphere of the area is one of barrenness and destruction. There is wilderness and dereliction in both the environment and in the heart. The whole place is due for demolition at an unspecified date. After a short period of time, empty houses are torn apart by children of all ages — for the fun of it, and for the money that can be got for scrap. While we were trying to recondition some large, old premises for community use, young teenagers started to tear lead off the roof almost before our eyes. On the adventure playground, the greatest frustration came from the apparent impossibility of channelling the children's energy into creative play. So often it found outlets in destruction, fighting and bullying. Tom aged nine, derived all his pleasure one afternoon from hitting four and five year olds. While I told him off, a boy of sixteen came past and hit him round the head. The older boy is now in a detention centre for pinching a scooter. He will most likely be beaten by the screws. Dog eats dog. After a while nearly all the

inflammable materials on the playground were burned — tyres, doors, barrels, and eventually a hut used by the volunteers and as a first-aid post.

Usually born into large families, Cannon Street children experience a violent and openly authoritarian or neglectful upbringing. (Perhaps this has some advantages over the more subtle forms of middle-class authoritarianism, such as possessiveness and parental ambition). They are subjected to demands and restrictions reinforced by violent sanctions. Very soon they learn to behave towards other people the way they have been behaved towards. Children tell smaller children to 'Do as you're told, son, or you'll get a bat in the mouth.' At the nursery we run, a boy of four, too young to realise what adults regard as cheeky or naughty, said to me as I came in the door, 'Shut up, or I'll hit you with that hammer!' When I protested that I'd said nothing, he said, 'Yes you did. Get out!' One mother told us that her twelve year old son was allowed to hit his five year old nephew, because the little lad was too soft. 'Like with Russia and America,' she said. 'It's the survival of the fittest round here.' As long as the children go to schools which employ a repressive regime and the cane, the local violence is bound to be reinforced. Probably all the children leave school at fifteen to enter the lowest levels of a brutal economic system. For many men, work is a brutal experience because it consists of extreme physical exertion

demanding little skill and evoking little interest. The myth that any exploitation of workers is now only technical, involving an unequal distribution of wealth but a fair deal for all, would soon be dispelled by a short stay on Cannon Street. Exploitation is real. There is deprivation and powerlessness and spiritual poverty.

Several teenagers act tough with their girl friends – ‘Shut up, you. Who asked you to speak?’ – and with the young people we have come into contact with, sex is a cursory act enjoyed, as much as it can be in the circumstances, in an alley or on wasteground, and only rarely indoors. It seems to be not infrequently forced on girls and is referred to in terms that make it clear that little affection is involved: ‘Did yer get yer prat, then?’ ‘She’s

good meat.’ Two girls were dragged forcibly into our house one evening, and subjected to a crude sort of third-degree treatment to get them to submit to being pratted.

Life is passed in a physical environment that is itself brutal: mean houses, grey streets, wastelands, factories, smoke, noise and an almost total absence of trees, flowers or grass. How soulless such an urban environment is! Not until I passed a small park and saw that its trees were leafless did I realise how far advanced the year was. I don’t think we hear birds round here. (The local joke is that they don’t sing, they just cough.) To live in Newport is to be assaulted every day, only, if you’re brought up here you become indifferent to it as you do to physical blows.

Since this article was written, the Cannon Street Project has been wrecked – by the people who were intended to benefit by it. The news reached us by word of mouth, and we have had no further information – or confirmation.

Violence is accepted without question. Ted spent about fifteen minutes telling me about fighting, about his views and his experiences. Throughout the discourse he never questioned violence itself, just discussed the best tactics to use, and how, when you mature (he’s in his late teens) you don’t go in for fighting in a gang, ‘Just one on to one, or two on to two,’ and how, once one has a reputation, one has to keep on fighting just to defend it and oneself. This was the nearest he got towards saying that fighting was futile. I think he was aware, in a way, that violence gets you nowhere, but that on Cannon Street it is essential. Of the youths who have provoked us, threatened us, stolen from us, assaulted us and destroyed our things, one or two occasionally became very explicit about why they were doing it: ‘We’re trying to show you that round here you’ve got to fight for your rights.’

There is so much boredom on Cannon Street. For many young people, especially the unemployed young, life is such an endless chain of gaping hours, and they can do little more than hang round the streets, or the bowling alley, or the pub or the chippie, or perhaps drive off cars, steal, fight or prat.

A group of lads were walking over the bridge one night. They saw someone walking over the other side. ‘Bet you couldn’t hit him’ one of them said. So another crossed over and socked him so hard he fell down. ‘You call that hitting him. I’ll show you.’ So just as the man was getting to his feet, another lad walked over and knocked him down again. ‘Sometimes I hit a fellow if he bumps into me,’ said Terry. ‘Sometimes I’ll hit him even if he apologises.’ Although these lads are members of a small, fairly well defined Cannon Street gang, and are not entirely representative of the area, they fit into it quite well. Seen in the context of the total environment, their violence appears at the same time understandable and insurmountable.

A girl of fifteen was asking me how often I had it. ‘That’s all you live for, isn’t it, prating?’ No, I said, that wasn’t all. ‘I reckon that’s all there is to live for for most people,’ she said. Her friend agreed that prating was all

there was to live for.

A low level of education is an obvious factor in this awful boredom and these narrow horizons. In this, there is more than the ability of the child to consider; there are the pressures of the environment as well. When a child comes from a home that is probably indifferent or even hostile to education, when he goes to a school where middle class teachers, perhaps unwittingly, try and impose middle-class attitudes and values on working-class children, when he comes from a family which couldn’t possibly afford him to do anything else but bring home a wage-packet as soon as possible, then he is not likely to benefit much from schooling. There are people here who, although they are very narrow, are obviously intelligent. But many of them would have neither the mental stamina to read this article, nor any other in this magazine, nor the vocabulary to understand many of the words. This whole environment contrives to hold people back.

Within this country alone, within this society, there are environments so vastly different, that the people who are confined to them can be said to live in different worlds. When you live on Cannon Street there are things a mile away in Acklam that are really foreign. When you read ‘Unit’, go to a play, listen to Bach or dig the Velvet Underground, look at paintings or have intellectual discussions, you are in a realm of experience from which large sections of the working class are effectively debarred. For it needs great independence and strength to tear oneself away from the pressures and traditions and moulding of environments like Cannon Street. Cannon Street teaches you that it is ridiculous to talk of society and to mean one thing, to mention social values and to expect people to know which social values you are talking about. Patrick Wall said of the students who broke up his meeting at York that they were trying to undermine the values of western civilisation. Reading that here it’s clear that he could mean either of two things: that they want to destroy the material and cultural wealth that Mr. Wall shares with a minority or that they want to destroy the barrenness of Cannon Street. The values of western civilisation produce them both and make the divide inevitable.

It is remarkable and mysterious when people do manage to break away, to transcend the environment. This means more than moving on to one of the new estates. Mickey is in his early twenties and works in the Dorman Long steelworks. While in the army he met people who broadened his outlook and learned to be a chef. A trade like that gives him considerable freedom, as he can go almost anywhere and be sure to find work. He's also been in the Merchant Navy, and bummed around

a bit. Mickey's quite different from his mates, regards himself a cut above them, an intellectual. Showing us hard and dirty palms he says, 'They were artist's hands, they were.' One of the things that makes him odd is the fact that he discusses politics and knows a good deal about current affairs. He supports Enoch Powell and asks us about anarchism, seriously interested in what we have to say. One evening he bet Ian that he could write a poem about anything. Ian challenged him to write a poem about an ashtray. This is what he wrote:

FOR IAN

I am square and concaved in the middle
On the table I am set
I see minds in a muddle
They are minds that can't be set

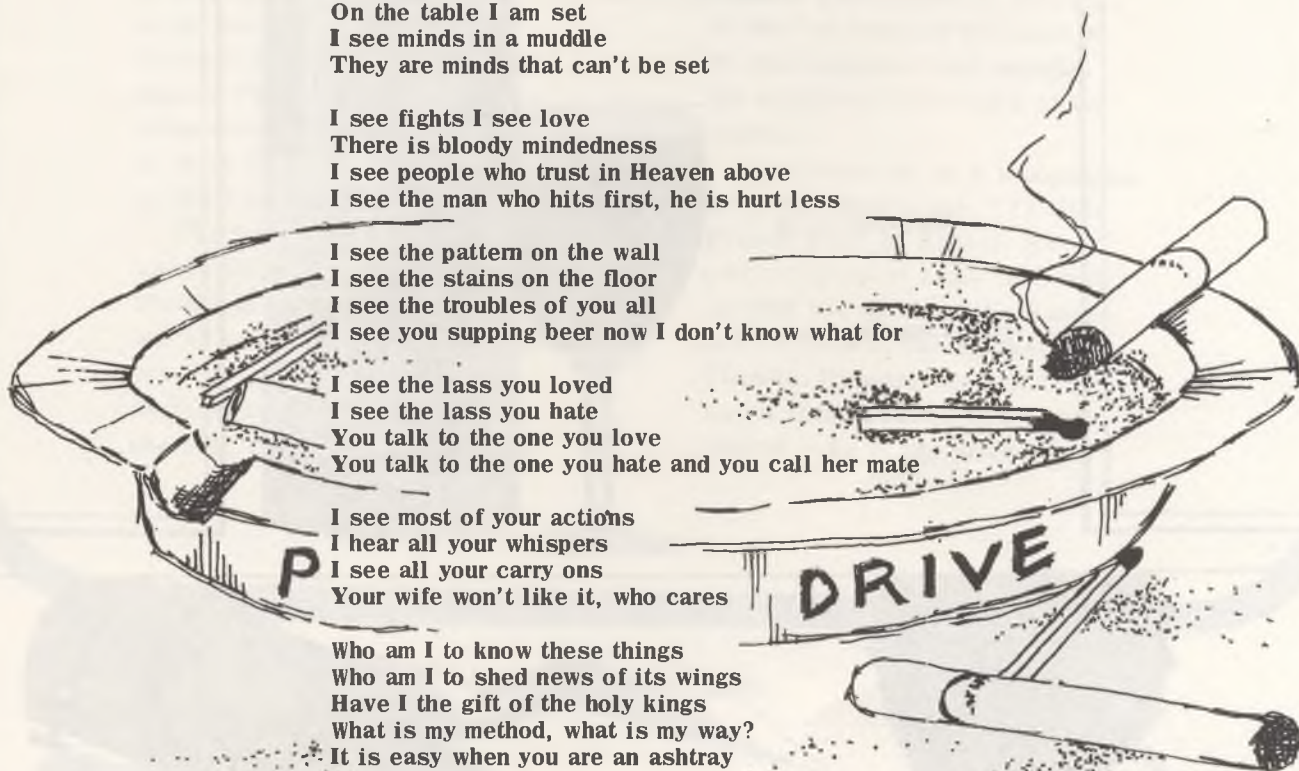
I see fights I see love
There is bloody mindedness
I see people who trust in Heaven above
I see the man who hits first, he is hurt less

I see the pattern on the wall
I see the stains on the floor
I see the troubles of you all
I see you supping beer now I don't know what for

I see the lass you loved
I see the lass you hate
You talk to the one you love
You talk to the one you hate and you call her mate

I see most of your actions
I hear all your whispers
I see all your carry ons
Your wife won't like it, who cares

Who am I to know these things
Who am I to shed news of its wings
Have I the gift of the holy kings
What is my method, what is my way?
It is easy when you are an ashtray



Two other lads we know have found a partial escape through bumming, music and pot. Both work on a Wimpey site. Bert despises the people round here and loathes the area. 'It's all beer, work and fuckin' girlfriends round here,' he says. As we stand on Newport Road on a freezing Saturday night he says he'd like to be on a warm beach somewhere, smoking all day and playing his guitar. In the summer he probably will be.

Things are far more difficult for older, married people. Escape is then almost impossible. One is then tied down to the wife, the job, the house. People involved in these responsibilities are even more trapped than the young. What makes people here more trapped than those in Acklam is not only the apathy, boredom and conservatism of the area, but powerlessness. We encounter a great deal of ignorance about the way authority works and how it should be approached, about welfare services, about civil rights. Just how powerless some people feel can be judged from the woman who asked us if she'd get into trouble if she moved to York.....

On October 28, Bob, one of the young workers about whom revolutionaries talk a great deal now, asked

us, 'What was it they were marching about? Vietnam, wasn't it. They'd never march about Middlesbrough, would they?' The thing he liked most about the demonstration was the picture in the 'Mirror' of the bobby getting his head kicked in. That Sunday, Cannon Street was much the same as usual. Men looked after their pigeons in the pigeon park. Kids played in dirty streets or on a playground that looked pretty desolate by then. Quite a few of them were bossed or clouted. Youths were bored, but perhaps got their prat, despite the rain. The cars of strangers passed through. At ten in the evening night shifts began. October 27 was Mary's seventy-third birthday, and she had no food or money in her house. None of the neighbours helped. She was afraid to sleep upstairs because of the night noises and because of the boys who ran through the continuous attic of the terrace. Her room was lit with candles and oil lamps. A year ago her electricity was cut off, she couldn't explain, she didn't know why.

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The purpose of the theatre is to go out to people, rather than sit back and wait for people to come to it. "I think there has always been a great deal of snobbery about attending the theatre, and so many people think 'it's not for me'."

"I suppose this dates from the closing of the theatres when the audience became a completely aristocratic one as opposed to the theatre for everybody which it was in the Elizabethan period. This of course is completely wrong — the theatre is there for everybody to make up their own minds about it."

The point about Les Moxon's Lunch Hour Theatre which he started in Stoke-on-Trent a few weeks ago is that it makes every effort to go out to people. He deplores the exclusive atmosphere of West-end theatre.

The project is situated in the middle of Stoke's shopping and business centre — it is based at the Mitchell Memorial Theatre in Hanley. The Lunch Hour Theatre is a kind of underground theatre aimed at everybody as opposed to a specific middle-class audience as are civic theatres generally. It is unpretentious, convenient and uncomplicated; somewhere to 'pop in' for half an hour. In this case it is underground — Les rejects the established concepts of the theatre.

Les Moxon is as a professional actor who runs a pub: 'Ye Olde French Horn' in Hanley. He previously spent some time with the Old Vic and was the Associate Director of the Belfast Arts Theatre. He explained that the Lunch Hour Theatre is a compromise — he is not forced to



LUNCH HR. THEATRE

make a choice between acting and producing, both of which he enjoys.

The attraction of mid-day theatre is that it is informal and convenient, removed from the

evening-dress-and-dark-suits glitter of first nights in the conventional theatre. "It gives people time for forty minutes of theatre and ten minutes or so to go and get a sandwich and



get back to work." The attraction to the actor is that of "so many glorious little plays such as 'Village Wooing,' 'Dock Brief' of John Mortimer, which I would like to produce in the future. There are quite a host of them, which very seldom get an airing. The lunch hour is an ideal time to do them. A collection of one-hour plays during the evening is very mixed — one serious, one comic and so on. Personally, if I'm going to the theatre in the evening I prefer a three or four act play as opposed to a collection of one-acters."

"The next play will be a collection of pre-Shakesperian farce with the wooing scenes from 'Richard 111,' something from Congreve, something from Oscar Wilde, and I'm hoping to finish with a scene from John Osborne — a thing called 'Courtship through the ages.' In fact this would be very difficult to do in an evening, it must be

very short or it would beging to be boring."

One of the important things about Lunch Hour Theatre is that it is performed in such a simple manner. There are no lights or settings to fall back on — most of the properties are mimed. The props are limited to a table and something to sit on, but everything else is mimed — telephone, articles of food, money. This is a convention that has to be accepted.

The experiment of the last play was a success. It was difficult to gauge how representative the audience was, because there was little time to get to know more than a very few people. The big hope at the moment is to slowly, with the help of extensive publicity, to draw in people working in nearby shops, warehouses, factories and offices. At a later point I hope it will be possible

to take some of the shorter plays along to some of the factories around the city, and play in canteens.

Between September and Christmas of 1968, Les Moxon proved that there is room for a theatre of this type. The idea of Lunch Hour Theatre has become an established thing in London over the past year or two with experiments such as the 'Ambiance' theatre/coffee bar on the Queensway. Les has not been involved with these projects. His experiments were made in Australia where they have been a tremendous success, and still continue. "We had all the house-

wives coming to town to do their shopping, and popping in to sit down for an hour."

Les feels happy, working in Stoke-on-Trent where he has discovered a lively interest in the theatre and where his ideas have been received with enthusiasm: "I feel optimistic about it — it might take a little time but I'm perfectly sure, if it can be persevered with, there will be a ready sort of audience to attend. It is sad that there is such a wealth of talent in this area, and an enormous number of people who are interested in these things, and so little opportunity for them."



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Model 1967

Extension of 'Space Place' Exhibition at Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam 1968

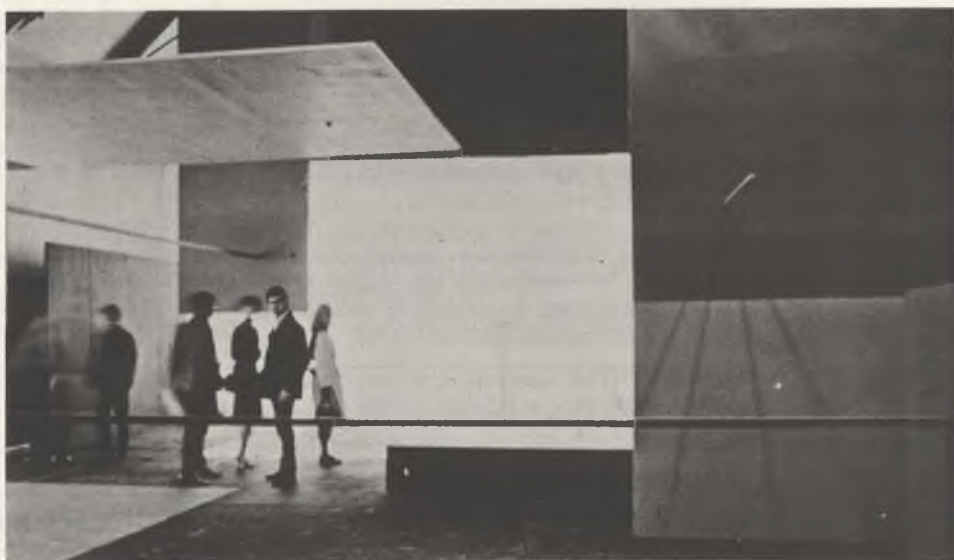
Our idea is that people should come to us and say, 'I've got an open space, come and help me fit it together something to put in it.' At the moment, we have to ask industry, with its vast resources of money and power, to help us do this; we ask them to 'contribute'. Of course, it's only a clever con really. However, in supporting projects we think valuable, say, ideas for schools or urban parks, industry always gets a return in the end, whether in the form of a mention a mile high, or in terms of marketing the ideas that an artist had ten years after he had them. This has happened with many artists working in new materials today. In fact, it's a familiar process altogether in art — forty years after some painter has died in the gutter, his ideas are picked up by someone and made into a 'new wave'.

It remains that there is no direct market for the things that we make. Renting is a possibility; but last year we had three invitations to do things that, but for adequate money, we were quite capable of. There have also been exhibitions in which we've taken part — in Oxford in 1966, and at the Stedelijk Exhibition in Amsterdam in 1967.

Really, however, we want things to happen naturally in the urban environment, so making structures to order for sale, or limiting them for exhibiting purposes, doesn't really interest us. This is why we have a workshop; people can come in if they want and look round, but they needn't if they're not interested. We can wait for them. Those that do come are intrigued — they have never seen anything like it before.

Often these compromises, like museum and exhibition demands, have to be made. The structure we took to Amsterdam was eight months in the making, and even that didn't come from nothing. The fixed three walls of that structure were a compromise — the thing became immovable, and far too solid. We couldn't shift it around. But any artist has to contend with this if he's going to make a total form. The first thing we did had no walls; it covered the whole workshop, and took us two years.

This article is written from an Maurice Agis, two artists who interview with Peter Jones and set up their 'Space Structure Workshop' in an old factory in South East London about three years ago.



space structure workshop
 by Phil Marshall
 (Interview by Ignacio Neri and Georgina Gore)

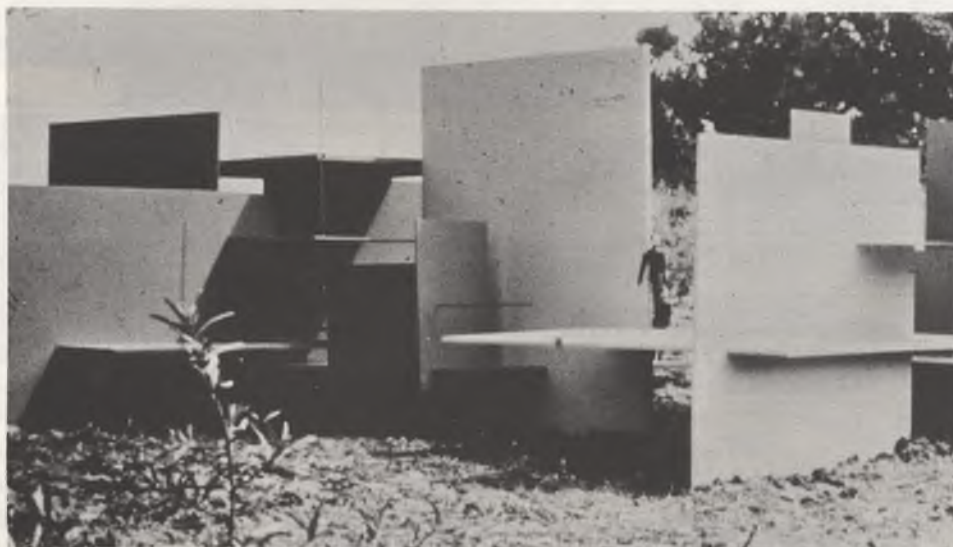
Mass production doesn't interest us either. There can be no duplication on our part, nor on anyone else's. We make a prototype, in which each part is interchangeable, and which first and foremost is an experiment. Ideally we would like to give people an instruction booklet and let them get on with it themselves.

Conventional canvas painting has no vitality in terms of developing ideas that are relevant to today's social situation. In that sense, it is obsolete. However, we are working in a different area of activity — public art, as against private art. It's a difference of availability; our structures are there for every Tom, Dick or Harry. Not that any question of utility enters into this, for a structure that is visually and physically an exciting thing is valid just as a sculpture or painting is valid. But by putting that structure in a museum it is being pulled back into that situation which we are opposed to. If it's built in the street, at first it will shock people, they will wonder why it's there. It could be called something, a bandstand say, and a pop group could play on it. This would make it a useful structure, for teas and dancing, and people would not be identifying the thing with 'art'. They would be getting away from a 'fine art' attitude.

However, we are just as much opposed to consciously creating say, a cinema or a theatre. Use must come out of development, out of the process. To take a particular direction above any other is dangerous, and we try to maintain a development process, not a static-type one. If there is a space in a building, we could put something up in it, and people would be free to make what use of it they wished. But most structures and buildings today are categorised as places where particular things happen. A cinema might only open for six hours a day, and it's wasted for the other eighteen. Schools are exactly the same.

In any city, there is a great poverty in the obsolescence of the structures and buildings that one looks at and which don't mean a thing to anyone. Sculpture and painting isn't obsolete as a private form of expression, although today it's narrow and restricting. But on the public side, what we are trying to achieve is a rethinking of man in space and the things that affect him, to create an awareness of himself.

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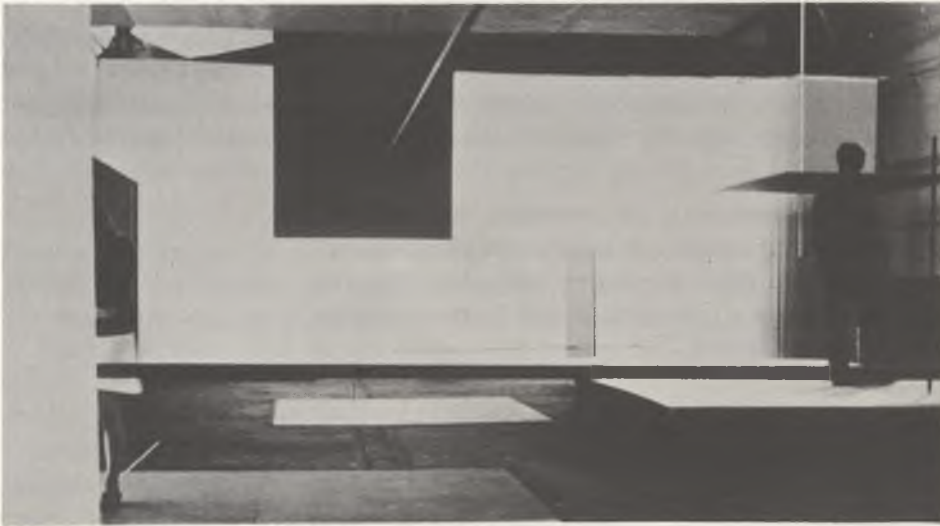
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Model 1967 — Stedelijk Exhibition, Amsterdam

Industrial design, pots and toilets, doesn't interest us at all, because there is already a pre-determined use for objects like that. Such a concept doesn't allow for man's need to change. For example, we could bring into question the whole idea of a family unit. The whole housing system is built around the concept of bedrooms, living rooms, places for children. We could say, scrap that, let's have one big space, or tiny private abodes, maybe we just want a place to sleep, or maybe we eat communally. The house of the future won't be a house. We work from the needs of man; he needs to live with other people, and maybe the idea of privacy might just be the physical idea that you can go somewhere and shut yourself off. You don't want to do it all the time, and it doesn't have to be in a room. If you could think of an area where all the parts could be changed, you could enclose a bit if you wanted to block the scene from view and be quiet for a day or so. And this means flexible structures, changeable, multi-purpose, that don't have merely one function.

Application is another thing that doesn't interest us. If a structure is good, then presumably it will have an application. More generally, we think that people's awareness of each other and themselves has increased, yet this makes them very vulnerable to the sort of things that happen in cities today — everyone is literally bombarded, shattered, in the normal run of things. There have got to be places like the squares built outside churches in the Middle Ages.

The most important job an artist can do is to demonstrate possibilities, and to get people back into contact with the world again. Even ideas such as cities with plastic domes over them contain the concept of enclosure, of limitation; it is not for us to say what the outcome of the problem will be, for we are merely the beginners of the developing process. Ideally, the answer is to scrap the whole mess we have now, and start again, but you can't do that. Town planners, however, are making a solution even more impossible, by exchanging one static situation for another; and given this, the only answer is to make people become more responsible, more aware of the chronic situation they're living in.



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Oxford Exhibition 1966

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At the moment, we are watching the reactions of people who come to see us, and listening to what they say. The effect of our structures upon people is far more important than the 'fine art' bit; is it art or isn't it art just isn't the question. It's very dangerous when you show yourself in front of critics who pre-determine, pre-judge, categorise, because they never ask the big question of the relationship of your work to man. A common reaction to what we do is that people can visualise say, a chair in our environment. They can't see that chairs won't be wanted if the structure is organised to fit the person. With different levels, people might sit on the floor; the Japanese have always had the element of change, and don't need chairs. We have this anti-object thing, we don't like chairs and tables because they don't cater for people's needs. Ideally, you would turn on hot air taps and float on the warm air that came out, but to say that is merely to illustrate the gap between ideas and technological developments. Until we can do that we produce the physical object which is nearest to it in terms of the structure.

One idea would be to inflate your clothing and sit on it. There are two problems which we find most difficult, clothing and seating, and we are working on a combination of the two now. We could make some sort of inflatable clothing which would be sympathetic to whatever structure we were involved with, and people would just lay down anywhere and be comfortable; and by that we mean not only the comfort of resting, but the comfort of watching other people move around. Clothing is a terrible thing — the first time people come into a structure and look round, they become aware of just how terrible their clothing is. Clothes do nothing at all to make a person more beautiful or human, they are not comfortable, and they don't keep anyone adequately cool or warm. In fact, they don't function at all apart from hiding the private parts. Interestingly, a couple of people came along, and said that their sexual desire increased.

One thing we have learned is that forms evoke intensive attitudes, they can be dangerous, and therefore it's essential that one should do a lot of work before anything is made public. The effect of a special experience upon people who suddenly find its realism is remarkable. We don't do that kind of thing at the moment, we can't afford to. It's sort of

fee LSD, you get high on experience. The recent general need for stimulation by drugs is probably a direct response to the crap that's going on out there, in our cities. It's not constructive, it's not an outward-going thing, but is a way we are trying to relate our work to the kind of thing that this is. Science has been quite remarkable, that's all that has happened. People are the same as they always were, except that they are making everything more and more difficult for themselves. You find that we're bombarded with all these atrocities, riots, rebellions, wars. It's very difficult to think in human terms. The architects of today have failed miserably in trying to give us something that is basically satisfactory. We're being pushed about by machines and roadways and God knows what, and what's happening is that it's just gone on and nobody's stopped, because they don't know how to stop it. They can only stop it if they're educated to stop it. It was mostly chance that a few of us have become educated and the rest of them haven't - they're victims of the system, whatever it is, communist or capitalist.

But in this context the artist can serve to demonstrate possibilities, and really this is the first role of the creative mind - it demonstrates ideas and ways. Many people would say that these possibilities of the artist only apply to a tiny minority of the population; but we are not talking about our own lifetime, rather in terms of hundreds of years.



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People's reactions to our environments are partly the reason why we go on working. To most people modern art means Picasso or something; here was something that they didn't see as art, but which we did, to which they reacted. Popular taste in wallpaper, carpets and chairs has all filtered down, for good or bad, from the initial idea of some artist or the other, but people are totally unaware of this. In making people aware, we hope, in a way, to re-instate a sort of seventeenth century concept of creating your own environment. In those days, people thought of time much less, and yet much more, in a natural way; in a city today, you can be totally unaware of whether it is night or day, the sky matters so little. People are not aware of what's happening around them because their responses have been neglected. They've been so shattered they've gone inwards, and have been degraded. Little is being done to help this situation — look at schools for instance; certain types of schools are probably better made than others, or better designed, but you wonder what the learning capacity in such a space is. This is why impact is as important to us. We could say that as long as someone somewhere has an idea that has quality and importance and is completely valid for human beings, then that idea will survive somehow, and have an effect.

There is something about making a work public, in a park or a city centre. People, confronted by this, will, we hope, come to grips with themselves more readily, become aware of themselves. It's the need to communicate, which at present is being ignored by both artists and urban planners. In these exhibitions we were at, and in the workshop, people would suddenly open up, their minds working on a different level. This is the most exciting thing of all, people's responses, their ways of moving, their behaviour to each other. The function of art has, we think, always been to tell the truth about something, in such a way as to stimulate people's consciousness — to make people conscious of themselves.

To ask how this can be achieved in the urban environment is asking a question that's not for us to answer. This is not why we're doing what we're doing. We don't work in terms of 'how can I do it?' and then sit down and think of a way; rather, our work is part of the way we live, what we are. Work is based on the senses of seeing and feeling and sound, and to allow these things to operate you've just got to get on in oneself. We can only say that we're stimulating an awareness of ourselves, and hoping to affect others by this. We rely on what people have in common, and obviously use ourselves while we're working, as 'people'. But if people don't respond generally in the way we assume, we're wrong somewhere. Then we have this new response to incorporate within our next project. This is why people's reactions are so important to us.

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