

## Exhibit A: The Exhibitionary Apparatus

In the fall of 1953, architects Alison and Peter Smithson, along with photographer Nigel Henderson, artist Eduardo Paolozzi, and engineer Ronald Jenkins mounted the small but seminal exhibition “Parallel of Life and Art” at the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA) in London. On the surface, the exhibition was unusual in at least two respects: the content of its display and its unorthodox hanging style. The installation was composed of 122 black-and-white photographic panels with images reproduced from a wide array of sources—scientific, technical, archeological, anthropological, artistic—arranged in a dynamic display that activated the wall, floor, and ceiling planes of the room. Among the pictures were microscopic views of insects, a disassembled typewriter, a radiograph of a Jeep, cellular views of vegetables, an Eskimo settlement, Jackson Pollock

TERCÜME EDEN	
Rana Dasgupta	<i>Sofya</i>
Julien Gracq	<i>Ardennes</i>
Neal Stephenson	<i>Metacvron</i>
Sevim Burak	<i>Istanbul</i>
Guy Mannes-Abbott	<i>Ramallah</i>
David Peace	<i>Tokyo</i>
Sophia Al Maria	<i>Doba</i>
Hu Fang	<i>Suzhou</i>
Evliya Çelebi	<i>Bağdat</i>
Vahram Martirosyan	<i>Erivan</i>
Tom McCarthy	<i>Brixton</i>
Murat Uyurkulak	<i>Diyarbakır</i>
Hisham Matar	<i>Trabzon</i>
Adania Shibli	<i>Kalandiya Kontrol Noktası</i>
Narmin Kamal	<i>Bakı</i>
Jonathan Lethem	<i>Brooklyn</i>
Yasunari Kawabata	<i>Yuzawa</i>
Ted Chiang	<i>Bentik</i>
Douglas Coupland	<i>Batt Vancouver</i>
DERLEYEN	
Charles Arsene-Henry	<i>Bire Bir</i>
Shumon Basar	<i>Bütün Dünya Kafanda</i>

producing a drip painting, a Paul Klee pen drawing, a whalebone mask, stop-motion photographs of pigeons flying, and a high-speed X-ray image of a golfer striking a ball. Hung with wires suspended from the ceiling, tilted at angles, or attached to the wall or leaning against it, the seemingly random arrangement paralleled the equally random selection of images. Beyond its unusual appearance, the exhibition was also unique in its working method and declarative intent.

In the spring of 1952, the Smithsons prepared a statement about the exhibition, outlining the purpose of the show, which was premised on their manifesto about a “second great creative period” of modern art and architecture emerging in the 1950s, and “the existence of a new attitude” evidenced through the juxtaposition of phenomena from different fields, a visual summary of developments that “contain within them the seeds of the future.”<sup>1</sup> It was certainly not novel to use an exhibition to debut a manifesto or for discursive effect—a tactic that can be traced from the Impressionists’ *Salon des refusés* of 1863 through the avant-garde movements

of the early twentieth century. What was unique was their foregrounding of the curatorial as a process of selection and arrangement, not of some discrete collection of objects but rather of a collectively shared and circulated archive of images.

Dubbing themselves “editors” rather than curators, the group stated,

*The exhibition will provide a key—a kind of Rosetta stone—by which the discoveries of the sciences and the arts can be seen as aspects of the same whole. Related phenomena, parts of the New Landscape, which experimental science has revealed and artists and theorists created.*

*The method used will be to juxtapose photo-enlargements of those images judged to be significant by the editors. These images cannot be so arranged as to form a consecutive statement. Instead they will establish the intricate series of cross relationships between different fields of art and technics. Touching off a wide range of association and offering fruitful analogies.*

*In sum they will provide an outline, a fugitive delineation of the features of our time as they have appeared to one particular group working together.<sup>2</sup>*

Those last words, “working together,” referenced the particular ensemble of participants, all of who were members of the Independent Group, a multidisciplinary group of painters, sculptors, musicians, critics, and architects. They met regularly at the ICA between 1952 and 1955 to discuss the growing impact of postwar popular culture, science, and technology on the “aesthetic problems of contemporary art,” as they named their series of programs. Progenitors of what would later be called Pop art, the Independent Group organized exhibitions and programs. Their open-ended explorations also generated accompanying catalogs and newly commissioned artworks and essays. In this way, the Independent Group represents a touchstone for today’s post-disciplinary art and design practices, which, at heart, are more productive than merely theoretical and more practical than merely discursive: generating discourse

and projects through a practice of publishing and exhibiting.

The reception of “Parallel of Life and Art” was decidedly mixed. Design critic Reyner Banham, a member of the Independent Group, provided perhaps the most insightful review of the show, focusing on the role of the camera to record moments of reality—whether a scene from a bygone era or an image of something invisible to the human eye.<sup>3</sup> Banham understood that even by 1953, the photographic document had become the “common visual currency of our time,” and the curators of “Parallel of Life and Art” had underscored the power of photographic images to create a new kind of leveling effect that could unite disparate disciplines while still depicting distinct or specific realities. However, the concept of bearing witness—the proverbial man with a camera and the photo as proof that he was there—gave way to a more contemporary understanding of the nature of the photograph as a document in a larger cultural image bank, which was increasingly defining man’s relationship to the world around him. Negative reactions

to the show, including those of students at the Architectural Association (AA) in London,<sup>4</sup> typically argued against flouting the traditions of photographic beauty. This was not, of course, an exhibition of photography but rather an exhibition made of photographs—confusing the utilitarian medium of magazines and newspapers with the high-art context of the gallery in which it was shown. As Banham would later write in 1955, reflecting in part on the exhibition, “‘Image’ seems to be a word that describes anything or nothing. Ultimately, however, it means something which is visually valuable, but not necessarily by the standards of classical aesthetics.”<sup>5</sup>

“Parallel of Life and Art” is one of the first exhibitions created by a cross-disciplinary collective of artists and designers that did not merely put discrete artworks on view but instead assembled a work drawn from the existing image world “as found.”<sup>6</sup> By doing so, they transformed one of the primary purposes of the exhibition—the display of what is unfamiliar or new—into a presentation of what is known and familiar. Only decades later would an artistic practice

emerge that would speak of consuming pictures, appropriating them through restaging and reproduction, tapping into their historical, social, and cultural meanings as part of an inescapable “image culture.”<sup>7</sup>

Although the editors-cum-curators of the show argued that the images were of ordinary significance and from commonplace sources, it seems they downplayed or underestimated the synergistic effect of this particular assemblage on viewers, whereby the whole was indeed greater than the sum of its parts. By doing so, what was new was not any specific image but rather the creative act of producing this ensemble. Their actions of selecting, editing, arranging, and juxtaposing—in essence the very same postproduction methods that today we recognize as creative acts—were given public form through exhibition and publication.<sup>8</sup> From a design standpoint, this was a pivotal gesture: to create an exhibition might typically mean conceiving of its spatial installation—choosing materials and furniture, for instance—or perhaps producing the accompanying catalog. In these traditional approaches, design is directed

back to its conventional commodity forms. Instead, in the instance of “Parallel of Life and Art,” the role of the designer became much more holistic and appropriative, shifting to both curator and editor, as well as installation designer.

For designers in particular, one lesson of this project is the potential generative nature of the exhibition format, or the exploration of what I call the “exhibitionary apparatus.” This apparatus is the support system that surrounds any exhibition, making it intelligible or visible, and it both precedes and succeeds the actual show itself. The exhibitionary apparatus includes the prospectus or thesis; various narratives or “walk-throughs” about the show prepared for funding and touring purposes; the press release and media kit; the related marketing such as the invitation and related advertising and promotion; the design of the exhibition, including installation plans, furniture, and fixtures; the commissioning of new works for display; the checklist of items on view; supervision and security of the show; gallery climate, lighting, and object condition reports; the exhibition catalog, interpretive

texts, and other visitor guides; related educational programs; docent training; interviews with the media and previews for critics; and the documentation of the show.

Not surprisingly, artists and designers have played with elements of the exhibitionary apparatus, oftentimes critically or reflexively, making them focal points of their work. In his desire to rethink the traditional salon-style hanging of art, El Lissitzky’s design for the display of art at the International Art Exhibition in Dresden (1926) incorporated sliding panels, colored surfaces, textured wood, and metal finishes to create a more dramatic, scenographic approach in which he likened the exhibition space to a “stage,” and the artworks its “actors.”<sup>9</sup> A more extreme and literal form of theatricality was employed by Frederick Kiesler in his design for the International Exhibition of New Theatre Techniques (1924) in which his radical modular L+T (Leger and Träger) hanging system allowed for a multilayered, flexible arrangement of material. The system was a series of horizontal and vertical supports, upon which display panels were attached,

and which freed the presentation of art from walls, creating an autonomous viewing environment.<sup>10</sup> In his design of the International Surrealist Exhibition (1938), Marcel Duchamp hung 1,200 burlap coal bags from the ceiling of the space, illuminated by a glowing brazier. The cave-like setting required visitors to explore the scandalous show using flashlights.

These early twentieth-century examples highlight the rethinking of presentation—of the space of art and, in particular, the activation of the viewer—that was coming to the fore of display. Yves Klein famously exhibited nothing in “*La spécialisation de la sensibilité à l'état matière première en sensibilité picturale stabilisée, Le Vide*” (The specialization of sensibility in the raw material state into stabilized pictorial sensibility, the void, 1958). In an emptied gallery painted white, he turned the absence of exhibition content into a kind of auratic presence, declaring, “This invisible pictorial state within the gallery space should be so present and endowed with autonomous life that it should literally be what has hitherto been regarded as the best overall definition of painting: radiance.”<sup>11</sup> Klein was adept

at using the exhibitionary apparatus, focusing his efforts on the invitations to his exhibitions, for instance, which included the use of postage stamps rendered in his signature blue (International Klein Blue), and canceled, and thus accepted, by the French postal service. In the 1960s and 1970s, as site-specificity became ever more present in post-studio forms of practice, the gallery and the museum became central spaces of investigation and exploration, spawning such genres as institutional critique. In 1970, as part of the exhibition “Information” at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York, Hans Haacke surveyed museum visitors about whether they would vote for Governor Rockefeller’s reelection (the latter was also a MoMA trustee) based on his position on the Vietnam War. Haacke’s earlier interest in natural systems and processes had expanded into the intersections of social, cultural, and political networks at the nexus of the museum and art world. In the 1980s, Julia Scher began an ongoing project entitled *Security by Julia* in which she invites visitors to partake in the spectacle of surveillance, often installing her

the subject and the object, the site of production and consumption—the generative machine that makes the design (to paraphrase Sol LeWitt).

In 2008, designer Zak Kyes curated the exhibition (and produced the accompanying catalog, coedited with Mark Owens) “Forms of Inquiry: The Architecture of Critical Graphic Design” for the AA. For “Forms of Inquiry,” Kyes commissioned nineteen graphic designers (individuals, studios, and collaborative teams) to produce an “inquiry” into the relationship between graphic design and architecture. A wide range of architectural references were deployed: from the acoustical properties of St. Paul’s Cathedral and the atmospherics of the Blur Building, to the site of the World Trade Center’s Twin Towers and the conspiracies surrounding adjacent Building 7; from the heights of modernism found in Le Corbusier’s design of Ronchamp to the movement’s demise signified by the implosion of the Pruitt-Igoe housing project in St. Louis. Although it used architecture as its starting point, the project ultimately tells us more about graphic

design practices in the new millennium. Here, the search for a critical disposition within the practice of graphic design was undertaken. In their reflections on some of the works produced for the project, the editors noted,

*This work draws the designer out from behind the screen, in the process dissolving the traditional client/designer relationship in favour of the designer reconfigured as editor, publisher and distributor. By utilizing new modes of production, these designers expand the limits of a studio practice (Dexter Sinister, Åbäke), distribute their own information through self-initiated publications (TASK, deValence) and present a matrix of new critical positions through the use of archival and curatorial projects (Project Projects, Will Holder).<sup>14</sup>*

In “Forms of Inquiry,” the exhibition became a kind of publishing project—an invitation to produce newly self-authored work, a mechanism through which ideas could be instantiated, take material form, and become more widely and publicly shared. Above all,

it was an open-ended exploration, “posing questions and pursuing paths without necessarily knowing where they will lead.”<sup>15</sup> The reflexive, and consequentially critical, turn is thus taken—from problem solving to problem posing.

In 1952, two architects proposed an exhibition that would use graphic design as a means to explore a “new attitude,” one that was widely cultural but nevertheless held the seeds of a more critical architecture. In 2008, two graphic designers proposed an exhibition that would use the corpus of architecture to examine a critical practice of graphic design. Both exhibitions sought to transcend disciplinary boundaries and conventions. If one was primarily about ways of seeing the familiar anew, then the other was predominately concerned with new ways of doing what seems familiar. In both instances, despite the fifty-plus years between, the exhibitionary apparatus proved invaluable as an incubator of ideas and a generator of alternative practices.

1. Alison and Peter Smithson, “Documents 53,” as reprinted in *As Found: The Discovery of the Ordinary*, eds. Claude Lichtenstein and Thomas Schregenberger (Zurich: Lars Müller Publishers, 2001), 38–39.
2. “Addendum: Texts Documenting the Development of Parallel of Life and Art by Alison and Peter Smithson,” as reprinted in *The Independent Group: Postwar Britain and the Aesthetics of Plenty*, ed. David Robbins (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990), 129.
3. Reyner Banham, “Photography: Parallel of Life and Art,” *Architectural Review* 114, no. 682 (October 1953), reprinted as “Parallel of Life and Art,” in *The Independent Group*, 170–71.
4. The reaction of students at the AA is reported by Banham in his essay, “The New Brutalism,” *Architectural Review* 118 (December 1955): 354–61. However, architect Denise Scott Brown, a student at the AA at the time, refers to the positive influence of the Independent Group’s ideas on her and her “rebellious-minded friends at the AA.” See her commentary,
- “Learning from Brutalism,” in *The Independent Group*, 203–6.
5. Banham, “The New Brutalism,” in *The Independent Group*, 171–3.
6. The “as found,” according to the Smithsons, was “where the art is in the picking up, turning over and putting with.” It proposed an active engagement with the preexisting, a radical taking notice of what is there. See Lichtenstein and Schregenberger, eds., *As Found*, 201.
7. In 1977, art critic and historian Douglas Crimp curated the exhibition “Pictures” at Artists Space in New York City, featuring the work of Sherrie Levine, Jack Goldstein, Phillip Smith, Troy Brauntuch, and Robert Longo. Crimp’s catalog text, along with his work as editor of the influential journal *October*, helped identify the appropriation strategies of the so-called Pictures generation of artists, which also included Cindy Sherman, Barbara Kruger, Richard Prince, Sarah Charlesworth, and Louise Lawler.
8. For a discussion of the concept of postproduction

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in contemporary art, see Nicolas Bourriaud, *Post-production* (Berlin: Lukas & Sternberg, 2002).

9. El Lissitzky, quoted in Matthew Drutt, "El Lissitzky in Germany 1922–1925," in *El Lissitzky: Beyond the "Abstract Cabinet,"* ed. Margarita Tupitsyn (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999), 22.

10. Frederick Kiesler, *Internationale Ausstellung neuer Theatertechnik* (Vienna: Kunsthändlung Würthle & Sohn, 1924), xx.

11. Yves Klein, lecture, Sorbonne, 1959, reprinted in *Yves Klein 1928–1962: A Retrospective* (Houston, TX: Institute for the Arts, Rice University, 1982), 225.

12. For an interview with the designers about the project, see Adam Kleinman, "Dexter Sinister," *Bombsite* (March 2008), accessed March 2012, <http://bombsite.com/issues/999/articles/3117>.

13. Peter Bil'ak, "Concept" (2006), accessed March 2012, [http://www.peterbilak.com/graphic\\_design\\_in\\_the\\_white\\_cube/concept.html](http://www.peterbilak.com/graphic_design_in_the_white_cube/concept.html).

14. Zak Kyes and Mark Owens, eds., *Forms of Inquiry*:

Can Altay

Public Workshop and Setting, 2012

The fictitious title of artist Can Altay's workshop and installation of two stacking tables, *Leipzig Papers: Wessel von Gegnung*, suggest the potential for a space to be a vessel for encounter. A daylong workshop involving twelve participants took place around the tables, and ephemera from the workshop was displayed on the tables for the duration of the exhibition. The workshop, conducted in English, took place on February 1, 2012, at 10:00 a.m. This new work relates to an earlier workshop, *Publishing Class*, by Altay and Zak Kyes, organized by Casco – Office for Art, Design and Theory, Utrecht, in 2011.