# The Ivory Tower and the Control Tower:

# Formalist Aesthetics and Cultural Affiliations in

# British Abstract Art, 1956-1968.

Neil Clements

Submitted for the degree of PhD

The Glasgow School of Art

School of Fine Art

November 2017

# Abstract

This thesis addresses British art of the late 1950s and 1960s, and specifically traces how formalist aesthetics and broader cultural factors influenced abstract art being made at this time. As such it is concerned with defining how particular artworks, while not depicting the environment in which they were produced, can still be demonstrated to embody it through other means. Opposing a binary separation of pop figuration and formalist abstraction prevalent in other scholarship dealing with the period, this text instead outlines a scenario where formalist strategies of art-making were themselves ideologically predicated on a number of other societal factors. These factors include the semantic economy underpinning the field of branded advertisement, the increasingly afunctional appearance of industrially styled commodities, and an image of 'classless' professionalism cultivated to combat an existing political Establishment.

Additionally, this study includes an examination of the influence exerted on British abstraction by American sources, and revisits the critic Norbert Lynton's observation regarding the 'Mid-Atlantic' position many practitioners found themselves occupying stylistically. At the heart of such an enquiry is an attempt to account in concrete terms for characteristics differentiating British artwork from that being produced elsewhere. It is structured as three chapters, looking at the work of Richard Smith at a time during which he was resident in both London and New York, that of a number of sculptors who participated in the Whitechapel Art Gallery exhibition *New Generation 1965*, and the development of Jeremy Moon's painting practice. Brought together these three case studies combine to suggest an autonomous and vital sensibility, one quite distinct from developments being made either in Continental Europe or the United States.

# Acknowledgements

# Table of Contents

# List of Illustrations

23. Richard Smith, *Re-Place* (1963). Oil on Canvas.

24. Installation photograph of Richard Smith's third exhibition at The Green Gallery, New York 1965.

25. Richard Smith, *Red Carpet* (1965). Acrylic on Canvas.

26. Photograph of Smith's studio showing *Ripe* (1964) prior to completion.

27. Robert Morris, *Column* (1961). Painted Plywood.

28. Installation photograph of *New Generation 1965*, Whitechapel Art Gallery, London 1965.

29. Installation photograph of *Anthony Caro: Sculpture 1960-63*, Whitechapel Art Gallery, London 1963.

30. Anthony Caro, *Early One Morning* (1962). Painted Steel and Aluminium.

31. Michael Bolus, *Sculpture Two* (1962). Painted Steel.

32. Carl Andre, *Field* (1966). Ceramic Magnets.

33. Installation photograph of *Primary Structures: Recent American and British Sculpture*, Jewish Museum, New York 1966. On the far right is William Tucker's sculpture *Meru* (1964).

34. Bruce McLean, *Found Steel Girder and Scrap Metal Sculpture* (1968). Photograph.

35. Anthony Caro, *Month of May* (1963). Painted Steel and Aluminium.

36. David Annesley, *Circle* (1966). Painted Aluminium.

37. Installation photograph of *Kenneth Noland: Paintings 1959-62* at the Kasmin Gallery, London 1963.

38. David Smith, *Circle I* (1962). Painted Steel.

39. Phillip King, *Rosebud* (1962). Painted Fibreglass.

40. Constantin Brancusi, *Newborn* (1925). Wood, Brass and Marble.

41. Phillip King, *Barbarian Fruit* (1964). Wood and Aluminium.

42. Constantin Brancusi, *Timidity* (1928). Marble.

43. Tim Scott, *Umber* (1961). Painted Wood and Fibreglass.

44. William Tucker, *Anabasis I* (1964). Painted Fibreglass and Perspex.

45. Phillip King, *Slant* (1966). Painted Fibreglass.

46. Michael Bolus, *Bowbend* (1964). Painted Aluminium.

47. Isaac Witkin, *Nagas* (1964). Painted Fibreglass.

68. Jeremy Moon, *Crusader* (*6/68*, 1968). Acrylic on Canvas.

69. Jeremy Moon, *10/68* (1968). Acrylic on Canvas.

70. Jeremy Moon, *Caravan II* (*15/68*, 1968). Acrylic on Canvas.

71. Jeremy Moon, *11/68* (*15/68*, 1968). Acrylic on Canvas.

# Introduction

Reminiscing about the London art scene of the late 1950s and early 1960s Bridget Riley recalled Richard Smith, a fellow painter, returning from an extended trip to New York with a pair of basketball sneakers. The stir she noted that this now ubiquitous item of footwear caused was considerable. Representing an informality alien to the comparatively staid image of the British art student, her anecdote gives a sense of the mystique that the US must have held over the imagination. Smith's studio she remembered similarly reflected his experiences abroad, becoming 'airy' and filled with large, abstract canvases.[1] For younger artists, operating in what they considered to be conditions mired by the hangover of a pre-war, class-bound conservatism, American products suggested nothing less than a paradigmatic shift in attitudes towards both practice and life. Smith's early identification with various aspects of this remote culture signified a new kind of discernment and modernity, one that would go on to exert an increasing influence on British art in the coming decade. Some years later the symbolic power of the basketball sneaker would be utilised once more, in a photograph that appeared on the cover of the Royal College of Art (RCA) student journal *Ark* in the summer of 1964 [Fig.1].

What Riley's recollections also highlight is how closely bound two different aspects of American culture were from a British perspective: Smith's embrace of a more casual form of apparel was perceived to be matched by his decision to redress aspects of his painting practice. Extending beyond the importation of consumer goods, cinema and music, New York's growing importance as an artistic centre was broadcast in London through a series of exhibitions of abstract art. Jackson Pollock's first British solo exhibition took place at the Whitechapel Art Gallery in 1958, while a one man showcase of Mark Rothko's work opened there in 1961. Following on from a general

---

[1] Although Riley attributes this memory to a time when they were both students at the RCA in the mid 1950s, Riley finishing her studies there in 1955 and Smith in 1957, it is more likely to have taken place after Smith visited America for the first time in 1959. See Bridget Riley, *The Eye's Mind: Bridget Riley: Collected Writing 1965-1999*, ed. Robert Kudielka (London: Thames and Hudson, 1999), 23.

survey that took place in 1956, a 1959 showcase at the Tate Gallery entitled *The New American Painting* focused exclusively on abstraction, and appeared to many to herald New York's ascendancy over Paris.[2] Further facilitating this visibility were magazines like *Art News*, and *Art in America*, titles that younger artists were able to refer to in a select number of art school libraries. These messages also appeared in a more specialised form in publications such as *It is: A Magazine about Abstract Art*, which served to reinforce an image of abstraction as America's principal artistic export. In London such resources were available from the library of the United States Information Services (USIS). Located in the American Embassy on Grovesnor Square the USIS Gallery was the location of several early exhibitions of American Art. Such was the efficacy of these sources of information that 'by 1960' Alan Bowness would note, 'the British assimilation of the New American painting may be said to have been completed and the turning away from Paris toward New York irrevocably accomplished.'[3]

Accompanying this newfound dominance of fine art emanating from the United States was the iconoclastic potential suggested by its consumer imagery. In particular this material was enthusiastically received by the Independent Group (IG), a small circle of artists, architects, critics and designers based around the Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA), and with whom Smith had tangentially come into contact with as a student in 1955.[4] Forming as an informal discussion group in 1952, the IG's multivalent interests manifested themselves in a number of exhibitions curated by its members. These showcased subjects as diverse as microbiology, modernist architecture and mechanised transport. Commonly regarded as the group's longest standing contribution to British art, however, is their fascination with mass-media advertising, and their participation in the 1956 Whitechapel Gallery exhibition *This is Tomorrow*. Made up of a series of collaboratively authored environments this show was the first to present consumer iconography in an unadulterated form, and in doing

[2] For a detailed account of exhibitions of American abstraction before 1960 see John A. Walker, *Cultural Offensive: America's impact on British Art Since 1945* (London: Pluto Press, 1998), 44-74.
[3] Alan Bowness, 'The American Invasion and the British Response,' *Studio International*, June (1967): 292.
[4] Richard Smith, quoted in Rayner Banham's 1979 documentary *Fathers of Pop*.

so augured a tendency that would later coalesce on both sides of the Atlantic as Pop Art.[5] Lawrence Alloway, critic, IG member, and one of the exhibition's organisers wrote that its purpose was 'to oppose the specialisation of the arts,' and to engender a greater sense of 'responsibility' in the spectator, through a combination of symbols and messages 'as far from ideal standards as the street outside.'[6] By the time of this exhibition the IG had ceased to officially meet, but its efforts would presciently anticipate the celebrations of demotic source material, and engagement with the urban environment that were to preoccupy many London based artists in the coming decade.

For the painters and sculptors who elsewhere, eight months prior to the opening of *This is Tomorrow*, had seen paintings by Franz Kline, Pollock and Rothko in the Tate Gallery exhibition *Modern Art from the United States*, or who would attend *The New American Painting* three years later, one of most readily apparent factors was the dramatic size of these artworks. Far larger than a conventional easel painting it was the sheer proportions of this work that made much European art seem diminutive by comparison. In an attempt to match such an ambitious use of scale *Situation*, an exhibition of abstract paintings held at the RBA Galleries in September 1960, set as its entry requirement works measuring a minimum of thirty feet square. Arranged and hung by a committee of participating artists, it posed an open challenge to a London gallery system that was ill equipped to either display or sell artwork of this size. The range of techniques employed in these works was diverse, but nonetheless marked the beginnings of a general shift away from an expressionist style of making, towards more geometric, or 'hard edge' methods of paint application. Smith, by this time living in New York on a fellowship from the Harkness Foundation, had dispatched a number of canvases that would not arrive, although he was to feature in several re-enactments of the format that were to take place subsequently.

Despite its seeming separateness from the repertoire of consumer imagery informing artists like Richard Hamilton and Eduardo Paolozzi, the formal properties

---

[5] It should be highlighted that in making these claims for *This is Tomorrow* most commentators have focused almost exclusively on the exhibit developed by 'Group 2', which consisted of Richard Hamilton, John McHale and John Voelcker.

[6] Lawrence Alloway, *This is Tomorrow* (London: Institute of Contemporary Arts, 1956), n.p.

of large-scale abstraction were also regarded by certain commentators as connected to the modes of address employed by the mass media. Alloway, who had also acted as chairman in the organisation of *Situation*, was a vocal exponent of such a viewpoint, going so far as to draw a direct comparison between the sensory impact of large abstract canvases and filmic innovations such as Cinemascope. In a succession of articles and catalogue essays he laid out his case for a 'communication' oriented tendency, responding to what he saw as the changing role of the viewer brought about by mass cultural developments:

> Knowledge of the ambiguity of interpretation of any stimuli, has destroyed the confidence early abstract artists retained in a one to one communication with their viewers. Now abstract pictures are subject to the psychology of rumour, to oscillating responses, to the appetite and wiles of the spectator.[7]

These comments were an extension of theories Alloway was developing with regard to a non-hierarchical 'continuum' of artistic sources, what in 1959 he would famously label as the 'Long Front of Culture.'[8] Rather than positioning the disciplines of painting and sculpture above imagery culled from the everyday world, his critique of the high-low divide looked to abolish the cultural pyramid as an organising principle. No longer positioning art above other form of cultural production, the continuum model repositioned the artist as a 'consumer' much like their prospective audience, with the media functioning as a 'common ground' between them.[9] For Alloway, the democratic properties of the continuum also carried a specific resonance in a British context, being opposed as it was to the 'aristocratic' nature of a previous aesthetic regime.

Standing in stark contrast to Alloway's multifarious taste was the self-reflexive disciplinarity advanced by Clement Greenberg, another figure who would play a notable part in the development of British Abstract Art in the postwar period. From the late 1930s onwards Greenberg had called for an advanced art free from the

---

[7] Lawrence Alloway, 'Notes on Abstract Art and the Mass Media,' *Art News and Review*, February-March (1960): 12.
[8] Lawrence Alloway, 'The Long Front of Culture,' in *Modern Dreams: The Rise and Fall of Pop*, ed. Edward Leffingwell (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1988), 31-35.
[9] Ibid., 3. See also Lawrence Alloway, 'Artists as Consumers,' *Image*, No.3 (1961): 14-19.

influence of the mass media, and in 1961 a selection of his essays were anthologised and available to a wider readership through his book *Art and Culture*. Greenberg's subsequent advocacy of Anthony Caro's practice would lead to him having a determining effect on the trajectory taken by British sculpture. Known primarily for claims concerning the entrenchment of each discipline in 'its own area of competence' Greenberg's contention was that abstract art had necessarily evolved as the outcome of a Modernist drive towards medium specificity.[10] Such opinions proved persuasive to those artists who wished to insulate their practices from the contaminating effects of mainstream culture, and whether they openly identified with this model of Modernism or not, it is from a broadly 'formalist' position that a substantial portion of British abstraction of the period would come to account for itself. Speaking later of the 'Greenbergian umbrella' under which much discussion took place John Hoyland, another participant in *Situation*, would observe that 'whatever differences you had with him, you still had more in common with him than anybody else.'[11]

As it pertains to the visual arts, formalism could be described as a method of interpreting artefacts that attempts to apprehend them solely in terms of their aesthetic immanence, unencumbered by any factors extraneous to the appearance of the object itself. It is worth taking into account that, prior to Greenberg's entrance into British culture, an earlier, indigenous model of formalism could be identified in the early 20th century writings of Clive Bell and Roger Fry. Bell's 1913 conception of a 'significant form' possessed by works of art, where 'lines and colours combined in a certain way' functioned to 'stir our aesthetic emotions,' was concerned with highlighting the artwork's formal properties at the expense of its depicted content.[12] Similarly, Fry's claim that 'in proportion as art becomes purer the number of people to whom it appeals gets less' predicts the exclusionary principles with which High Modernism would later establish itself.[13] Despite such precedents later iterations of

---

[10] Clement Greenberg, 'Modernist Painting,' in *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism, Volume 4, Modernism with a Vengeance 1957–1969*, ed. John O'Brian (London: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 85.
[11] John Hoyland quoted in Sally Ann Bulgin, *Situation and New Generation*, PhD Thesis (London: Courtauld Institute, 1993), 306.
[12] Clive Bell, *Art* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1914).
[13] Roger Fry, *Vision and Design* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1928), 10.

formalist thinking in British art would proceed largely from American prompts, due in no small part to the visibility of critical associations forged between writers like Greenberg and painters like Pollock. Free from the issue of depicted subject matter complicating Bell and Fry's readings of Post-Impressionist and Cubist art, abstraction's confluence with formalism in the postwar period drew heavily on the former's elimination of representational content, and how this appeared to allow an artwork to assert itself as a completely self-referential entity.

While proliferating in descriptions given by both critics and practitioners, such a formalist attitude is emphatically present in the published statements that accompanied younger artists' work in the exhibition catalogue for *New Generation 1966*. For example, accompanying a selection of images by Knighton Hosking was the following comment:

> All of my paintings over the last two years have had their origin in their obsession with the wedge and fan shape. I've used these images as a jumping off point for all my work, developing an image until I reach an end product.[14]

Such a factual declaration functions as a form of negation, or an attempt to preclude any attribution of representational content to a work. Many of the other artists' entries in this publication are couched similarly, making reference to geometric archetypes or a sustained enquiry into one kind of pictorial device or another, with little to account for how these devices were arrived at. Indeed, what is most apparent from Hosking's statement is that the starting point for the work, where the 'wedge and fan shape' originally derives from, has been expunged. Significantly, such suppressive tactics did not extend to Hosking's choices for titles like *Tupperware Secret* and *Splen-door* (both 1966), both of which retain telling allusions to the modern context in which they were produced [Fig.2].

It is important when accounting for the attraction held by a formalist approach to credit the ideological security such rhetoric conferred, allowing artists to identify their practice with the vanguard of critical thought at the time. The absence of any

---

[14] Bryan Robertson, *New Generation 1966*, (London: Whitechapel Gallery, 1966), 82.

figurative art in a showcase of emerging practices like *New Generation 1966* was symptomatic not just of the widespread predominance of abstraction of a mainly geometric nature, but also a specific kind of discourse attendant to it. For those keen to preserve a sense of creative independence such ubiquity was troubling, not least because it suggested an unthinking association with a prevailing orthodoxy. Charles Harrison encapsulated this concern when, reflecting on 'the typical "advanced" English painting of the 1960s,' he disparagingly referred to those who had elected to wear the criteria of emphatic flatness so central to Greenberg's account of American painting 'like a provincial's badge of allegiance.'[15] Pessimistically, Harrison would regard such affiliation as representative of the 'unequally distributed' nature of Britain's Transatlantic dialogue with the United States.

Basil Taylor, writing about the first wave of Abstract Expressionism to reach British shores in a 1956 article for the *Spectator*, was struck how for the first time 'the United States has produced a body of painting which matches the scale and vigour of its technological enterprise and architectural expansion.'[16] Setting aside the existential connotations considered by others to be present in paintings by Kline or Willem De Kooning he stated 'these are custom-built jobs with all the anonymity of the production line; many of them have indeed been given a production number.'[17] Much like America's expanding influence in the fields of advertising and industry, what was so convincing about this new strain of abstract painting was the alternative it offered to previously held conceptions of national identity. Functioning for a critic like Taylor as an overtly technical force, painting was conflated with a broader image of forward thinking modernity.

**Thesis**

---

[15] Charles Harrison, 'Modernism and the Transatlantic Dialogue,' in *Pollock and After: The Critical Debate*, ed. Francis Frascina (London: Harper and Row, 1985), 221.
[16] See Patrick Heron, 'The Americans at the Tate Gallery,' reprinted in *Painter as Critic: Patrick Heron, Selected Writings*, ed. Mel Gooding (London: Tate Gallery, 1998), 100-104.
[17] Taylor is here referring to numbered works from the exhibition, such as Rothko's *No.10* (1950). Basil Taylor, 'Contemporary Arts: Modern American Painting,' *Spectator*, 20th January (1956): 80.

As information becomes our environment, it becomes mandatory to program the environment as part of our art.[18]

The central purpose of this research is an examination of the kinds of contextual factors we permit to act upon a critical account of abstract artwork. The primary motivation for focusing on the geographic locality and time covered here is the singular value it holds in relation to the question of abstraction and its porosity to other forms of cultural production. Mythologised as a period of newfound vitality the image of Britain, specifically London, during the 1960s is one of nascent affluence, and the dynamic intermingling of economic and cultural capital. Alongside actors, musicians, designers, and commercial photographers, artists played a pivotal role in this constructed narrative of a 'swinging' milieu, forming part of the 'new aristocracy' reported to preside over it. [19] Their domain presented itself as cosmopolitan, immersive, and was demarcated by the use of bright synthetic materials. This thesis addresses the various ways in which abstract artists responded to this narrative, in some cases enthusiastically, in others with hostility, and the extent to which their practices were implicated within this broader cultural discourse. In an attempt to move beyond the discussion of consumption and the commodity that has dominated the subject to date it will introduce a number of other considerations. These include the semantic economy underpinning the world of branded advertisements, the increasingly afunctional appearance of industrially styled commodities, and an image of the professional used to promote conceptions of a 'classless' society.

Although this thesis employs a series of methodological approaches drawn from the field of art historical research, my original interest in artwork of this kind stems from my own experience working as a practicing artist. While I would not claim that such experience constitutes a methodological strategy, in a sense this document's contribution to scholarship on abstract art made in Britain during this period is informed by the perspective that this offers me. It was through considering the

---

[18] Marshall McLuhan and Harley Parker, *Through the Vanishing Point: Space in Painting and Poetry*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 252.

[19] For an account of this 'New Aristocracy' see Jonathan Aitken, *The Young Meteors* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1967); George Melly, *Revolt into Style: The Pop Arts in Britain* (London: Allen Lane, 1970).

question of abstraction and its relationship to the broader societal conditions in my own practice that I initially came to appreciate the responses this earlier generation of artists adopted to similar questions. Furthermore, when researching the topic of this thesis, it seemed that many of the critical observations that resonated most with me were written by the practitioners themselves. When attempting to identify what it was that made these texts appear so compelling, it would be overly simplistic to argue that their importance related solely to the grasp these texts demonstrate of the practicalities underpinning an object's making. Nevertheless, there is an extent to which the subtle distinctions these artists drew between different aspects of materially producing an artwork that also suggests a conceptual means with which to approach their work. It is in an attempt to incorporate such considerations that this analysis proceeds.

This text challenges the notion that the phrase Pop Art pertains entirely to artworks that contain representational subject matter, and suggests instead that the structural iconoclasm of mass media imagery proved just as 'appealing' to British artists as any specific information contained within it. Inversely it also takes issue with other artists' claims that their abstraction stood entirely outside the conditions underpinning 1960s culture as a whole, and aims to demonstrate how such a formalist position itself developed in conjunction with other social and technological factors. Considering either art to be evolving an ever greater sense of its own historical necessity, or the boundaries between art and life to be rapidly eroding, these respective visions are taken as dialectical points. To do so it draws upon an observation the Canadian media theorist Marshall McLuhan made in 1964. McLuhan noted how 'the artists tends now to move from the ivory tower to the control tower of society,' and appeared to be fostering a clearer connection between artistic production and other form of cultural activity.[20] By treating the 'ivory tower' of a formalist mindset and the 'control tower' of an open engagement with the everyday environment as opposing principles, the intention is to provide a finer-grained image of British abstract art: one in which conceptions of national identity, an informed relationship

---

[20] Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (London: Routledge, 2010), 71. For further discussion of the competing logics of these societal and aesthetic imperatives see Jurgen Habermas 'Modernity: An Incomplete Project,' in *Habermas and the Unfinished Project of Modernity*, 38-55, eds. Seyla Benhabib and Maurizio Passerin d' Entrèves (Camridge MA: MIT Press, 1997).

with international developments, exclusionary principles, and integrationist tendencies all coincided to generate a hybrid sensibility.

Pivotal to this goal is articulating the nature of the Transatlantic dialogue British abstractionists engaged in with their American counterparts. Much like the political and economic relations between the two countries in the post-war period, where Britain was reliant on support from United States through financial subsidies like Lend-Lease, British art is generally assumed to have played a subordinate role. Contrastingly, what will be outlined here is how the formal solutions developed by British artists responded to but intentionally repositioned this influence in relation to their own contextual circumstances. Their solutions it will be suggested constitute a 'Midatlantic ingenuity,' to borrow a passing remark made by the critic Norbert Lynton regarding the idiom that many artists working in the 1960s found themselves occupying.[21] Like Harrison's metaphor of the Greenbergian badge worn by many painters, Lynton's comment reflects an anxiety about an over-reliance on American sources, and the danger of finding oneself stylistically adrift between the two landmasses. While the intrusion of stimuli from the United States played an undeniable part in the evolution of British abstract art at this time, I will argue that it is wilfully resistant to critical interpretations using the criteria laid out by a dominant, Americanised canon.

Aiming to recuperate the artwork of Smith and others, and to attend to the sophisticated duality that marks it out as an independent phenomenon, what this thesis aims to demonstrate is that it is the degree to which this work absorbed, but then subsequently problematised American influences that most clearly attests to its autonomy. This desire to establish a critical viability for works peripheral to a central narrative of 1960s abstraction is not limited to British art though, and shares much in common with other contemporary studies looking to validate a range of other national variants.[22] Meeting with and adapting an international narrative to serve its own

---

[21] Norbert Lynton, *Jack Smith: A Painter in Pursuit of Marvels* (London: Momentum Books, 2000), 60.

[22] Particularly relevant in this respect, although by no means demonstrating the limits of such material, is scholarship examining the interaction of formalism and Eastern philosophies in the work

particular needs, the aim of this thesis is to articulate the character of one locality within what Jan Verwoert has described as 'neighbourhoods' of modernism, a remapping of cultural terrain 'no longer modelled on a linear timeline but rather on a complex topography of different histories in specific places.'[23]

Another purpose of this text is to assess the potential adaptability of the term 'pop abstraction'. Outlined by Alloway in 1966 as the 'second phase' of British Pop Art –being preceded by a first phase he associated with the IG's anthropological explorations, and succeeded by a third, more openly celebratory one embodied by the figurative practices of painters like Derek Boshier, David Hockney and Peter Phillips– this intermediate tendency he interpreted as 'environmental' in its outlook. The connection of abstract art to the urban environment Alloway saw as residing in its ability to function analogously to the spectacular nature of its address:

> A basic assumption was that perception of the world had changed because of the bombardment of our senses by signs, colour and lights of the mass media. Hence it should be possible to activate our experience of these scenes, and of objects in them, by means of an imagery that was non-verbal but topical.[24]

Presenting Smith as the lynchpin of this sensibility Alloway goes on to name the brothers Bernard and Harold Cohen, Robyn Denny, William Green and Ralph Rumney as other exponents. For him the topicality of such work 'depended on an acceptance of the large scale of American abstract art and, at the same time, on an affiliation with American popular culture.'[25] What Alloway left relatively undeveloped in his account however, are the methods with which such affiliation actually manifests itself in artwork, or the kinds of imagery that contributed to its topicality. Also absent from his account, due in some degree to the temporal location of this second phase

---

of Mono Ha artists, the overtly Maoist interpretation of abstraction that was established by the French group Supports/Surfaces, and the constructivist ideals held by South American artists affiliated with the Neo Concrete Movement. See Koji Enokura et al., *Mono Ha, The School of Things* (Cambridge: Kettle's Yard, 2001); Gabriel Perez Barreiro, ed., *Concrete Invention: Reflections on Geometric Abstraction from Latin America and its Legacy* (Madrid: Ediciones Turner, 2011); Rachel Stella, *Supports/Surfaces* (Saint Étienne: Ceysson Editions d'Art, 2015).
[23] Jan Verwoert, 'World in Motion,' *Frieze*, June (2004): 91.
[24] Lawrence Alloway, 'The Development of British Pop Art,' in *Pop Art*, ed. Lucy Lippard (London, Thames and Hudson 1966): 47.
[25] Ibid., 50.

prior to the emergence of the RCA Pop painters in 1961, are any sculptors to whom the term might apply.[26] While harbouring inherent limitations, the notion of pop abstraction remains valuable, as it theorises abstract artworks capable of functioning as equivalents to aspects of their wider environment. This is an assertion that will be considered in relation to both artists named by Alloway, as well as a number of others whose practices fall outside the that time period he delineates.

By opening out a discussion of environmental prompts beyond a familial resemblance to specific cultural products like the cinema and commercial advertising, this text will establish how British abstractionists, including those of a formalist mindset, subscribed to a positivist worldview dominant in the 'operational field' of advanced industrial society. For cultural commentators such as Herbert Marcuse this worldview extended beyond the division of labour enacted by mechanisation, and now resided in how 'the technological controls appear to be the very embodiment of Reason for the benefit of all social groups and interest.'[27] These were conditions Marcuse saw as likewise having assimilated the arts. A similarly interconnected vision would be offered by McLuhan, who in 1962 remarked 'it is quite easy to establish the fact that the same means that served to create the world of consumer abundance by mass production served also to put the highest levels of artistic production on a more assured and consciously controlled basis.'[28]

The danger in unquestioningly accepting such operational principles was that this rendered artists complicit with the overall agenda of the industrial complex, a shift that Marcuse perceived as replacing earlier concept of artistic alienation with the alienation conventionally attached to forms of non-artistic labour.[29] Alloway for example, shortly after growing sentiment had led to the formation of the Campaign

---

[26] Caro for example had been included in a second iteration of *Situation* that took place at the Marlborough New London Gallery in 1961, and given the scale of his sculptures, their abandonment of the plinth and painted coatings it is surprising that these were not seen to embody environmental properties similar to that of the painters Alloway cites.

[27] Herbert Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (Oxon: Routledge, 2002), 11.

[28] Marshall McLuhan, *The Gutenberg Galaxy* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962), 275

[29] Previously 'authentic works expressed a conscious, methodical alienation from the entire sphere of business and industry, and from its calculable and profitable order.' Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man*, 61-62.

for Nuclear Disarmament, and a matter of months before the first of the organisation's Aldermaston marches, could be found writing enthusiastically about atomic energy for *Design* magazine.[30] Meanwhile Smith, sitting on an ICA panel chaired by Hamilton in 1962, incensed audience members by refusing to take a moral position to the question of advertising and its effects. Responding to questions about his responsibility to critique mass media spectacle Smith said that he felt no more accountable for his subject matter than a landscape painter was for a farmer ploughing a particular kind of furrow in a field.[31]

In parallel with such questions of complicity this text will also consider how exhibitions including *Situation*, but to which *London: The New Scene* and the sculptural showcase *New Generation 1965* could also be added, simultaneously contributed and responded to a collective sense of national identity as it was being shaped. Lisa Tickner's examination of Britain's efforts to market its artistic products as part of a wider 'export drive' is informative in this respect, as it demonstrates how cultural diplomacy was employed to project an intersecting image of 'art, design, politics and trade.'[32] Much like how internationally touring exhibitions of American art served to promote an image of consumerist freedom alongside the subjective freedom embodied by the artworks themselves, these British iterations also advanced an image of widespread cultural vitality.[33] The problem this presented was that various stakeholders –ranging from governmental organisations such as the Arts Council of Great Britain and the British Council, to private entities like the Stuyvesant Art

[30] See Lawrence Alloway, 'Reaction to Atomics,' *Design*, Vol.122, February (1959): 42-45.

[31] According to a November 1962 diary entry by Richard Morphet, reprinted in David Mellor, *The Sixties Art Scene in London* (London: Phaidon, 1993), 131.

[32] Lisa Tickner, 'Export Britain: Pop Art, Mass Culture and the Export Drive,' in *British Art in the Cultural Field, 1939-69*, eds. David Peters Corbett and Lisa Tickner (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012),196-221.

[33] The degree to which such American exhibitions were instrumentalised in service of a wider political agenda around this time has been the subject of a considerable amount of scholarship. For a range of positions to the subject see Eva Cockcroft, 'Abstract Expressionism, Weapon of the Cold War,' in *Art in Modern Culture: An Anthology of Critical Texts*, eds. Francis Frascina and Jonathan Harris (London: Open University, 1985), 82-90; Serge Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom and the Cold War* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1983); David Craven, 'The FBI Files on the New York School,' in *Abstract Expressionism as Cultural Critique: Dissent during the McCarthy Era* (Cambridge University Press, 1999), 79-104; Stacy Tenenbaum, 'The Triumph of "The New American Painting": MoMA and Cold War Cultural Diplomacy,' in *Artists and Patrons in Post-War Britain*, ed. Margaret Garlake (London: Ashgate, 2001), 125-153.

Foundation– looked to present the visual arts in accordance with the vibrancy emanating from other cultural spheres such as fashion and music. What these branded exercises often elided were a number of substantial ideological disparities that separated the intentions of artists from that of designers and musicians. In order to accurately establish the nature of such a disparity, the kind of neat histories such exhibitions present must also be, to some extent, disturbed.

Similarly, a number of studies have examined the London art scene as a site of interdisciplinary 'cross-over' between the visual arts and music, and consider the development of more liberal curricula within art schools as central to such counter cultural exchange.[34] Others have focused on geographic areas of London or the institutional spaces around which these social structures coalesced.[35] The establishment of venues at the time, including but not limited to Gallery One, Indica Gallery, Kasmin Gallery, the New Vision Centre, Rowan Gallery, Robert Fraser Gallery and Signals Gallery, contributed to a ground shift away from an older methods of displaying artwork. In certain cases gallerists achieved as much notoriety as the artists they exhibited.[36] Chronicling the London art scene 'from the inside' *Private View*, written by Bryan Robertson and John Russell, and lavishly illustrated with photographs by Snowden, was amongst the earliest to attempt to provide a topographical account of these new developments.[37] While each of the sources provide valuable insights into the social field in which 1960s British abstract art circulated, what this thesis aims to identify is a different kind of connectedness, one less centred on practitioners than on their output. Whereas surveys like *Private View* tended to reduce artworks to the status of by-products ancillary to the network of agents with whom they are primarily concerned, it is my intention to consider the extent to which these artefacts can themselves be demonstrated to embody societal codes. Equally

---

[34] See Simon Frith and Howard Horne, *Art into Pop* (London: Methuen, 1987); John A. Walker, *Cross-Overs: Art into Pop/Pop into Art* (London: Methuen, 1987).

[35] See Barry Miles, *London Calling: A Countercultural History of London since 1945* (London: Atlantic Books, 2010).

[36] For an example of this kind see Harriet Vyner, *Groovy Bob: The Life and Times of Robert Fraser* (London: Faber and Faber, 1999).

[37] Smith appears in one such photograph, resplendent with American paraphernalia, resting on a stars and stripes cushioned hammock in his studio complete with a pair of white basketball sneakers. See Bryan Robertson, John Russell, Snowden, *Private View* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1965), 198-201.

important in this regard is the degree to which these objects resist being contextually located, or problematise commonly held notions concerning the time in which they were produced. This is a factor that is especially pertinent when considering the Sixties, a period of time arguably subject to more mythologisation than any other in the postwar era.

In his 1969 study of the media's response to cultural developments in London, *The Neophiliacs*, Christopher Booker criticised what he regarded as the decade's unsustainable obsession with newness. The profusion of such sensational forms of promotion he said had given birth to a collective daydream, whose operation relied upon 'a nyktomorphic effect' that 'whether in art or in life, causes the projections of fantasy to assume an importance or attraction beyond the bounds of reason or reality.'[38] The reality of the situation was for Booker quite different, and what this 'group fantasy' grew from but also worked to conceal was Britain's insecurity about its waning colonial influence, and the deterioration of class boundaries that had previously acted as its most visible marker of national identity. Many artists shared Booker's scepticism about the hallucinatory promise of such hyperbolic rhetoric, even as their paintings and sculptures were appropriated as aspects of the novelty upon which it thrived. To complicate issues further, for artists attempting to extricate their products from the branded mono-culture advanced under the banner of 'Swinging London,' one of the most powerful alternatives was offered by an Americanised model of formalism that argued for an artwork's complete autonomy from other forms of cultural production. Hemmed in between the two, British abstract art in the 1960s had to differentiate itself not just from the expansion of Carnaby Street and the King's Road into the public's consciousness, but also the intrusion of a critical mindset that by 1968 Patrick Heron, an early supporter of American painting, considered to have become so overbearing as to represent 'a kind of cultural imperialism.'[39]

---

[38] Christopher Booker, *The Neophiliacs: A Study of the Revolution of English Life in the Fifties and Sixties* (London, Collins, 1969) 56.

[39] Patrick Heron, 'A Kind of Cultural Imperialism?' *Studio International*, February (1968): 62-64. This essay built upon an argument first laid out in Patrick Heron, 'The Ascendency of London in the Sixties,' *Studio International*, December (1966): 280-281.

Nor did the image of American art remain consistent during this period. *The Art of the Real* at the Hayward Gallery, another travelling survey taking place a decade after *The New American Painting*, effectively bookending the period covered here, displayed a dramatically different image to that of its predecessor. Despite featuring several painters from the 1959 Tate exhibition the show's rationale emphasised how artworks now presented themselves as 'irreducible, irrefutable objects.'[40] 'The "real" of today as it is posited by this new art,' its curator, E.C. Goosen, wrote 'has nothing to do with metaphor, or symbolism, or any kind of metaphysics.'[41] This observation is equally applicable in a British context, as artworks made there during the 1960s likewise reflected a decreasing emphasis on the 'iconography of despair' that had been emblematised in the previous decade by Herbert Read's phrase 'the geometry of fear,'[42] or what Caro would depreciatingly refer to as 'bandaged art.'[43]

In the place of an existentialist affiliation with pitted and scarred surfaces, a growing number of artworks prompted associations with the modern environment through the use of bright colours and industrial materials. A recurring theme throughout each of the sections that make up this study, and a topic most clearly linking abstract art to the technological rationalism outlined by those like Marcuse, are questions arising from the artwork's status as a literal object. Arising in contradiction to earlier theories of painting and its flatness, the same physical properties that to some signaled the autonomy of an artwork were seen by others to demonstrate the redundancy of such disciplinary distinctions.[44] In either case, what a debate around the shaped canvas and the obduracy of certain sculptural materials presumed was that enhanced technical means signified advanced artistic status. This factor contributes greatly to the topicality of abstraction, insofar as it could be

---

[40] The painters included in both *The New American Painting* and the *Art of the Real* were Jackson Pollock, Barnet Newman, Mark Rothko and Clifford Still.

[41] E. C. Goosen, *The Art of the Real* (London: Lund Humphries, 1969), 5.

[42] Herbert Read, *An Exhibition of works by Sutherland, Wadsworth, Adams, Armitage, Butler, Chadwick, Clarke, Meadows, Moore, Paolozzi, Turnbull: Organised by the British Council for the XXVI Biennale, Venice* (London: British Council, 1952), n.p.

[43] There is a degree of irony in this statement, as until 1960 Caro was still producing art that corresponded closely with such a bandaged mindset. See Norbert Lynton, 'Latest Developments in British Sculpture,' *Art and Literature*, Summer (1964): 199.

[44] For a detailed appraisal of such a contradiction see Thierry De Duve 'The Monochrome and the Blank Canvas,' in *Kant after Duchamp* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1996), 199-280.

demonstrated to act as a heraldic representation of the industrial environment in which it was produced.

A taste for industrial surfaces would not be limited to abstract art like that shown in *Art of the Real* either. Describing a profusion of new artistic styles in 1965 Irving Sandler observed a commonality between practitioners working with figuration and abstraction in terms of their methods of handling. He named this shared sensibility 'cool art,' and attributed as its key characteristic a taste for 'impersonal' or 'mechanistic' facture. [45] Like Swenson, Sandler suggested the reason for artists adopting such strategies was their dissatisfaction with the hegemony of earlier, more expressionist approaches to art making. What differentiates Sandler's position from a later historiographic tendency to treat the period separately in terms of formalist abstraction and Pop figuration is that he considered materials and technical processes to carry with them iconographic qualities not unlike depicted content. [46] Situating itself as this enquiry does between these two increasingly distinct fields of scholarship –pop figuration and formalist abstraction– this is a useful proposition: as it is through the embodiment of such technocratic principles that the porosity of abstract artworks to other aspects of cultural production is frequently best attributed.

### Structure

This thesis is laid out in three chronologically sequential but overlapping episodes, each focused on a specific aspect of the topic in relation to an individual artist or group of artists. The first of these studies will concentrate on artworks Richard Smith produced between 1959 and 1965, a period he split between living in London and New York. At this time Smith's practice was in a state of continual development, drawing on an array of influences from both the worlds of mass media and fine art. Whilst a RCA student and in the years immediately following his fascination with consumer culture ran largely parallel to those first explored by the IG.

---

[45] Irving Sandler, 'The New Cool Art,' *Art in America*, January-February (1965): 96-101.
[46] A similar point is also taken up in Robert Rosenblum, 'Pop Art and Non-Pop Art,' reprinted in *Pop Art Redefined*, eds. Suzi Gablik and John Russell (London: Thames and Hudson, 1969), 52-56.

The nature of this connection will be examined in relation to a series of articles and projects contributed to the student journal *Ark*, which took as their subject matter the cinema, fashion and ideogrammatic systems. In addition to this activity Smith participated in a number of exhibitions that show British artists trying to come to terms with influences emanating from both Continental Europe and the United States, cumulating in *Place*, a display that presented the viewer with an 'environment' of canvases. What this earlier period provides is a preamble for the kind of painting Smith was to make upon arriving in New York in late 1959, which combined the gestural abstraction that had preoccupied him as a student with symbols drawn from the media saturated urban landscape.

Rooted in themes that he and his colleagues at the RCA had previously explored, like the 'dream state' induced by consumer culture, or a 'background' of modern communications, these paintings appropriated several aspects of American culture at once. Taking their colour and compositional motifs from the commercial photography of Bert Stern and the corporate logotypes of Tom Geismar, but matching their scale and handling to the best efforts of the New York School, they enacted a carefully calibrated collision between the high and the low. This intermarriage of influences Smith saw as reflective of his own 'midtown' sensibility, an aesthetic lens through which his ambulatory experience of the metropolis was refracted. By equating the formality of formalist abstraction with other aspirational commodities, this strategy recast the existential pursuit of a personal image so central to the work of painters like Newman and Rothko as an exercise in branding, much like those enacted by corporate interests. Referring to a series of advertisements and photographer's work alluded to by Smith's titling and correspondence, what will also be examined is the degree to which a cultural source needed to be either misremembered or de-familiarised by gestural handling in order to become unmoored from its original signification.

Initiated following his return to London in the summer of 1961, and persisting through his relocation to New York at the very end of 1963, another important phase in the evolution of Smith's practice was his employment of more object-like painting

supports. Like his use of branded logotypes these too represented his preoccupation with mass media sources, namely the 'packages' in which commodities were presented. In contrast to a contemporaneous trend in Minimalist artworks, which aimed to eliminate any trace of illusionism from their clinical surfaces, and bemusing those American critics who encountered Smith's work when it was first exhibited, these shaped canvases deliberately problematised their three-dimensionality by 'punning' upon their own volume. This habit of painting recessive space onto projecting objects would reach its height in the *Sphinxes*, which presented the viewer with a narrow strip of pictorial surface extending at points some four feet from the gallery wall. It is these works that most visibly demonstrate Smith's vision of abstraction as a hollow form, or a semantic structure voided of specific content. Equivocal in their address these paintings can be in equal measure interpreted in relation to commercial culture and its intrusion into everyday life, or to more formal definitions of 'theatricality.'

Moving on from a discussion of painting and its relationship to three-dimensional form, the second chapter investigates the relation of sculpture to a Modernist concept of opticality, and details specifically how a formalist viewpoint established itself in the Sculpture Department of St. Martin's School of Art, manifesting itself specifically in the work of David Annesley, Michael Bolus, Phillip King, Tim Scott, William Tucker and Isaac Witkin. Celebrated locally in *New Generation 1965*, and shown as part of *Primary Structures: Recent American and British Sculpture*, held at the Jewish Museum in June 1966, those St. Martin's graduates who became known as New Generation sculptors took as their common goal a definition of what was proper to sculpture. Appearing weightless and produced with an 'unwinking' industrial finish, their work broke with an existing sculptural tradition predicated on the credo of truth to materials. While sharing a use of obdurate surfaces in common with Minimalist artworks also included in *Primary Structures*, what distinguished the New Generation sculptors from those who embraced methods of serial arrangement was their retention of overtly relational compositions. Resistant to both an American trend towards non-relational objectivity, and an earlier British disposition towards the pastoral, sculpture's place as 'a thing in the world' was regarded as residing instead in what could be described as its metalinguistic properties,

and it is these properties that are explored in relation to semiological definitions of language and its functioning parts.

Closely affiliated as these artists were with their former tutor Caro, their work has been interpreted mainly in relation to a definition of sculpture advanced by Modernist critics. Scrutinising the nature of such an association, and centring on Michael Fried's description of Caro's sculptural 'syntax,' what becomes apparent is the extent to which New Generation sculpture refutes as many of these criteria as it conforms to. In particular what a number of polychromatic works expose is an ontological paradox in the Modernist conception of sculpture's disciplinary purity: in that it was able to sanction the use of coated surfaces in service of greater opticality, yet not the choice of any specific colour. Looking at how colour was used to 'energise' or otherwise augment compositional elements it will be suggested that these sculptor's decisions functioned not dissimilarly to the cropping of canvases by colour field painters like Kenneth Noland and Jules Olitski, who employed this tactic retrospectively to allow their pictures the correct amount of space to 'breathe.' Given that several of the St. Martin's sculptors had spent time in active discussions with these individuals, while occupying teaching positions at Bennington College in Vermont, the issue is presented in the context of an interdisciplinary dialogue amongst practitioners, as opposed a debate held solely between artists and critical ideologues.

Another characteristic distinguishing these sculptors' practices from Caro's was their use of closed volume forms, and these will be considered in relation to what Jean Baudrillard theorised as a widespread shift in the modern operational field from an economy of physical 'effort' towards an economy of disembodied 'control.' Baudrillard saw such a change as having been brought about by automation and, like the smooth encasements sported by many New Generation Sculptures, presented the individual with a decreased sense of their own tactile agency. Additionally, this discussion will go on to consider the influence Constantin Brancusi continued to exert over younger British sculptors in spite of Greenberg's advocacy of increasingly linear, collage-based forms of expression, and the opportunities new materials such as resin and fibreglass offered to expand upon his legacy. Seeking to insulate the artwork from its

surrounding environment, as Brancusi did using his own sculpted pedestals, what the rhetorical or 'un-public' nature of these sculptures demonstrate is not a greater affinity with the urban environment, but rather a demand to be regarded as radically emancipated from the social situation in which they were obtrusively placed. It is in this manner –as intransient 'personages' seeking autonomous speech– that these sculptures can best be located culturally: in relation to conceptions of the liberated subject that would become a leitmotif of the 1960s.

Finally, the question of abstract art and its relationship to formations of artistic identity will be taken up in a discussion of paintings made by Jeremy Moon between 1962 and 1968. Set against a social backdrop where an image of classless professionalism signaled a break with the Establishment and accompanying notions of aristocratic amateurism, Moon's decision to pursue a full time artistic practice followed his having worked 'on the executive side of the advertising industry' for a number of years.[47] Developing a 'hard edge' painting style to match his professional aspirations after seeing *Situation* he would go on to enjoy commercial success as an artist, feature in a number of international showcases of British art including *London: The New Scene*, and hold teaching positions at several reputable art schools including St. Martin's. Moon's untimely death in a motorcycle accident in 1973 has limited a critical appraisal of his work in any way proportional to the recognition he enjoyed during his lifetime, and it is this imbalance that this survey aims in part to redress. This chapter will specifically analyse aspects of Moon's practice that confounded formalist accounts, opening out a discussion of the alignment between the rhetoric attendant to hard edge abstract painting in Britain and the technocratic principles underpinning definitions of a 'new class.'

Making use of both shaped and rectangular formats Moon's paintings are epitomised by the 'tension' they exploit between pictorial composition and the framing edge, leaving the literal and illusionistic aspects of the picture in dynamic

---

[47] This is the phrasing employed in Moon's first artist's biography, printed in the accompanying leaflet for his 1963 Rowan Gallery exhibition. Jeremy Moon, Exhibitions Leaflet (London: Rowan Gallery, 1963), n.p.

suspension. Extrapolated beyond its role as a formal device this tension could also however be argued to embody the delineation these paintings draw between a viewer's disinterested engagement with the artwork, and the productive forces that brought them into being. This separation is possibly most evident in the loose preparatory drawings made in advance of finished pieces, which functioned as an unrestrained testing ground for ideas and that privileged play as their operative purpose. By comparison, in the paintings resulting from this initial period of exploration Moon felt compelled to modify and rework a motif until any trace of its 'original conception' had been relinquished. Whereas a 'one shot' method of stain painting favoured by Americans like Kenneth Noland foregrounds the artist's efforts as a form of immaterial prowess, it will be argued that Moon's treatment of painted surfaces reflect a 'neurotic' impulse to imbue his buoyant compositions with the qualities of workmanship. This artificial division of labour and leisure is furthermore evident in his dual titling of artworks from 1964 onwards. There paintings were assigned a numerical title describing their position within an administrative matrix of practice, as well as a more allusive, text-based name correlating to their subsequent circulation in the public realm.

Unlike in Manhattan, where the spacious artist's loft studio carried with it the connotation of light industry, in London large-scale abstract painting evolved in the late 1950s and early 1960s in conflict with the domestic site in which it was predominately made. In Moon's case these logistical constraints would be alleviated by his relocation to the suburb of Kingston Upon Thames in 1966, and his construction of a purpose built studio in the back garden of the property. Living and working in close proximity to other painters including Bernard Cohen and Hoyland this would result in a period of increased productivity for Moon, and this suburban context will be analysed in relation to the overlaid figures of production and consumption that recur in his later grid paintings. As a sublimated form of labour what Moon's serious play highlights is a conundrum faced by those who would adopt a formalism as a methodological worldview: that while their artwork had to speak to the conditions of leisure central to its disinterested contemplation as a purely sensual object, its making could not itself be construed as a form of leisure.

**Methodology**

In his essay 'The Historical Genesis of a Pure Aesthetic,' Pierre Bourdieu analysed the social formation of the self-referential artwork and the essentialist thinking that combined to produce and preserve one another. 'In effect' he noted:

> The works that stem from a pure concern for form seem destined to establish the exclusive validity of internal reading which heeds only formal properties, and to frustrate or discredit all attempts at reducing them to the social context, against which they were set up. And yet, in order to reverse the situation, it suffices to note that the formalist ambition's objection to all types of historicization rests upon the unawareness of its own social conditions of possibility.[48]

It was these social conditions of possibility that had given rise to the very prospect of apprehending artworks solely in terms of their formal attributes, circumstances that had evolved only as the result of the historical accumulation of previous 'breaks with history.'[49] The assumption Bourdieu deemed 'naïve' about the formalist project –a field made up not only of artists or artworks, but also writers, institutions and other agents conditioned to interact with it– related to its 'genesis amnesia.'[50] In claiming to engage atemporally with artworks the ideological apparatus of the pure gaze was in effect able to preclude any discussion of its own cultural formation. What this logic offered in its place was a feedback loop, one in which artworks and sufficiently cultured interlocutors worked to cyclically reinforce a sense of collective necessity. Returning to Hosking's obsessive employment of a wedge and fan motif, it is the inability to countenance a moment of origin that appears naïve, so focused as the artist is on converting the stimulus that first inspired him into a self-evident visual statement. It is in an attempt to furnish Hosking's work and that of his peers within a contextual framework that my methodological approach has been developed.

---

[48] Pierre Bourdieu, 'The Historical Genesis of a Pure Aesthetic,' in *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 266.
[49] For another framing of the formal artwork in relation to its 'conditions of possibility' see Yves Alain Bois, 'Whose Formalism?' *The Art Bulletin*, March (1996): 9-12.
[50] Bourdieu, 'The Historical Genesis of a Pure Aesthetic,' 262.

To that extent, this enquiry could be summarised as a sociological interrogation of formalism, insofar as it manifested itself as a tendency in 1960s British abstract art. Far from trying to discredit the outcomes of such a tendency, it instead proposes that its robust defence depends on a formalist claim to atemporal autonomy being understood in relation to the specific historical circumstances that accompanied it. While this narrative disturbs or at points directly compromises the rhetoric typically accompanying many of the abstract artworks covered here, my intention is to secure for the practitioners analysed a greater degree of visibility. This visibility I would suggest relies not so much on abstraction's capability to repel the intrusion of popular culture, but rather upon apprehending the iconoclastic promise such a vision of autonomy held as an ideological imperative at this specific time. As such this claim proceeds directly from Bourdieu's observation that 'far from leading to a historical relativism, the historicization of the forms of thought which we apply to the historical object, and which may be the product of that object, offers the only real chance of escaping history, if ever so small.'[51]

Just as it straddles the gap between formalist abstraction and Pop Art this enquiry draws both on firsthand formal analysis of artworks, as well as Institutional theories that encourage an appraisal of the systems of patronage in which such artefacts circulate. Advanced by amongst others Howard Becker and George Dickie these stress that artistic production does not occur in isolation, but that it is rather cooperatively supported and consensually validated.[52] Another topic placed out of bounds by formal analysis, that of an artist's biography, has also been selectively employed to facilitate a discussion around factors motivating certain formal decisions within that individual's practice. Nor is this approach limited to a consideration of stylistic tendencies generally assumed to court associations with a practitioner's biographical circumstances, like Harold Rosenberg's well-known definition of 'action painting.' After all, an artist's decision to suppress such interpretations through

[51] Ibid., 264.
[52] See Howard Becker, *Art Worlds* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982); Arthur Danto, 'The Art World,' *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol.61 No.19 (1964): 751-784; George Dickie, *Art and the Aesthetic: An Institutional Analysis* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1974).

adopting an impersonal method of making results no less from a specific series of social conditions than any decision to deliberately invoke them using expressionist means. This issue has a particular bearing on the topic of Jeremy Moon's paintings addressed in the third chapter, where a degree of professionalised objectivity was cultivated to signify an identification with other more socially integrated forms of labour.

Despite remaining at least partly open to these external factors, by attempting to demonstrate how such concerns were embodied implicitly the aesthetic attributes of the artworks themselves, this study still conforms to many of the criteria of a formalist investigation, although corresponding largely to what Richard Wollheim categorised as a 'latent' mode of formalism. Latent formalism, in contrast to interpretations that regarded the formal properties of an artwork as outwardly 'manifest,' he described as searching for 'forms that somehow underlie what is to be seen when looking at a surface,' and that had to be 'excavated' from it.[53] Wollheim observed that this model of thinking tended to regard artworks as formations of syntax, a concern taken up in earnest in the semiological appraisal of New Generation sculpture that forms the second chapter of this study.  In appraising the relationship between inclusive and exclusive methods of thinking about abstract art and its porosity to the world around it –for instance, that which could be said to separate the New Generation sculptors' conception of artistic practice from that of Richard Smith's– a shared interest in underlying semantic structures nonetheless emerges as a common theme. The difference of opinion separating the two is that while the former considered such semantic properties as the conceptual bedrock of the sculptural discipline to which they were committed, the latter regarded it as symptomatic of abstraction's topicality, something that allowed him in turn to appropriate devices from other economies of signs like the world of advertising.

Emerging at a time of substantial technological expansion, and what many theorised to be an enhanced connectivity between humans and such advancements, formalist abstraction developed as a hermetic ideology alongside a number of other

---

[53] Richard Wollheim, *On Formalism and its Kinds* (Barcelona: Fundacio Antoni Tapies, 1995), 26.

viewpoints that similarly looked to classify experience in relation to a set of fundamental principles. Broadly 'structuralist' in their approach these conceived of consumer capitalism and the globalised conditions of mass production and advertising attached to it as a single, cohesive entity, a framework that lay underneath every aspect of modern society. Such operational systems were for McLuhan what constituted the 'medium,' in his mind constituting an instrumental potency far greater than any of the 'messages' they carried. Likewise, as a form of technical advancement abstract paintings and sculpture were considered in Modernist terms to more closely explicate the intrinsic nature of their own medium. However, lacking as it did representational subject matter –akin in such circumstances to what McLuhan would refer to as 'programme content'– it is also paradoxically this factor that allowed abstract art to declare its interdependence with larger forms of operational structure.

Regarded in this manner the term abstraction refers not just to an artwork's elimination of visible subject matter, but instead to its appearance as a system not unlike those exerting control over society as a whole. It is this structural quality that could be identified as connecting it to other forms of contemporaneous discourse. A common topic linking a diverse range of writers at this time, including theorists like Baudrillard, McLuhan, Roland Barthes, and Guy Debord, economists like J.K. Galbraith, popular commentators like Vance Packard, as well as novelists like J.G. Ballard was the human subject's changing relationship to conditions of increasing industrialisation, commodification and affluence. Each of these writers considered such change to have fundamentally altered how the modern environment functioned at a structural level, and with reference to this opinion that this discussion of abstract art and its wider affiliations refers.

Another factor significantly informing this research is a survey of the critical reception of British abstraction received both locally and internationally. What the accounts of critics like Dore Ashton, Mel Bochner and Donald Judd demonstrates, when first encountering British abstract art exhibited in New York, is how far removed a British mindset was from the criteria determining the advanced status of American art. And it is this geographical dislocation that serves to clearly articulate

fundamental differences in approach between the two. In Britain, sitting alongside the well documented commentary of figures like Alloway, Heron and David Sylvester were a range of other critics, including but not limited to Bowness, Harrison, Lynton, Michael Compton, Robert Kudielka, Richard Morphet and David Thompson, whose contribution to a discussion of the development of British art of the 1960s has been accorded less credit. Writing for both specialised art magazines and national news outlets their criticism eschewed 'polemic' generalisations of the kind that came to dominate American critical discourse at the time, instead adopting a more measured response to the trajectories taken by individual artists' careers.[54] It is with some measure of this spirit of moderation that this enquiry hopes to conduct itself.

Also important are those art magazines that provided a platform for British artists to present their own opinions in print. Pivotal in this respect, and a source that is consistently referred to throughout this text is *Studio International*, which under the editorship of Peter Townsend from 1965 onwards became the venue for a succession of articles addressing abstract art and its relation to wider questions of nationality and technology. Under Townsend's direction the magazine maintained a fractious debate between practitioners, educators and critics in the 'ticketboard' paper section at the beginning of each issue.[55] Prior to this *Art International*, a bilingual magazine published in Lugano by James Fitzsimmons, had acted as an international outlet for British art, at various points featuring articles by Alloway, Lynton and Denny.[56] Although lacking this level of distribution *Art News and Review*, founded in 1948 by Richard Gainsborough, focused on art being shown in London and carried many of Alloway's earliest speculations on the interrelation of the popular and fine arts.[57] *Art*

---

[54] For an outline of the polarised mentality pervading the critical atmosphere in New York at the time see James Meyer. *Minimalism: Art and Polemics in the Sixties* (London: Yale University Press, 2001).

[55] For a detailed discussion of Townsend, his editorial policies, and the evolution of *Studio International* see Jo Melvin, *Studio International Magazine, Tales from Peter Townsend's Papers, 1965-1975*, PhD Thesis (University College London, 2013); Jo Melvin, *Five Issues of Studio International* (London: Raven Row, 2015).

[56] For a list of Alloway and Denny's *Art International* articles see Richard Kallina ed., *Lawrence Alloway: Imagining the Present, Context, Content and the Role of the Critic* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), 275-276; Robert Kudielka, *Robyn Denny* (London: Tate Gallery, 1973) 63.

[57] For a longer discussion of *Art News and Review* in relation to earlier imprints and systems of patronage see Margaret Garlake, *New World, New Art: British Art in Postwar Society* (London London: Yale University Press, 1998), 10-31.

*and Artist*, manned by amongst others early Pop scholar Mario Amaya, and former editor of *Art News and Review* Bernard Denvir, began publication in 1966 and also devoted space to promoting members of the London scene.

In addition to sources that appeared in periodicals like *Art International* and *Studio International* this research draws on documentary material from a number of student-edited journals circulating around this time. What the engagement of both students and staff members with these ad hoc, often short-lived publications evidences is a series of prevailing outlooks represented within various institutions. The longest running and most celebrated of these journals was *Ark: The Journal of the Royal College of Art*, in print intermittently between 1950 and 1978, and the result of a collaboration between the Schools of Design and Fine Art.[58] Although known for granting early opportunities to celebrated graphic designers like Len Deighton and Alan Fletcher, this thesis primarily focuses on a number of issues of the journal published under the editorships of John Hodgson and Roger Coleman, which featured contributions from RCA students such Smith and Denny, as well as giving a platform to figures like Alloway and Reyner Banham.[59] Forming a link between late 1950s British abstraction and the private and mainly undocumented discussions that took place amongst the IG, the experimental layout of these issues and their eclectic collision of source material gives some idea of the openness towards the world of popular culture shared between these two generations. Much of this acceptant attitude and design aesthetic would later be carried on into *Living Arts*, the house journal of the ICA that ran to three issues between 1963 and 1964, and that featured prominent contributions from amongst others Hamilton and Smith.

If *Ark* had derived its input from students across the RCA, other journals were formed within specific departments and as a result proceeded with a narrower disciplinary remit. Distributed by the Sculpture Department at St. Martin's School of Art *First: An Occasional Magazine* was edited by a number of individuals including

---

[58] See Keren Goldberg, ed., *ARK: Words and Images from the Royal College of Art Magazine 1950-1978* (London: Royal College of Art, 2014).
[59] Hodges edited issues sixteen and seventeen of *Ark*, Coleman eighteen through twenty.

King, Scott and Tucker. A telling comparison can be drawn between the first of these editions, released in 1959 and edited by King, Scott, Hazel Peiser, Judy Barclay and Lily Tadjian, and the second, edited by Tucker, Peiser and Barclay, that was released two years later. In its inaugural issue the journal mimics the montage techniques and fragmentary text that had by this point come to dominate issues of *Ark*, presenting an atemporal collection of imagery that actively conflated the old with the new. On one page pictures of hieroglyphs, a hydro-electric dam, bicycle wheels and aerial photography are positioned in a clustered array, and on another a photograph taken by Caro of the Carnac standing stones in Brittany squat underneath an inverted image of a Pininferina designed Ferrari 250 GT. Further sign of the editors' affiliation with a cultural continuum was the inclusion of a short article by Alloway entitled 'Words on Images,' which celebrated the 'tack-board' mentality behind such piecemeal arrangements. '20th century images communicate without text' he stated 'there is a vernacular of things seen,' before going on to ask 'is BB Bernard Berenson or Bridget Bardot?'[60]

The sophomore issue with which Tucker was closely involved was by contrast a more conventional affair, devoting clear monographic sections to King, Maurice Agis and Bucki Swartz, and reproducing an excerpt of an article by the American sculptor David Smith that had appeared in *Arts* magazine the year before. An interest in sculptural tradition was represented by a photograph of Tucker's hand holding a copy of the Venus of Willendorf that appeared on both its front and back covers. Whereas the previous issue had presented a profusion of sources that could potential inform the making of contemporary sculpture this shift in editorial focus looked to define it in more sober terms, as a reflective method of formal enquiry. Most emblematic of this change in tone is the difference between the open potentiality of Alloway's text and the hardened self-sufficiency of Smith's. In the coming years it was Smith's viewpoint that was to exert more influence on sculpture being produced at St. Martin's,

---

[60] Lawrence Alloway, 'Words on Images,' *First*, No.1 (1959): n.p.

a great deal of which could be said to have progressed from his statement 'I start with one part, then a unit of parts, until a whole appears.'[61]

A disciplinary focus would again manifest itself in *Monad: A Magazine about Painting*, organised by students of the Chelsea Painting Department and instigated at the suggestion of Jeremy Moon and fellow tutor, the Constructionist John Ernest. Sponsored by the Chelsea Art School Student Union, and published in a single issue in the summer of 1964 this was intended to perform a similar role to publications like *Ark* or *First*, operating with the goal of contextualising student's interests with those of advanced practitioners and current trends outside of the educational establishment. Drawing a direct link between the introduction of more liberal teaching curricula and a greater porosity between art schools and the outside world it was the hope of Tim May, *Monad's* student editor, that this new climate 'could engender a freer and more enlightened form of communication.'[62] One sign of its attentiveness to international trends was its reproduction of a recorded conversation that had taken place between Caro and the painters Kenneth Noland and Jules Olitski in Bennington College that year.

Notable was the emphasis *Monad* placed upon abstract art. A central feature in the journal was a questionnaire polling artist's opinions on a number of subjects. Featuring contributions from amongst others Cohen, Denny, Riley, Gillian Ayres and Paul Huxley, what is telling in their published answers is the degree to which the issue of abstraction and its autonomy from other cultural forms recurs. In the printed sample of artists contacted, all with the exception of Anthony Donaldson, Derrick Greaves and Allen Jones –who were each then employing quasi-abstract approaches to figuration at the time– were painting in a non-representational idiom. This questionnaire also featured a series of characteristically clipped responses from Moon, representative of the exclusionary rhetoric in which he was accustomed to describing his own practice. When asked the question 'do you regard your painting as an act of

---

[61] David Smith, 'Notes on my Work,' *First*, No.2 (1961): 34. See also David Smith, 'Notes on my Work,' *Arts*, February (1960): 40-49.

[62] Tim May, 'Editorial: A Climate to Work In,' *Monad: A Magazine About Painting* No.1, Summer (1964): 4.

representation?' his curt reply was 'not in any way at all.'[63]

---

[63] May, *Monad: A Magazine About Painting*, 9.

# Hollow Signs: Richard Smith, 1957-65

> Sometimes I think that painting is part of the entertainment industry – sometimes. I think it is an aspect of the media –I think this kind of confusion has been formative in my paintings.[1]

The work of Richard Smith evades categorisation. A desire to blend contradictory elements, and an unwillingness to remain with one formal outcome for any length of time, comprise two principal reasons his work has eluded critical support in any way proportional to the considerable success he enjoyed as a younger artist.[2] At a time when the prevailing tendency in both American and British art was to suppress visible brushwork while placing a greater emphasis on the three dimensional properties of the painting support, Smith elected to explore both gesture and projected form simultaneously. Likewise, despite being identified by critics like Alloway as the principal British exponent of pop abstraction, one of the few artists who was felt could comfortably assume such a nomination, he increasingly limited discernible references to popular culture in his work during the second half of the sixties. These are decisions that make appraising his oeuvre a challenging prospect, as it is this willingness to cross freely between categories such as abstraction and representational imagery, painting and sculpture, which endows his work with its particular agility, as well as defy any simplistic association with a historical account of either Pop Art or formalist abstraction. Indeed, if one recurring characteristic can be identified in Smith's work of the 1960s, it is a profound ambivalence to such rigid forms of demarcation.

What drove Smith's practice was a certain restlessness, one that displayed a sophisticated sensitivity to the sense of freedom abstraction shared with aspects of consumer culture. On one side there was the fine arts, the private logic of the studio and a hermetic model of abstract painting. On the other there was the outside world, represented by the artist's own abiding fascination with the popular media: movies,

---

[1] Richard Smith, 'Brief Statement,' *Metro*, No.6 (1962): 112.

[2] Beyond a string of exhibitions with commercial galleries, before the age of forty Smith had represented Britain twice at the Venice Bienniale, and had been awarded the Grand Prize at the 1967 Sao Paolo Biennial.

advertising and fashion. By seeking to strike a balance between these forms of experience Smith's paintings reflect how a modern subject perceives their environment, and the mechanics that permitted this interaction to occur. Abstraction was accorded a dual function in these circumstances, being used both as a means to expose the semantic structure underpinning spectacular society, as well as a method with which to smuggle aspects of popular culture into an institutional framework ideologically opposed to its inclusion. These twin processes –the use of abstraction to decode mass media imagery, to then subsequently 're-communicate' it in artworks– are strategies Smith pursued simultaneously. The original sources in Smith's paintings can be interpreted as undergoing a process of abstraction in the strictest sense: in that they are formally reduced until a loss of mimetic signification occurs. This kind of emptying out of content has as its root a desire to render the artwork autonomous from its original point of reference. However, the resulting autonomy that this kind of abstract artwork gains is only to the extent that it is divested of characteristics specific to that source. What are retained are its most essential elements, characteristics that could be interpreted as structurally underpinning the original reference. Unlike the autonomous concept underpinning the non-objective or concrete artwork this process was capable of gradation or scaling; and as his practice developed Smith would subject the visual stimuli that appealed to him to varying degrees of abstraction.

This unwillingness to settle on any solution for long was also geographical, with the artist dividing much of his time during the 1960s between Britain and the United States. Whether we can attribute more British or American characteristics to his work during this decade is a subject very much open for debate. Mario Amaya, in his 1965 survey *Pop Art… and After*, felt the question sufficiently irresolvable that he elected to compartmentalise Smith's paintings along with R.B. Kitaj's in a separate 'Anglo-American' section.[3] Smith himself felt an antipathy to a previous generation of British artists, openly stating in one 1965 interview that that he and his peers had

[3] Mario Amaya, *Pop Art… and After* (New York: Viking Press, 1965), 77, 137-139.

been 'failed' by painters like Roger Hilton, Terry Frost and Alan Davie.[4] To surpass the influence of such individuals, his joint interests in Abstract Expressionist painting and urbanised consumerism were employed as a 'clean sweep,' a way to combat what he regarded as a conservative model of British art and the detached role its practitioners claimed within society. Despite his credentials as a honorary member of the New York scene Smith's practice also retained a number of eccentric characteristics that sat awkwardly in relation to the official narrative of art's development in America, either in relation to a figurative Pop tendency, or the formal considerations dividing abstraction made by the opposing camps of Modernists and Minimalist artists. What will be contended here is that this indeterminacy functioned deliberately: as a method in which to reconcile aspects of modernity that Smith saw as interconnected and felt disinclined to differentiate between.

## *Ark*: Getting the Measure of Popular Culture

Smith's contributions to the RCA journal *Ark* begin in 1955, run until 1962, and mark the beginnings of the artist's written commentary on several aspects of popular culture that would later appear in publications like *Living Arts* and *Gazette*. Beginning while he was still a student these articles continued in a piecemeal fashion following his relocation to the United States and subsequent return to Britain. Initially the interests displayed in these texts were only tenuously connected to his practice as a painter, engaged as he was with a kind of gestural abstraction indebted as much to the European school of Tachisme as it was to Abstract Expressionism. What Smith's articles and the broader intellectual climate fostered by *Ark* provide however is a method of interpreting how he began to tentatively regard such an approach to painting as linked to other cultural activities, and the important function 'action painting' played in constructing such an affiliation.

Becoming involved along with fellow students Denny and Roger Coleman

---

[4] Smith quoted in Bruce Glaser, 'Three British Artists in New York,' *Studio International*, November, (1965): 179.

from issue fifteen of the journal onwards Smith initially provided visual accompaniments, contributing lithograph illustrations to a poem by Roy Fuller. His first written article was entitled 'Ideograms' and examined the overlapping of pictographic and linguistic meaning in an eclectic array of subjects.[5] These included Japanese and Chinese Calligraphy, the poetry of Mallarme and E. E. Cummings, as well as the paintings of Paul Klee and Pierre Soulages. Smith argued what characterised each of these subjects was their shared employment of methods of mark making intended to render meaning as indivisible from its embodied form. This is a topic that would prove prescient given his later interest in the world of branded advertisement, where corporate interests were presented as synonymous with the graphic symbols representing them in the modern environment.

Abruptly shifting focus in a pair of articles that followed this in issues eighteen and nineteen, 'Film Backgrounds: On the Sunny Side of the Street,' and 'Film Backgrounds Two: Sitting in the Middle of Today,' both analysed the use of staging in Hollywood productions to subliminally structure narrative.[6] The first of these focused on the use of 'actual locales' and banal props in musicals like *On the Town* and *It's Always Fair Weather* as a means of conferring an 'unlikely glamour' upon everyday places and things. 'On the Sunny Side of the Street' was printed in conjunction with a text by Coleman entitled '… and on the Shady,' which looked at on similar uses of location filming in thrillers such as *The Naked City* and *The Killing*, contrasting Smith's taste for whimsical theatricality with the grittier, 'realist' interests of his colleague. The second of Smith's essays on film backgrounds, 'Sitting in the Middle of Today' looked at a hesitance to include modernist furniture in the furnishing of cinematic sets, and the alienating or 'abstract' function these designs played in the few productions that did feature them [Fig.3]. It was also the first occasion that Smith made reference to the concept of a consumer 'dream world,' a space in which 'Hollywood along with the home magazines can give some public reality to an

[5] Richard Smith, 'Ideograms,' *Ark,* No.16 (1956): 53-56.
[6] Richard Smith, 'Film Backgrounds: The City, On the Sunny Side of the Street,' *Ark*, No.18 (1956): 54-55; 'Film Backgrounds Two: At Home, Sitting in the Middle of Today,' *Ark*, No.19 (1957): 13-15.

essential unvoiced communal fantasy.'[7] This article acted in tandem with a text by Coleman entitled 'Dream Worlds Assorted,' which examined fashion photography in Vogue and *Harper's Bazaar* and their 'image-attack on the public mind.'[8] Again, what such meditation on the dreamlike nature of the consumer landscape precedes with some accuracy is the theme of spectacular communication that would consistently preoccupy Smith in later paintings. A third 'Film Backgrounds' text by Alloway, subtitled 'Communications Comedy and the Small World,' completed the series in a subsequent issue.[9]

In 'Man and He-Man,' published in the twentieth issue of *Ark*, Smith's attention shifted again, from the cinema to a semiotic assessment of the current fashion options available to the sartorially sensitive male in late 1950s London[10]. This text was adapted from an earlier discussion he had participated in with Coleman at the ICA that year called 'Fashion: Man about Mid-century.'[11] Taking the Surplus Store as its starting point, the cultural signification of a wide range of articles of clothing was unpacked in rapid-fire succession, with Smith noting how each embodied a 'value judgment' that extended to other aspects of a consumer's taste and experience. Treated as an iconographic system the naming of items using geographical terms was dwelt upon in some detail, specifically the differences between Continental and American styling, with varying levels of formality being indicated by brands such as 'St. James,' 'Montana,' or 'Monaco-Tyrol.' At the time the subject of apparel was of much interest to the circle in which Smith mixed, with Coleman and Alloway dressing in dacron suits imported by the retailer Austins on Shaftesbury Avenue.[12] Precipitating a later trend for flamboyant self-expression that would exemplify London during the swinging sixties the increasing freedom available to style conscious individuals appeared to Smith as evidence of the decline of the staid respectability that

---

[7] Smith, 'Film Backgrounds Two: At Home, Sitting in the Middle of Today,' 15.

[8] Roger Coleman, 'Dream Worlds Assorted,' *Ark*, No.19 (1957): 30-32.

[9] Lawrence Alloway, 'Film Backgrounds Three: Communications Comedy and the Small World,' *Ark*, No.20 (1957): 41-43.

[10] Richard Smith, 'Man and He-Man,' *Ark*, No.20 (1957): 12-16.

[11] The talk took place on the 7th February. See Anne Massey and Gregor Muir, *Institute of Contemporary Arts: 1946-1968*, 183; David Robbins ed., *The Independent Group: Postwar Britain and the Aesthetics of Plenty* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1993) 38.

[12] David Mellor, *The Sixties Art Scene in London* (London: Phaidon, 1993), 77.

has dominated the field of British male fashion since the war. 'The bank clerk look' he asserted 'is in danger of becoming inbred to the extent that it is as sterile and futureless as a Beefeaters uniform, whereas the more colourful dressers in our community are so wide-open to sartorial ideas from Waikiki to Rotten Row that like the chameleon on tartan they might burst.'[13]

As a series of speculative enquiries into a variety of forms of mass-cultural production, Smith's articles operate in much the same vein as texts by IG members, such as Alloway, Banham, Hamilton, John McHale, Toni del Renzio and Peter and Alison Smithson also published in *Ark,* often in the same issues in which his appear. These include Alloway's 'Technology and Sex in Science Fiction: A Note on Cover Art,'[14] Banham's 'New Look in Cruiserweights,'[15] McHale's 'Technology and the Home,'[16] del Renzio's 'Shoes, Hair and Coffee,'[17] and 'But Today We Collect Ads' by the Smithsons.[18] Due to the disposition of the journal's editors between 1956 and 1957 –John Hodges, in charge of issues sixteen and seventeen, and Coleman, who organized issues eighteen through twenty– *Ark* became a platform for intellectual reflection on the operations of popular culture. Smith's articles fitted neatly with this editorial focus, and complemented a growing discussion that had been conducted privately by the IG in the first half of the decade.

In addition to the older generation of mass culture aficionados Smith had encountered through the ICA, an additional influence on his articles was McLuhan, an imported copy of whose 1951 book *The Mechanical Bride: Folklore of Industrial Man* he had obtained around this time.[19] There, McLuhan had attempted to come to terms with the signals of the mass-media using a series of short investigations of single

---

[13] Smith, 'Man and He-Man,' 16.
[14] Lawrence Alloway, 'Technology and Sex in Science Fiction: A Note on Cover Art,' *Ark*, No.17 (1956): 19-23.
[15] Reyner Banham, 'New Look in Cruiserweights,' *Ark*, No.16 (1956): 44-47.
[16] John McHale, 'Technology and the Home,' *Ark*, No.19 (1957): 25-27.
[17] Toni del Renzio, 'Shoes, Hair and Coffee,' *Ark*, No.20 (1957): 27-30.
[18] Alison and Peter Smithson, 'Personal Statement I: But Today We Collect Ads,' *Ark*, No.18 (1956): 48-50.
[19] This was 'brought back at his request by a cousin who worked in the advertising and occasionally visited New York.' Alloway also owned a copy, purchased on its release in 1951. See Martin Harrison, *Transition: The London Art Scene in the Fifties* (London: Merrell, 2002), 95, 162.

advertisements, looking at the way commodities as diverse as coffins, cleaning products and Coca Cola were marketed to consumers through a series of subliminal narratives. These he saw as combining to produce a collective 'folklore' for modern society, one that exerted enormous control over the public imagination, and that could only be apprehended as a 'single landscape' by inspecting the ideological operations performed by a sample of individual examples. Its layout was experimental, with McLuhan insisting that there was no need for these sections 'to be read in any particular order.'[20] Demonstrating his earliest 'mosaic' arrangement of fragmentary sources, this treatment drew on the novels of James Joyce for inspiration, but also owed a debt to the Vorticist painter Wyndham Lewis, who like him lived in Toronto during the 1940s.[21] Smith was particularly taken with the way in which McLuhan's analytical method collided with the populist nature of the content he was addressing:

> It was the juxtaposition of serious text and black and white ads… It was that kind of relationship which was so beautiful. It was like writing a sociological piece and using the illustration like an ad.[22]

Whimsical in tone and presenting a vision of a pervasive field of communications affecting society at a fundamental level, *The Mechanical Bride* formed a blueprint for Smith's broad-ranging meditations on popular culture, in that he too regarded specific examples as indicative of sweeping changes to how a subject engaged with their environment.

Although not translated into English until the early 1970s a contemporaneous investigation into the operational nature of media imagery also formed the core of Roland Barthes' bi-monthly essays for the magazine *Les Lettres Nouvelles*, which would be gathered together with the publication of *Mythologies* in 1957.[23] Similarly taking as their starting point an examination of a range of advertisements and

---

[20] Marshall McLuhan, *The Mechanical Bride: Folklore of Industrial Man* (Berkeley CA: Gingko Press, 2001), vii.
[21] This affiliation is most evident in the mimeographed pamphlet entitled *Counterblast* that McLuhan made in 1954 as a response to the Vorticist publication *Blast*. See Marshall McLuhan, *Counterblast* (Berkeley CA: Gingko Press, 2011).
[22] Smith quoted in Maggie Gilchrist, *Richard Smith: Paintings 1956-1962*, MA Report (London: Courtauld Institute, 1978), 7.
[23] Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (London: Palladin, 1973).

commodities, the intention of Barthes' short texts was to dismantle these sources in such a way as to demonstrate their structural foundations, and to expose what he called the 'myths' of consumer culture, a counterpart to what McLuhan had identified as its collective folklore. Analysing subjects like detergents, plastics and cookery these essays sought to decipher not just the meaning of single images, but the linguistic principles upon which this corpus of imagery was constructed as a whole. To achieve this aim Bathes turned to semiology, drawing on the distinction it made between the sign and what it signified as a means of differentiating between an actual commodity and the connotative properties it was seen to embody. While it is unlikely that any of the ICA group had come into contact with these texts when they were first published the parallel they offer is compelling, due to Barthes' theorisation of an overarching system through which all information passed and was consensually understood. Falling into line with a British concept of a continuum of communications placing the products of fine art and popular art on an equal footing, this too understood meaning to be subliminally concealed within cultural artefacts.

The articles that appeared in *Ark* demonstrate how popular culture represented to Smith and these other contributors a valuable source of hierarchically devolved, demotic content, while suggesting that this content relied upon certain structural conditions for its presentation. These conditions of presentation were only discernible from an in-depth examination of the conventions established by each of these cultural forms, cumulatively revealing a concealed code that operated below the modern environment. This functioned, using a phrase first employed to analyse filmic conventions and later applied to abstract paintings, as a 'background,' something Alloway described as referring to a physical setting as well as 'a background of ideas; implicitly present or explicitly stated.' Giving one such example of such circumstances, he said 'the frontier is not only where Western movies happen, it is, also, a state of mind, involving the American idea of destiny.'[24] The encompassing byword for the method through these ideological signals were transmitted was 'communication,' a term that provided the means of describing both technological advances and their sociological impact.

---

[24] Alloway, 'Film Backgrounds Three: Communications Comedy and the Small World,' 41.

Presiding over Coleman and Hodges' editorial sensibility was a belief in the continuity of a range of cultural pursuits. This pluralist attitude was in essence an embodiment of Alloway's subsequent advocacy of a 'cross sectional' method of assessing cultural products using sociological methods, in order to infer 'meaningful patterns' in them.[25] *Ark* certainly reflected such plurality, containing within a single issue articles on televised cricket, action painting, and aircraft design, an indication of the inter-disciplinary dialogue the journal helped establish between the college's design and fine art departments.[26] Sources drawn from mass culture for fine artists particularly were a vital means of transgressing these boundaries, existing as they did outside of the institutional framework in which their own practices sat. Such equality relied on the semantic properties of these subjects; as Anne Massey has pointed out 'if the painting, the scientific diagram, the film or the American car contained its own discrete system of signification, then no hierarchy could exist between "high" and "low" culture and the established, modern canon of taste could not operate.'[27]

Crucially, prior to its widespread use in the 1960s the term Pop amongst the IG referred not to artworks that appropriated material from popular culture, but rather they regarded that material as a category of art in and of itself. Alloway defined an earlier use of the phrase as referring 'to products of the mass media, not to works of art that draw on popular culture.'[28] Hamilton seconded this distinction, while distinguishing it from traditional forms of craft by saying:

> The use of the term here refers solely to art manufactured for a mass audience. "Pop" is popular art in the sense of being widely accepted and used, a distinct from Popular Art of the folksy, handcrafted variety.[29]

Pop was initially considered by Hamilton and his peers from an objective vantage point, treating these sources more as models of exemplary practice to be recuperated

---

[25] Alloway, 'The Long Front of Culture,' 31.
[26] These were all subjects of articles published in *Ark*, No.18.
[27] Anne Massey, *The Independent Group: Modernism and Mass Culture in Britain, 1945-1959* (Manchester University Press, 1995), 105.
[28] Lippard, *Pop Art*, 27.
[29] Richard Hamilton, *Richard Hamilton: Collected Words*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1984), 28.

for aesthetic consideration, rather than directly annexed. The eventual co-option of such imagery by fine artists was something that only took place some time after its initial collated presentation as raw or 'as found' material, both in essays and exhibition displays.[30] The articles by IG members that appeared in *Ark* between 1956 and 1957 are, like Smith's, primarily studies of mass media products that interested them, offering little to no indication as to how this interest could be translated into artistic practice. The Smithsons saw the benefits to be taken from such sources as residing in a greater understanding of their egalitarian properties:

> Mass production advertising is establishing our whole pattern of life, principles, morals, aims, aspirations, and standard of living. We must somehow get the measure of this intervention if we are to match its powerful and exciting impulses with our own.[31]

In order to properly assess the extent of such interventions into modern life what was developed was a kind of quasi-sociological detachment from the subject. Even following Hamilton's famously ebullient definition of Pop Art in a 1957 letter to the Smithsons as 'Popular, Transient, Expendable, Low Cost, Mass Produced, Young (aimed at youth), Witty, Sexy, Gimmicky, Glamorous, Big Business,' he attached the following qualification:

> I find I am not yet sure about the "sincerity" of Pop Art…
> Maybe we have to subdivide Pop Art into its various categories and decide into which category each of our subdivisions fits.[32]

The subdivision and categorisation of Pop Art was for Hamilton a means by which a greater appreciation of its merits, or 'sincerity' could then be arrived at; and it is towards this goal that articles analysing mass media forms in *Ark* were primarily aimed. As such Smith's earliest engagements with the topic were predicated on a similar degree of objective distance as members of what Alloway called the first phase of Pop Artists, a distinction that Alex Seago also noted as separating an earlier, more

---

[30] The term 'as found' was used to describe the material presented in exhibitions such as *Growth and Form*, *Man, Machine and Motion*, or the *Parallel of Life and Art*. See Claude Lichtenstein and Thomas Schreggenberger, eds., *As Found: The Discovery of the Ordinary* (Baden: Lars Muller, 2001).
[31] Alison and Peter Smithson, 'Personal Statement I: But Today We Collect Ads,' 50.
[32] Hamilton, *Richard Hamilton: Collected Words*, 28.

intellectual species of 'Uptown Pop' from a more immersed 'Downtown' variety that would manifest itself at the RCA a number of years afterwards.[33]


**Getting into the Act: British Action Painting**

If Smith's interests in mass culture were abundantly visible in his writing, there remained a larger question of how, or even whether it was possible 'get the measure' of mass culture while not literally depicting it. Attempting to account for the abstracted presence of such ideological affiliations, 'Two Painters,' an article Coleman wrote for *Ark* on Smith and his then studio mate Denny, primarily concerned itself with the formation of painterly 'space.' This was a quality he perceived to be 'in' Denny's images but 'of' Smith's, noting that changing spatial concepts were linked to overall developments in the technological 'structure' of the modern world, somewhere 'the new sciences and advanced art exist in a sympathetic correspondence.' The most overt comparison Coleman drew with Smith's paintings though, and an observation he saw as 'key' to unlocking their meaning, was the paradigm offered by Cinemascope films. 'On a wide screen or a wide canvas,' he said, 'the area of action is too large to be contained within any single cone of vision, instead one's eyes roam over the whole surface to envelop the senses in a majestic spatial movement.' [34] 'Action,' a characteristic shared by the widescreen western as well as paintings by artists Smith admired like De Kooning and Sam Francis, was in either instance augmented by an expanse of scale.[35] This was a quality that Coleman saw as evident in both cinematic offerings shot using new kinds of anamorphic lenses, as well as the canvases by De Kooning and Francis recently exhibited in surveys like *Modern Art in the United States* or *New Trends in Painting*.[36] The conflation of such different examples of theatrical

---

[33] Alex Seago, *Burning the Box of Beautiful Things: The Development of a Postmodern Sensibility* (Oxford University Press, 1993).

[34] Roger Coleman, 'Two Painters,' *Ark,* No.20 (1957): 25.

[35] In addition to seeing American work in London another formative experience Smith recalls in his development as a painter came in 1955 when on a visit to Paris he saw a Sam Francis exhibition at the Galerie Rive Droite. He was particularly impressed by the thinness with which Francis applied colour, a quality he would seek to emulate in his own paintings.

[36] *New Trends in Painting* was a 1956-1957 touring exhibition featuring a selection of works owned by the collector E. J. Power, and was accompanied by an essay by Alloway. Francis was represented

endeavour is emblematic of the continuum mindset in operation.

In 'Two Painters' Smith declares himself a 'Post-Action Painter,' the precise meaning of which Coleman himself admits he is not entirely sure, but 'could guess' as reflecting his attempt to operate in the wake of developments initiated by Pollock.[37] At the time that this text was printed the terminology British abstract artists used was in a state of flux, beset as it was on either side by a growing number of Continental and American trends. Nor was there a stable consensus for what the generic phrase 'abstract art' indicated either, appearing to some to a method by which natural forms could be abstracted, and to others as a non-objective pursuit of 'concrete' imagery.[38] Amongst the most coherent term coming from Europe, a topographical field littered with practitioners and factions working under names such as 'Arte Nucleare,' 'Spazializmo,' and 'Matière,' was Tachisme, a painterly tendency that placed an emphasis on 'lyrical' mark-making. [39] Intimately connected to an existentialist worldview prevalent in the postwar period, it was also at odds with the rationalism espoused by an existing tradition of Constructionist Art in Britain.[40] Georges Mathieu, the artist who along with Nicolas De Staël would be most readily associated with the Tachiste style, had held a televised live performance at the ICA in July 1956. There he had executed a painting entitled *The Battle of Hastings*, lending further traction to Coleman's interpretation of gestural abstraction as a filmic medium.

The most overt British adoption of the term was a May 1957 exhibition at the Redfern Gallery. Entitled *Metavisual Tachiste Abstract*: *Painting in England Today* it featured, along with works by twenty-nine other artists, paintings made by Denny several months before his inclusion in 'Two Painters'. In addition to contributing artwork Denny also designed the accompanying catalogue for the show. The range of

by five paintings. See Lawrence Alloway, *New Trends in Painting: Some Pictures from a Private Collection* (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1957).

[37] Coleman, 'Two Painters,' 24.

[38] For an account of the debate around the term 'abstract' leading up until this point see Garlake, *New World, New Art*, 36-41.

[39] See Fiona Gaskin, 'British Tachisme in the Postwar Period 1946-1957,' in *Courtauld Research Papers No.2: Artists and Patrons in Post-War Britain*, ed. Margaret Garlake (London: Ashgate, 2001), 17-54.

[40] See Alastair Grieve, *Constructed Abstract Art in England after the Second World War: A Neglected Avant-Garde* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005).

approaches on display was broad, bringing together those working in both constructivist and gestural styles, with Denys Sutton stating in his preface that 'diversity and complexity are as essential to art as to life or politics'[41]. *Dimensions: British Abstract Art 1948-1957*, which opened at the O'Hana Gallery in December that year, including a work by Smith entitled *Painting* (1957), likewise demonstrated the gamut of techniques then being employed by British practitioners. Selected by Alloway, and accompanied by an indexed 'Table of Events' detailing key moments in postwar abstract art by Toni del Renzio, this laid out a basic separation between 'geometric' and 'painterly' tendencies while tending in its selection to favour the latter.[42] This was due in part to Alloway's fascination at the time with what he called 'action painting,' a development that like the popular arts he saw as hastening 'the collapse of old hat aesthetics,' and showing 'that art was possible without the usual elaborate conventions.'[43] Capable of unsettling the 'aesthetic certainly' that had governed previous forms of taste it was as an iconoclastic force that Smith and Denny too embraced action painting as a means of antagonising RCA tutors like John Minton, whose romantic figuration seemed to them to celebrate a vision of English parochialism[44].

If Tachisme suggested an artist's sympathy with the École de Paris what the phrase Action Painting signified by contrast was an association with the New York School, derived as it had been from Harold Rosenberg's essay 'The American Action Painters,' first published in the December 1952 issue of *Art News*. In this text Rosenberg described an emerging generation of painters whose abstraction he argued should be interpreted as 'encounters' or 'events' as opposed to pre-determined

---

[41] Denys Sutton, *Metavisual Tachiste Abstract*: *Painting in England Today* (London: Redfern Gallery, 1957), n.p.

[42] Lawrence Alloway, *Dimensions: British Abstract Art 1948-1957*, (London: O'Hana Gallery, 1957).

[43] Lawrence Alloway, 'Personal Statement' *Ark*, No.19 (1957): 28.

[44] In a frequently repeated anecdote, a confrontation between Minton and Denny at a RCA Sketch Club in December 1956 led to Denny painting the words 'Eden Come Home' on a bitumen coated painting before setting fire to it. As a final flourish, he asked Smith to sign it 'Robyn Denny.' The pair accompanied this gesture with an open letter to Minton in the *RCA Newsheet*, entitled 'A Stiffy on Whose Easel.' See Frances Spalding, *John Minton: Dance Till the Stars Come Down* (London: Lund Humphries, 2005), 228-230.

images.[45] In the States this concept, while being met with enthusiasm by some was nonetheless questioned by many of the practitioners to which it was notionally addressed. According to the critic Irving Sandler it had grown 'less and less persuasive… as the decade progressed,' with objectors frequently resorting to Mary McCarthy's epithet 'you cannot hang an event on the wall, only a picture.'[46] By contrast the currency the term held in Britain was subject to a lag in time, and only entered common parlance following the arrival of Americans at the Tate and the ICA several years later. 1956 Alloway pronounced 'was the year everyone got into the act of painting,'[47] collectively naming a series of articles that would appear in *Art News and Review* from October that year onwards 'Background to Action.'[48] Greenberg, a committed opponent of Rosenberg's concept, considered Alloway's use of the phrase so relentless that in 1962 he attributed its persistence almost exclusively to him:

> That it did not get forgotten was mainly the fault of a young English art critic named Lawrence Alloway… he propagated Mr. Rosenberg's opinions with such conviction and verve, and with such confidence, that 'action painting' became current overnight in England as the authorised brand name and certified label of the new abstract painting from America.[49]

One event where Alloway had proselytised on its behalf was a discussion with del Renzio and Robert Melville held at the RCA in February 1957. The occasion was commemorated by a poster design from Denny depicting a cascading repetition of the event's details, closely prefiguring his cover for the catalogue of *Metavisual Tachiste Abstract* several months later. While still strongly associated with the New York School the term as it was used in Britain however was broadened out to apply to a range of practices by artists of other nationalities. Melville, another critic associated

---

[45] 'At a certain moment the canvas began to appear to one American painter after another as an arena in which to act –rather than as a space in which to reproduce, re-design, analyse or express an object, actual or imagined. What was to go the canvas was not a picture but an event.' Harold Rosenberg, 'The American Action Painters,' in *The Tradition of the New* (University of Chicago Press, 1982), 25.

[46] Irving Sandler, *A Sweeper Up after Artists: A Memoir* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2003), 184.

[47] Alloway quoted in Robert Hewison, *In Anger: Culture in the Cold War, 1945-1960* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1981), 180.

[48] For a comprehensive list of these articles see Kalina, *Imagining the Present*, 283. See also Lawrence Alloway, 'Introduction to Action,' *Architectural Design*, Vol. 26, No.1, January (1956): 30.

[49] Clement Greenberg, 'How Art Criticism Earns A Bad Name,' *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism, Volume 4, Modernism With a Vengeance*, ed. John O'Brien (University of Chicago Press, 1986) 137-139.

with the IG, had previously contributed a text to *Ark* entitled 'Action Painting: New York, Paris, London,' in which he treated the term as a catchall for gestural abstraction as a whole[50]; Sutton in turn described it as having 'become an international style,' the 'hybrid child of the Frenchman Dubuffet, the German Ernst and the American Jackson Pollock.'[51] The distinction in fact applied more to the scale of a painting than its geographic origin, with most work still considered Tachiste taking the form of a more moderately sized easel painting. As such 'action' signified as much as the expanding presence of 'Paintings from the Big Country' in the collective imagination as it did any slavish adherence to Rosenberg's original tenets.[52]

Furthermore, in contrast to the 'constant No' to society Rosenberg saw his metaphysically attuned subject enacting, action painting was consciously misread and repurposed by British artists like Smith as part of a fine art-pop art continuum.[53] Tachisme, embedded as it was in the broader discourse of Continental existentialism, demonstrated a refusal of society on the artist's part. What Rosenberg's description of action painting as a codified reflection of lived experience provided –albeit founded on erroneous interpretation of his intentions– was a means by which gestural abstraction could demonstrate an indirect connection to the environment in which it was made. Part of the seductive appeal of the phrase lay in its Transatlantic origins, a factor that led to it being conflated with other embodiments of aesthetic freedom emanating from the United States. Even Alloway's phrase 'getting into the act' carried with it multiple connotations, having distinct similarities to a catchphrase popularised by the American performer Jimmy Durante.[54]

Rosenberg's definition lay directly in opposition to Greenberg's formal assessment of painting of the same milieu, with this text becoming the centrepiece of

---

[50] Robert Melville, 'Action Painting: New York, Paris, London,' *Ark*, No.18 (1956): 30-33.

[51] Sutton, *Metavisual Tachiste Abstract*, n.p.

[52] This was the title of one of the 'Background to Action' articles, reviewing *The New American Painting*. Lawrence Alloway 'Paintings from the Big Country,' *Art News and Review*, 14th March (1959): 3, 671.

[53] Rosenberg, 'The American Action Painters,' 32.

[54] 'Getting in on the Act' also closely parallels the title of a 1957 article reporting on the growing number of amateur artists in the United States. Jacob Getlar Smith, 'Everyone Wants to Get into the Act,' *American Artist*, June-August (1957): 30, 90-92.

a well-documented rivalry between the two. For Greenberg it was the historical reflexivity of the medium itself that inexorably drove its advancement, while for Rosenberg biography played a decisive role in establishing an individual's unique relationship to the act of painting. It was this set of personal co-ordinates he argued that preserved the autonomy of an expressive action, saying:

> A painting that is an act is inseparable from the biography of the artist. The painting is in itself a moment in the adulterated mixture of his life.[55]

Although wholly undefined in 'The American Action Painters,' by privileging the biographical circumstances of the artist as the principle method by which painterly style was individuated Rosenberg in turn presented a bridging link between artistic practice and broader elements of lifestyle. Recognising this Greenberg scathingly surmised that painterly gesture in these terms therefore existed as part of the 'same reality as breathing, thumbprints, love affairs and wars belonged to, but not works of art.'[56] Despite departing markedly from his original intentions, it is also quite possible to infer the shadow of mass culture encroaching onto a number of statements made throughout Rosenberg's text, such as the following:

> The act painting is of the same metaphysical substance as the artist's existence. The new painting has broken down every distinction between art and life.[57]

How these distinctions between art and life are broken down, or their 'adulterated mixture,' is something we could very well imagine Smith electing to interpret quite liberally given the other interests in popular sources he displayed in his articles for *Ark*. This was especially given that Rosenberg's positioning of the 'metaphysical substance' of the act of painting at the same level as the 'artist's existence' left considerable speculative room as to the relation of artistic practice to everyday experience. Smith's identification as a 'Post-Action Painter' in effect reflected his yet unrealised desire to retool painterly gesture to accommodate a greater range of ideological identifications. In a review of the 1958 Pollock exhibition at the

---

[55] Rosenberg, 'The American Action Painters,' 27-28.
[56] Greenberg, 'How Art Criticism Earns A Bad Name,' 136.
[57] This statement corresponds for instance to Rauschenberg's later decision to work in the 'hole' between art and life. Rosenberg, The American Action Painters,' 28.

Whitechapel Art Gallery Smith would pursue this direction, stating 'before his death Jackson Pollock saw his dripped paint technique hula hoop its way round the avant-garde galleries of the world.'[58] A year previously, in October 1957, this attitude was also evident in another text, written to accompany an exhibition of expressionistic canvases by John Plumb at the New Vision Centre Gallery. There, Smith suggested that the 'violence' of Plumb's methods derived more from his exposure to horror films than any tormented inner voice. 'With John Plumb's paintings we are in the world of Teenage Werewolves, Black Sheeps [sic], and Creatures walking amongst Us,' he wrote, before going on to observe that 'the demand for the primitive is supplied in the popular arts, the London Pavilion being a central shrine.'[59]

In pursuing such connections Smith's thinking ran altogether counter to Rosenberg's vision of action painting and the separation an artist sought from the world around them. For Rosenberg even a consistent painterly style suggested a potential lapse from revolutionary approach to orthodox system. In the penultimate section of his text, headed 'Apocalypse and Wallpaper,' this issue was specifically addressed. This threat Rosenberg saw as coming from an artist identifying too readily with the methods at their disposal:

> His gesture completes itself without arousing either an opposing movement within itself nor the desire in the artist to make the act more fully his own. Satisfied with wonders that remain safely inside the canvas, the artist accepts the permanence of the commonplace and decorates it with his own daily annihilation. The result is apocalyptic wallpaper.[60]

What forestalled the commonplace in Rosenberg's mind was not the emotive signification of the gestural mark, as that could be all too quickly imitated. It was instead an existential questioning of the relationship between the artist and their artworks that held the banality of everyday life in abeyance. Too stable a relationship between subject and gesture suggested to him an overly familiar arrangement between the individual and the marketplace:

---

[58] Richard Smith, 'Jackson Pollock 1912-1956,' *Art News and Review*, 22nd November (1958): 5.
[59] Richard Smith, *Paintings and Drawings by John Plumb* (London: New Vision Centre Gallery, 1957), n.p.
[60] Ibid., 34.

> Here the common phrase "I have bought an O—" (Rather than a painting by O—) becomes literally true. The man who started to remake himself has made himself into a commodity with a trademark.[61]

Such remarks would prove prophetic in the paintings Smith was to make in the years following his departure from the RCA, in which the concept of a trademarked gesture would be prove a recurring feature.

### Apocalyptic Wallpaper: *Place* and its Sources

If 'getting the measure' of popular culture and 'getting into the act of painting' were parallel but as yet unconnected pursuits for Smith during his time at the RCA, the beginnings of a synthesis between the two can be traced to immediately afterwards. This synthesis was most concretely articulated in *Place*, an exhibition which opened at the ICA in September 1959. A milestone for the environmental tendency of abstract painting envisaged by Alloway *Place* presented viewers with thirty-four stretchers fastened together to create a three-dimensional, 'ludic' space [Fig.4]. The collective effort of Smith, Denny and Rumney, it was made using a pre-determined palette of colours –green, red, black and white, used singly or in any permutation– and two set canvas sizes –seven foot by six foot, and seven foot by four foot– with an accompanying text by Coleman, who was now the ICA's exhibition organiser.[62] In this a variety of sources, or 'backgrounds' that informed the display were laid out as an equation: '*Place*, then, represents an interest in A, Environment in a general sense, B, the environment of the mass media, C, an environmental space in painting, and D, the concept of participation explicit in A and B but implicit in C.'[63] Confronting the spectator with an array of physically interconnected modules, the display parted substantially from the kind of discrete experience offered by the large canvases of Americans like Newman or Rothko. Again the issue of scale was associated jointly

---

[61] Ibid., 35.

[62] Coleman had been recruited to the ICA Exhibitions Committee by Alloway in February 1957. Seago, *Burning the Box of Beautiful Things*, 120.

[63] Roger Coleman, *Guide to Place* (London: ICA, 1959), n.p.

with American painting and mass media conventions like Cinemascope lenses and Cinerama theatres, with an acceptance of the latter 'as a legitimate body of reference' that were noted by Coleman to be an 'exclusively English' phenomenon. A maquette of the installation produced by Coleman in the lead up to the show further hinted at filmic connotations, photographs showing it populated by a group of toy soldiers and cowboys.[64]

One notable antecedent shown at the ICA two years previously was Hamilton and Victor Pasmore's *an Exhibit*, a display that was made up of a series of abstract planes of varying opacity spatially distributed throughout the gallery space.[65] This collaboration also assigned abstract forms a participatory function, borrowing from modes of presentation Hamilton had initially developed for photographic material in exhibitions like *Man Machine and Motion*, as well as making use of acrylic sheeting more commonly employed by constructionist artists like Pasmore. The exhibition had been positively reviewed by Coleman, using a number of terms that would recur in his text for *Place*, including that of the 'game' and the 'environment.'[66] This was a functioning vocabulary to which he would add 'background,' a recurring phrase used in *Ark* articles by both himself and others to imply the subliminal interconnectedness of different media. Smith too would also later acknowledge the indebtedness of *Place* to an 'ICA tradition of "Form and Function," of huge blow-ups of photos and photostats.'[67] How *Place* differed from these earlier exercises though was its integration of the painted gesture, a factor that brought with it a level of subjectivity conspicuously absent in either *an Exhibit* or *Man Machine and Motion*, presenting as

---

[64] See Ralph Rumney, *The Consul Vol.2: Contributions to the History of the Situationist International and its Time* (London: Verso, 2002), 80. Additionally, Coleman's models bears a similarity to an earlier method the Smithsons had employed in a number of drawings accompanying a proposal to regenerate areas of London. In these images, collectively titled *Golden Lane* (1952-53), cut-out figures such as Marilyn Monroe and Joe DiMaggio had been collaged onto the architectural renderings.

[65] See Victoria Walsh, 'Seahorses, Grids and Calypso: Richard Hamilton's Exhibition Making in the 1950s,' in *Richard Hamilton*, ed. Mark Godfrey (London: Tate Publishing, 2014), 61-75; Elena Crippa, ed., *Exhibition, Design, Participation: "an Exhibit" 1957 and Related Projects* (London: Afterall Books, 2016).

[66] Roger Coleman, 'Mice and Men,' reprinted in Massey and Muir, *Institute of Contemporary Arts: 1946-1968*, 124.

[67] Smith quoted in Harrison, *Transition*, 152.

these exhibitions did a range of pre-existing material[68]. Furthermore, if *an Exhibit* was seen as an endlessly repositionable exercise, the gallery plan for *Place*, drawn by Smith, indicated by the use of arrows a number of fixed 'vistas' from which multiple works by one artist could be viewed.[69]

Nor was this arrangement the first of Smith's enquiries into experimental methods of displaying his work, having been prefigured to some degree at the ICA the previous January in *Five Painters*, an exhibition also featuring John Barnicoat, Peter Blake, Peter Coviello and William Green. Involved once more was Coleman, contributing a text to the show. There he alluded to the influence of American painting while also stating that collectively the artists included 'regard *Astounding Science Fiction* as more essential reading than, say, Roger Fry.' Smith's works he said 'communicate a dynamic, in some ways kinetic conception of space,' one that 'might be regarded as expressive demonstration' of its 'invisible fact.'[70] Smith's group of paintings was captured on a British Pathé newsreel entitled 'The Eye of the Artist,' opening with a shot of Alloway and Banham seated on a bench reading a gallery plan. Pointing upwards the cameraman follows their gesture to a painting entitled *Sky Limit* (1957-58) that has been secured to the ceiling by a series of cables.[71] This was a technique employed subsequently to stabilise the paintings shown in *Place*, as well as bearing considerable similarity to the way in which a canopy by Paolozzi had been suspended nearby in the same galleries for *Tomorrow's Furniture* in 1952. Omitting any reference to this unusual method of presentation, the film's narrator noted 'many artists like Richard Smith have the gift of evoking a mood of excitement, of repose, of menace with their strange abstract creations… all you have to do is give up the prejudiced idea that a picture should be of something.'[72] Shown alongside more conventionally displayed paintings, *Sky Limit* represents a comparatively tentative exploration of the installational potential of the painted canvas to that performed in

---

[68] According to Coleman Hamilton himself considered *Place* 'the illegitimate heir' of *an Exhibit*. See Roger Coleman, 'The Content of Environment,' *Architectural Design*, November (1959): 518.
[69] These vistas were indicated on the gallery plan given to visitors. See Roger Coleman, *Guide to Place*, n.p.
[70] Roger Coleman, *Five Painters* (London: ICA, 1958), n.p.
[71] This work was presumably part of a series. A similar painting entitled *Ceiling III* (1959) forms part of the collection of the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art.
[72] British Pathé, *The Eye of the Artist*, Newsreel (1958).

the same venue by *Place* thirteen months later. What it does demonstrate though is Smith's individual engagement with a concept that would be more ambitiously realised later, both in conjunction with Denny and Rumney, but also in the increasingly eccentrically shaped painting supports he was to turn to from 1963 onwards.

Opening shortly after *Five Painters* Smith's preoccupation with the environmental connotations of his work would be framed in quite a different fashion as part of *Abstract Impressionism*, an exhibition organised by Alloway and Harold Cohen. Held first at the Nottingham University Gallery in February, before moving via the Laing Art Gallery in Newcastle to the Arts Council Gallery in Cambridge in June, this placed British artists like Smith, Heron, and the Cohen brothers alongside Americans like Francis, Joan Mitchell and Miriam Schapiro, as well as Europeans like De Staël, Tal Coat and Jean-Paul Riopelle. Smith designed the two versions of the catalogue that would be printed.[73] The show's title was employed by Alloway and Cohen as a means to consolidate a tendency that they saw as both internationally present and historically founded, leading from Cezanne and Monet through to the latest developments in advanced American abstraction. The term itself was considered to have derived from remarks made by Elaine De Kooning in 1951, who later committed these thoughts to print when discussing painters who 'keep the Impressionist manner of looking at a scene but leave out the scene.'[74] While short-lived its usage was further cemented in 1956 by Louis Finkelstein's article 'New Look: Abstract Impressionism,'[75] along with Holger Cahill's catalogue essay for *Modern Art in the United States*, in which the curator applied it to works by Rothko and Phillip

---

[73] In addition to the publication that accompanied the exhibition in Nottingham a subsequent, marginally altered catalogue would be produced for the second and third venue. See Lawrence Alloway, *Abstract Impressionism: An Exhibition of Recent Paintings arranged by Lawrence Alloway and Harold Cohen* (University of Nottingham, 1958), n.p.; Lawrence Alloway, *Abstract Impressionism: An Exhibition of Recent Paintings arranged by Lawrence Alloway and Harold Cohen* (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1958).

[74] Elaine De Kooning, 'Subject: What, How, or Who?' in *Elaine De Kooning: The Spirit of Abstract Expressionism, Selected Writings*, ed. Rose Slivka (New York: George Brazilier, 1994), 148.

[75] Louis Finkelstein, 'New Look: Abstract/Impressionism,' *Art News,* Vol. 35, No.1, March (1956): 36-39.

Guston. [76] Importantly however the curators of *Abstract Impressionism* saw little distinction between paintings environmentally inflected by their rural or urban surroundings, with Alloway writing approvingly of how Smith's contribution *Noplace* (1958) 'is a spatial picture but with non-associative colour, so that a space is created but pastoral references are kept down.'[77] Although imbuing Smith's paintings with their sense of open topicality, what straying so close to depictions of landscape also necessitated was a use of high key, effectively urban colours. This was to mitigate against what Coleman described as 'a narrow scale of grayish hues which invariably, associate so closely with nature.'[78]

A more explicitly cosmopolitan celebration of the landscape, one coinciding with the exhibition run of *Place*, was the centerfold 'Project for a Film: Ev'ry Which Way' that featured in the twenty fourth issue of *Ark*, a collaborative, two colour lithographic collage upon which Denny and Smith had been working that year [Fig.5]. This had been produced as an experimental film script for the director John Schlesinger, then working for the BBC programme *Monitor*, a proposal that was subsequently rejected.[79] Corresponding with what Leo Steinberg would later describe as the 'flatbed picture plane' the collage presented non-hierarchical array of sources in a manner that owed much to the tackboards that occupied many artist's studios at the time.[80] Amongst the panoply of sources excised from various aspects of the media was an image of Piccadilly Circus, regarded as the national equivalent of New York's Times Square, a laboratory mouse in a glass case, and an American Football Player. These were positioned alongside other imagery relating to favoured IG topics such as car styling, space travel and cinematic horror. Alfred E. Neuman, mascot of *Mad Magazine*, occupies a rare portion of unoccupied space close to the centre of their

---

[76] Holger Cahill, *Modern Art in the United States: A Selection from the Collection of the Museum of Modern Art, New York*, (London: Tate Gallery, 1956), 20.

[77] Lawrence Alloway, *Abstract Impressionism*, n.p.

[78] Coleman, 'Two Painters,' 25.

[79] Seago, *Burning the Box of Beautiful Things*, 101-103.

[80] There Steinberg discussed arrangements that were 'the outward symbol of the mind as a running transformer of the external world, constantly ingesting incoming unprocessed data to be mapped in an overcharged field.' Leo Steinberg, *Other Criteria: Confrontations with Twentieth Century Art* (Oxford University Press, 1972), 88.

arrangement.[81] The pair of artists themselves also appear, sat in a studio and shaven headed following a trip to Sardinia that summer. A series of annotated notes were printed across this montage, outlining their immersed relationship with their surroundings. One read 'because we are painters living in a world, an urban world, that not as old as the hills, but only as old as [Cecil] Gee's windows, our viewpoint is angled.' Another section however was keen to reinforce the indirect manner with which such material affected their practices:

> There's no viewable contact between the PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT and painting. It's a frame of reference, a climate rather than a place, relating a private (painter) situation to a public scale.[82]

Appearing alongside 'Ev'ry which Way' in the same issue of *Ark* was the first of three articles by Rumney collectively titled 'The Leaning Tower of Venice.' This had also been intended for another purpose, publication in the first issue of *Internationale Situationniste*. Similarly presented as a photo collage it treated the city as a participatory environment, with the American Beat writer Alan Ansen, performing the role of 'A,' depicted engaging in different kinds of play. Its late submission had resulted in Rumney's expulsion from the Situationist International (SI) by Debord, but in its psychogeographical handling he remained committed to one of the group's core concepts: the employment of the 'dérive' or unplanned drift as a method to break free of the rationalised conformity of the city. Reimagining Venice as a ludic space Rumney stated:

> It is our thesis that cities should embody a builtin [sic] play factor. We are studying here a play environment relationship. As this stage environment is interest than the player.[83]

While taking a less enthused view of the conditions placed upon the subject by the urban environment than Denny and Smith what Rumney's inclusion presented was another strand of genealogical influence for *Place*, joining precedents from both the

---

[81] For further discussion of Mad Magazine and its importance to the IG see Thomas Crow, *The Long March of Pop: Art Music and Design 1930-1995* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 90-93.

[82] Robyn Denny and Richard Smith, 'Ev'ry-Which-Way, Project for a Film.' Four page pull out, *Ark*, No.24 (1959).

[83] Ralph Rumney, 'The Leaning Tower of Venice,' *Ark*, No.24 (1959): v-vi.

IG and British Constructionism. Situationist thinking had also been in evidence earlier at the ICA when Debord's notoriously blank film *Hurlements en Faveur de Sade* had been screened in May 1957, provoking a frustrated response from its audience.[84]

Despite having negotiated this project with Rumney, it is debatable how influential Situationist thinking was on either Smith or Denny's thinking. The grouping of artists from which the show was initiated was to no small degree provisional: pairing two individuals who had worked closely together over the course of several years with a third who, due to dividing his time between London, Paris and Venice was regarded as much a European intellectual as a British painter. As such this confederation was not so much an active collaboration as a speculative project, having come about as the amalgamation of two proposed exhibitions: one agreed between Rumney and Alloway, and another between Denny and Coleman.[85] Using Raymond Williams' terminology Toby Treves stressed this division, describing the venture as the uncomfortable intersection of an 'alternative' position, occupied by Denny and Smith, and an 'oppositional' viewpoint espoused by Rumney.[86] Whereas Rumney was highly critical of the spectacular conditions through which modern society was administrated, Denny and Smith saw themselves as complicit with the city and its flows.[87]

In negotiating this ideological rift however most scholarship has contrasted Denny's public facing attitude with the political intentions of Rumney, but in doing so has also marginalised Smith's role in the show's development.[88] This perception of Smith's diminished engagement relates strongly to his stylistic retention of painterly

---

[84] See Rumney, *The Consul Vol.2*, 31.

[85] Eric De Chassey, '*Place*, A Constructed Abstract Situation in the Urban Continuum of the 1960s,' in *October*, Vol.120 (Spring 2007): 41.

[86] Toby Treves, 'Place,' in *Courtauld Research Papers No.2: Artists and Patrons in Post-War Britain*, ed. Margaret Garlake (London: Ashgate, 2001), 154-182.

[87] As Thomas Crow highlighted when discussing *Place*, 'there was an unbridgeable divide between the Independent Group's fascination with consumer culture as an index of modernity and the Situationist ultimatum that the false blandishments of "the Spectacle" be superceded in every particular.' Thomas Crow, *The Rise of the Sixties: American and European Art in the Era of Dissent* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1996), 57.

[88] De Chassey described Smith 'as the least engaged in the project.' De Chassey, '*Place*, A Constructed Abstract Situation in the urban Continuum of the 1960s,' 47. For Denny's thoughts on engaging the participation of the public see Robyn Denny 'Togetherness?' *Gazette*, No.1 (1961), n.p.

gesture, a factor that distinguishes his works from Denny and Rumney's visible transitions towards 'hard edge' painting, compositions in which more cleanly defined pictorial forms complemented the rectilinear shape of the support. Reviewing the exhibition Alloway remarked that Smith's paintings, each of which featured a triangular motif intended to act as a perspectival cue for the spectator, displayed a greatest sense of conventional, picture-like autonomy. These paintings Alloway remarked could 'become separable and satisfactory works of art' when the installation was broken up, something he doubted of Denny's more 'effectual' contributions.[89] This conflict between the obtrusiveness of a painting placed directly in a viewer's space –the physical role it performed as a screen– and the image painted on it was likewise recognized in a review by Alan Bowness, when he complained 'either you're making a maze or you're making pictures –you can't have it both ways.'[90] But it is exactly this contradiction that Smith would go on to pursue with increasing ingenuity while his two colleagues returned to less experimental methods of displaying their own work. By repurposing action painting in service of the commonplace, and presenting it as an environmental vista, Smith had in effect produced a kind of 'apocalyptic wallpaper,' one that signaled its topicality both by its inhabitation of the same physical space as the viewer.

## Midtown Pop: New York, 1959-1961

Upon being awarded a Harkness Fellowship intended to support promising young artists Smith left London shortly after the opening of *Place*, sailing to New York and arriving there in October 1959. This grant had previously been awarded to enable artists in their early career to travel to Paris, but at Smith's request funds were made available for him to visit the United States. Another Harkness Fellow, Harold Cohen, had arrived there earlier in the year.[91] He worked in two studios in lower Manhattan. The first was on Whitehall Street and the second, 'a classic twenty five

---

[89] Lawrence Alloway, 'Making a Scene,' *Art News and Review*, 26th September (1957): 2.
[90] Alan Bowness, 'Denny Smith and Rumney in *Place*,' *Arts*, Vol.34, No.3 (December 1959): 20.
[91] For a list of Harkness Fellows from the period see S. Gorley Putt, *An Exhibition of Recent Works by the Harkness Fellows* (London: Leicester Galleries, 1966).

by one hundred foot studio loft on Howard Street just north of Canal Street.'[92] Eighteen months into his stay, in April 1961, Smith would have his first solo exhibition at The Green Gallery, run by Richard Bellamy at 15 West 57th Street. Bellamy, with the financial backing of the businessman and collector Robert Scull, opened the gallery in October 1960.[93] Following on in part from the curatorial diversity of the Hansa Gallery, where he had previously been director and artist's membership had determined the exhibition programme, The Green Gallery showed a diverse range of artists, and acted as a point of 'cross pollination' between a number of emerging trends. Between 1960 and 1965, exhibitions were held showcasing the work of Pop artists such as Claes Oldenburg, George Segal, Tom Wesselman and James Rosenquist, as well as Minimalists like Dan Flavin, Donald Judd, and Robert Morris. Smith's position within this programme was an intermediary one, situated somewhere between Segal and Oldenburg's Pop figuration and the reductive abstraction Bellamy began to show in the gallery's fourth season.[94]

The body of paintings that made up Smith's first exhibition at The Green Gallery were typified by the recurring use of 'consumer motifs' arranged centrally on canvases for the most part even larger than those used for *Place*.[95] These marked a change from those painting he had made prior to leaving London, in that they were the first to directly reference emblems drawn from the urban environment. Previously works had been titled after musical performers or commodities to demonstrate 'an alliance' with popular culture, but once in New York Smith began to more explicitly state this allegiance through the use of its graphic iconography.[96] These remained concealed to varying degrees concealed within loose assemblies of diagonally banked

---

[92] Gilchrist, *Richard Smith: Paintings 1956-1962*, 22.
[93] For a general account of the circumstances leading up to the formation of the Green Gallery see Judith Stein, *Eye of the Sixties: Richard Bellamy and the Transformation of Modern Art* (New York: Farrar Strauss and Giroux, 2016).
[94] For a comprehensive list of exhibitions held at The Green Gallery see: Eric La Prade, *Breaking Through: Richard Bellamy and the Green Gallery 1960-1965, Twenty-Three Interviews* (New York: Midmarch Arts, 2010), 202-205.
[95] Bellamy had come to Smith's studio late in 1960 along with Henry Gezdahler and Ivan Karp, as part of a series of visits the trio were in the habit of conducting with artists on Sundays. Frances Beatty and Samuel Lorin Trower, eds., *Richard Smith: The Green Gallery Years 1960-1965* (New York: Richard L. Feigen and Company, 1992), 39.
[96] The title *Noplace* derives from a lyric in a George Gershwin song called 'I Can't Get Started With You.'

marks carried over from earlier London works, what Marco Livingstone has described as 'flurries of brushstrokes,' that lent them 'a warmth of human emotion that deliberately countered their more overt impersonal aspects.'[97] In different instances these emblematic forms either appear as if illusionistically suspended over, or alternatively embedded into a painted background. The colours used were high key, with their thin application owing more stylistically in Smith's opinion to Francis than any New York painter at the time, although he had visited Kenneth Noland's 1959 exhibition of stained 'targets' at French and Company shortly after his arrival.[98]

Paintings from the time with titles such as *After Six, Chase Manhattan, McCalls, Panatella,* and *Revlon* respectively reference to a range of consumer products: evening wear, a bank, a women's fashion magazine, cigars, and makeup. As such they demonstrate a commonality with the interests of those New Yorkers who would become known as Pop artists, but in their signification such aspirational subject matter is quite different from the more pedestrian, lowbrow material generally favoured by those individuals. While a clear link can be made for example between Oldenburg's less salubrious references and the urban detritus employed by earlier Neo-Dada artists like Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg, Smith's up-market product choices referred more to an atmosphere to be found further north in Manhattan, an ambience Barbara Rose referred to as 'the pastel chic of Bonwit's windows.'[99] It was to this area that Anne Seymour recounted Smith would go on 'shopping expeditions for colour' to use in the paintings before returning to his Soho studio.[100] In a 1961 text entitled 'That Pink' Smith would label these 'midtown' references, something he believed separated his tastes from American artists engaging with mass media culture:

> For New York painters working popular culture elements the accent is always on the below 14th Street ambiance (which includes discount stores, street

---

[97] Beatty and Lorin-Trower, *Richard Smith: The Green Gallery Years*, 15.
[98] This Noland exhibition was one of several shows organised by Greenberg during his brief association with the gallery between 1958 and 1960.
[99] Rose, *Richard Smith: Seven Exhibitions 1961-1975*, 15. At this time the department store Bonwit Teller was located near to the upper edge of midtown on Fifth Avenue at 56th St. The irony, no doubt recognized by Rose, is that many of its window displays of this period were in fact designed by artists who would later be associated with Pop Art. Examples include Johns and Rauschenberg (working collectively under the pseudonym Matson Jones Custom Display), Rosenquist and Warhol.
[100] Anne Seymour, 'Richard Smith,' *Studio International*, June (1970): 258.

markets, junk shops and 10th St.) Midtown (Bergdorf Goodman, Brooks Brothers, Park Avenue), except for Times Square just does not figure.[101]

Furthermore, these sources were something that he also regarded as distinguishing his interests from those of other British artists engaging with American culture remotely:

> In London, where topographic divisions are impossible, there is an emphasis on Americana which is slightly exotic. The choice of elements is more specialised; publications and products which are out and out non-fine art (cereal box premiums for instance) are in, whereas non-fine art with pretensions (Primavera, About Town) is out.[102]

Such pretensions are clearly evident in *After Six* and *Formal Giant* (both 1960), where the reference to the brand of evening wear from which the first painting takes its name is indicated by a bow tie motif placed in the central portion of each image [Fig.6]. These works play on two different conceptions of formality: the material properties specific to painting alone, and a series of sartorial conventions observed by the upper echelons of society[103]. Such doubling up of meaning may also knowingly allude to a comment made by the critic David Caritt in a review of *The New American Painting*, in which he had accused the New York School of producing 'a new kind of background art, perfect for penthouse parties and often rising to the very highest point of triviality.'[104] Writing a short introduction for this exhibition at The Green Gallery Alloway described Smith's paintings as having 'a kind of formality which is not Beaux Arts but remembers the symmetry of a clip on bow tie,' a comment that is worth considering in relation to what exactly is 'formal' about *Formal Giant*.[105] In this painting whether we choose to regard the central motif as a circle bisected diagonally from either side by two dark triangular elements, or as a simplified representation of a bow tie, very much hinges on the degree of supporting information we have in our possession at the time of viewing. Nor is this type of understanding necessarily one-

---

[101] Richard Smith, 'That Pink,' *Gazette*, No.2 (1961): n.p.
[102] Ibid.
[103] Smith would later remark that 'the word "formal" refers both to formal dress and drawing formally.' Gilchrist, *Richard Smith: Paintings 1956-1962*, 25.
[104] This review was quoted in Lawrence Alloway, 'Sic Sic Sic,' *Art News and Review*, 11th April (1959): 5.
[105] Lawrence Alloway, 'Richard Smith,' reprinted in *Metro*, No.6 (1962): 112.

directional. Even after apprehending the iconic signification of this shape it is still possible to regard it once again as abstract, limited as the degree of information offered to the viewer is. Collapsing the painterly into the sartorial its palette could refer just as easily to the deep burgundies and crimsons that characterise many Rothko paintings of the period as to a 'Biarritz Red' jacket marketed in one After Six advertisement from 1960 [Fig.7]. Like the clip on bow tie this kind of tenuous signification operates as a demountable device that the viewer can apply or remove at will, its charm lying in the spontaneity with which it is possible to shift between either register.

In these circumstances abstract painting suggested a refined method with which to aesthetically recoup selected aspects of popular culture, freed as it was of any illustrative responsibility to the original source. This is what Alloway referred to as the 'topicality' of Smith's abstraction, a quality he saw as sharing more in common with the anthropological tendency represented by himself and fellow IG members than the more 'immersed' or 'verbal' treatment of popular sources by later British Pop Art. Just as his midtown subject matter carried with it tasteful connotations, the paintings themselves maintained a calculated distance from the material informing them, a criticality likewise predicated on notions of taste. What the occlusion of the original source allowed for was a detached, hence more intellectual engagement with its iconic properties. This was a factor linking abstract painting of this kind to other fields of semantic study. Writing with Barthes' enquiries in mind, Susan Sontag observed that the concept of an iconological system underpinning every aspect of modern life was itself implicitly an exercise in taste, as 'for reality to exist *as* signs conforms to a maximum idea of decorum: all meaning is deferred, indirect, elegant.'[106] Cultivating a critical distance in his paintings not unlike Barthes', Smith's approach was also a decorous one, insofar as 'symbols only appear under good pretext for good painting.'[107]

The dual interpretations that these paintings provoke are reflective of Smith's ambivalence concerning the distinctions others drew between fine art and products of

---

[106] Susan Sontag, *Roland Barthes: A Reader*, xxv.
[107] Richard Smith, 'Statement,' 111.

the mass media, a position that also corresponded closely to the continuum mindset cultivated as an editorial sensibility at *Ark*. Related to these discussions was the concept of multivalent subject matter advanced by IG member Eduardo Paolozzi. In a lecture given at the ICA in April 1958, a transcript of which subsequently appeared in the first issue of *Uppercase*, Paolozzi had explained his theory that artworks could accommodate more than one meaning simultaneously. Removed from their original context he saw sources in his sculptures as undergoing a 'metamorphosis,' and becoming as a result a new class of 'multi-evocative' imagery in which several interpretations were equally plausible.[108] In this respect Paolozzi's attitude to subject matter had significant commonalities with Smith's. In addition to borrowing graphic forms from a range of consumer brands, each of the paintings in Smith's first exhibition at The Green Gallery collectively referred either directly or indirectly to a Manhattan landmark of particular interest to him at the time. Located at the northern edge of Times Square behind the Father Duffy Statue, the Canadian Club neon sign displayed as its background an animated sequence of stripes and chequerboard patterns, a display which periodically changed to show a rapidly rotating propellor motif like that used in both *After Six* and *Formal Giant*.[109] Pointing specifically to this motif, but not relinquishing the comic image of an askew bow tie suggested by their titles, these paintings ask that the viewer accept both references simultaneously.

A similar multivalence is elicited from the differing sources attributed to *Billboard* (1961). The most sparsely populated painting included in the exhibition it presents a gesturally brushed, monochromatic field bordered on its top and sides by brick-like forms [Fig.8]. Suggesting a link between the large areas of painted colour employed by the New York School, and the expanses of advertising space that dominated an urban space like Times Square, what little composition there is corresponds provisionally to the dashed border that edged the Canadian Club sign. Alloway's exhibition text however offered another explanation, referring to how it 'comes out of being painted by Smith as a pampered airmail letter from a lover,' a

---

[108] See Robin Spencer, ed., *Eduardo Paolozzi: Writings and Interviews* (Oxford University Press, 2000), 81.
[109] The Canadian Club sign had been erected by Artkraft Strauss, a company who designed and fabricated a large number of the displays in Times Square, in 1952.

comment that suggests a play upon the commonality between the dashed perimeter of an airmail envelope and the neon edge of the sign.[110] Once again either interpretation is plausible, the degree of abstraction to which the image has been subjected acting to reinforce this sense of ambiguity. *Billboard* is only tenuously connected to its source, a factor that distinguishes Smith's interests from those of the RCA Pop painters coming to prominence in London during his absence. Such a difference becomes readily apparent when compared to *Airmail Painting* (1961), a work produced in the same year by Boshier [Fig.9]. Complete with dated postal stamp, the correct colour scheme and number of dashed elements, the relationship between painting and source is clearly legible. These are characteristics obfuscated in Smith's rendition.

Displaying a less tacit acknowledgement of its source material, *Billboard* positions itself halfway between Boshier's fascination with the iconography of intercontinental communication and the abstract fields of paint produced by Still, Newman or Rothko. What working in this manner offered Smith was a way in which to assemble these disparate elements into one abstracted totality: a dream-image that he considered capable of straddling the boundary between popular culture and the formal parameters of abstract painting. Like the animated screen of the Canadian Club sign, whose complex sequence of pictorial elements appeared within a single spectacular presentation, the canvas surface was likewise capable of suturing multiple narratives together. As Smith pointed out 'in writing about painting, aspects tend to get separated; within the paintings there is less punctuation.'[111]

There are a number of other amendments to Smith's sources that he attributed to a process of wilful misremembering. This is most evident in *Chase Manhattan* (1960), a painting that takes as its starting point the Chase Manhattan logotype [Figs.10&11]. The logo had been designed by Tom Geismar, a founding partner in the graphic firm Chermayeff and Geismar, to rebrand The Chase Manhattan bank

---

[110] Alloway, *Richard Smith*, 112. This dashed motif would reappear in two paintings completed the following year, *Tissue* and *Twin Pack* (both 1962).
[111] Richard Smith, 'Trailer: Notes Additional to a Film,' 30.

following the amalgamation of The Chase National Bank and The Bank of The Manhattan Company. Smith's painting and Geismar's brand are close contemporaries, *Chase Manhattan* being painted the same year that the logo began to appear on bank signage and advertisements. The bank's commission of a new corporate identity paralleled a wider trend within American corporate culture that increasingly favoured a modernised self-image over a prestigious one. Dispensing with the serif fonts and ornate heraldry previously used to present an organisation as venerable, trademarks designed by firms like Chermayeff and Geismar made use of flat planes of colour and bold geometry, emphasising an increased need for efficient communication. In this new landscape the competitiveness of a brand related to how identifiable it was graphically.

Logotypes like the one that stood for Chase Manhattan Bank were employed as a condensed representation of a company's identity, and echo Smith's earlier musing on the nature of the ideogram, in which 'the idea and form' directly equate to one another. Geismar himself affirmed the ideogrammatic quality of his own efforts when he commented:

> When all is said and done, a mark is both form and substance, image and idea. To be effective, its forms must be familiar enough to be recognisable and unusual enough to be memorable.[112]

Analysing Smith's painting however, it becomes readily apparent that several elements differ greatly from Geismar's supposedly 'memorable' original. The most immediately telling of these differences is that while Geismar's logo is octagonal, the forms that populate Smith's painting are hexagonal. Furthermore unlike the logo, in which thin horizontal and vertical lines divide the octagon into four separately coloured sections, in Smith's rendition these are not present at all. Instead the butted sections that make up the re-painted logo are separated diagonally. Finally, the colours Smith uses in the illuminated form in the centre of the composition –red, yellow and blue– are also not faithful to the brown, blue, green and black allocated to its source. Nor was this kind

---

[112] Ivan Chermayeff, Tom Geismar, and Geissbuhler, *Trademarks Designed by Chermayeff and Geismar* (Baden: Lars Muller, 2000), n.p.

of misinterpretation something that Smith sought to correct. Recalling the painting in 1992 he offered this explanation:

> No it was memories, or instant memories, or something would suddenly reveal itself. For instance *Chase Manhattan*– I got it wrong. I didn't have any source material, because the image is wrong. It's just a misinterpretation of the Chase Manhattan logo. It's done wrong. I didn't have this file system.[113]

Adopted in such a way as to establish a painting's autonomy from the commercial emblem it depicted, the vagaries of memory functioned in much the same way gestural brushwork was elsewhere employed to efface the specificity of the reference. Such slippages suggest a form of distracted, ambulatory spectatorship, one unconcerned with the proprietary signification of the logo. Elsewhere, Smith summarised the lack of responsibility he felt towards his sources, saying:

> I find no need to identify brands, but both for a sense of scale and to realise the balance of attention (time, skill, care, square footage of canvas) devoted to something ephemeral, memories are necessary.[114]

Memories served as afterimages, recalled 'instants' imperfect enough to allow the formal properties specific to painting to assert themselves. Misremembering also provided Smith with a method with which to subjectively situate himself in relation to the mediated environment, his memories representing an internalisation of its effects.

## Consumer Dreamworlds: Photographic Mediation

Whether Smith employed as the primary basis of his paintings such firsthand experiences, or whether he relied more on mediated imagery is a complex topic to unravel, as despite moving to New York to immerse himself in American culture Smith continued to acknowledge the influence photographic and cinematic sources had on his work. As Denny noted such mediated imagery was the principal means

---

[113] Beatty and Lorin-Trower, *Richard Smith: The Green Gallery Years*, 49.
[114] Richard Smith, 'Trailer: Notes Additional to a Film,' 30.

with which British artists in the 1950s formed a picture of the United States:

> You have to remember that when Dick got the Harkness Scholarship to go to America he went on the Queen Mary. The only way to go was by ocean liner, as had happened for over 200 years! …
> So it was terribly inaccessible and the only experience you had of it was at the movies. That's why we had this image of it, this fantasy.[115]

Alloway similarly acknowledged the orientation Smith received while still in Britain, saying that when he 'got to New York he wasn't homeless, he recognised the paintings and recognised the street signs.'[116] If New York was not entirely alien to Smith, what relocating there did in any case offer was an intensified engagement with both mass media imagery and American abstraction. Even if he recognised the signage of New York from attending *On the Town* at the cinema, it was only upon his arrival in the winter of 1959 that he could seek them out himself as an ambulatory participant. Likewise, although familiar with Newman's paintings from exhibitions at the ICA and the Tate Gallery, it was only living in New York that he came to meet the artist, when Newman came to visit his studio in 1960.[117]

Smith's earliest use of photographic sources date to his time as a RCA student. Amongst the first of these is *White Island* (1956), a painting loosely based upon an aerial picture of Manhattan handled in a Tachiste style. And if the landscape was an influence on those paintings included in *Abstract Impressionism* these too referred more to the way in which it appeared in commercial advertising than any firsthand experience. *Salem* (1958) references the use of pastoral scenes in marketing material for Salem cigarettes, the painting's 'menthol freshness' pointing to the brand's artificial staging of 'shaded glens,' as opposed to their actual appearance [Figs.12&13]. Another painting deriving from photographic material, made shortly before taking up the Harkness Scholarship, was *MM* (1959). Amongst a select group of artworks to portray Marilyn Monroe prior to her death its source is identifiable largely by the rectangular blocks of red and black at the top of the composition, being based upon a

---

[115] Denny quoted in Jeff Amos, *Alloway, Denny and 'Situation': Critical and Technical Issues in the Emergence of British Hard-Edge Painting*, PhD Thesis (Brighton, University of Sussex, 2000), 130.
[116] Alloway, 'Richard Smith,' 112.
[117] La Prade, *Breaking Through: Richard Bellamy and the Green Gallery 1960-1965*, 91.

picture that had appeared on the cover of *Paris Match* in February that year [Figs.14&15]. A gestural rendering not unlike De Kooning's painting of the actress from five years previously Smith's version effaced Monroe's features, transforming her into an atmospheric phenomenon.[118]

Less concerned with the specific information such sources contained, Smith was more interested in a broader 'shift in sensibility' engendered by commercial photography and the widespread availability of colour printing. Such changes to a modern subject's vision had come about because technology had produced circumstances in which it had 'become impossible to see –for instance– a beach in the Bahamas except through the filters, accommodating lenses and slurring shutters of the brochure photographer.'[119] Much like the musical affiliations alluded to by earlier abstract works like *Everly 1*, *Everly 2* or *Blue at the Roots* (both 1957) photography's effect was regarded as environmental, an all-pervasive influence whose impact extended far beyond the information contained in any one example. [120] This interpretation relied heavily on McLuhan, who argued that technological developments had wrought fundamental changes to the sensorium of the modern subject. Smith's interest was in isolating the structural role photography played in advertising culture, asking 'can how something is communicated be divorced from what is being communicated, and can it be divorced from who it is being communicated to?'[121]

The quality Smith valued most in photographic advertising was its enhanced colour, synthetically heightened beyond that of the original subject. Commercial printing techniques also had the effect of compressing this colour into a single plane, a form of flattening he attempted to apply to his own vision:

---

[118] A companion work to *MM*, titled *Kim* (1959), referred to the actress Kim Novak and was cooler in hue.

[119] Christopher Finch, *Image as Language: Aspects of British Art 1950-1968* (London: Penguin, 1969), 53.

[120] The Everly Brothers Don and Phil, to whom the paintings *Everly 1* and *Everly 2* respectively allude, had released their first million selling single that year. *Blue at the Roots* refers to a composition by Jazz musician Gerry Mulligan. A number of these subjects, such as the Everly Brothers and Kim Novak, also appear around the same time in the paintings of Smith's flatmate Peter Blake, albeit handled in a quite different style.

[121] Richard Smith, 'Trailer: Notes Additional to Film,' *Living Arts*, No.1 (1963): 29.

I see fruit photographed rather than set out in reality on a greengrocer's stall. When I see real things, other things get in the way of them, shine, solidity, or the way they reflect light. But in the photograph you only have one image on one plane, with a single unified texture, and without the disturbances of shifting light.[122]

These remarks strongly echo Barthes' comments about the plasticised appearance of commercial food photography in his essay 'Ornamental Cookery,' in which he observed that its perceived desirability was shifting towards more visual qualities:

The "substantial" category which prevails in this type of cooking is that of the smooth coating: there is an obvious endeavor to glaze surfaces, to round them off, to bury the food under the even sediment of sauces, creams, icing and jellies. This of course comes from the very finality of the coating, which belongs to a visual category.[123]

What both Smith and Barthes recognised was these processes acted to flatten the object, to condense it into a singular chromatic value, easing its transfer to the lithographic magazine plate. This flattening was in itself a process of abstraction, a factor that effectively rendered Smith's repurposing of advertised content third-hand, a representation of a representation.

*Somoroff* (1961) points explicitly to Smith's interest in the iconic properties of commercial photography, presenting an enlarged depiction of a camera's shutter reflex. The painting's title refers to Ben Somoroff, who contributed to magazines like *Harpers Bazaar*, *Vogue*, *Esquire* and *Look*. One of a group of American photographers gathered around art directors like Alexey Brodovitch at *Harpers Bazaar*, and Alexander Liberman at *Vogue*, including Irving Penn, Richard Avedon and Bert Stern, the work of these individuals marked a decided shift in the way commercial photography was laid out and presented up until this point.[124] These photographers achieved striking imagery by imposing a chromatically striking, and graphically reductive sensibility onto their subjects. In shoots they often employed dramatic juxtapositions of

---

[122] Bryan Robertson, *Richard Smith: Paintings 1958-1966*, (London: Whitechapel Gallery, 1966) n.p.
[123] Barthes, *Mythologies*, 78.
[124] See: Dodi Kazanjian and Calvin Tompkins, *Alex: The Life of Alexander Liberman* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993); Kerry William Purcell, *Alexey Brodovitch* (London: Phaidon, 2002).

glamorous and banal elements, positioning their models outside the confines of the photographic studio in order to create situations in which aspirational commodities sat in stark contrast to their backdrops. These are methods that Smith sought to assimilate into his paintings by adopting certain aspects of the colours and compositional layouts of product photography. Despite his enthusiasm for their work such influences remained indirect and only partly legible to many of those who saw the paintings. Stern, whose campaign for Smirnoff Vodka set against the pyramid of Giza had particularly impressed Smith, visited The Green Gallery and remarked that he could see no connection whatsoever.[125]

The surreal impression given by a figure so poised and glamorous in surroundings that were either industrial or ruined was something that Coleman had analysed in some detail in his article for *Ark* 'Dream Worlds Assorted.' There he had stressed the centrality of the process of photographic framing in creating these fantastically juxtaposed relationships, saying 'that the Vogue-type dream world is created primarily by the camera is important, because it presents a world that is fabulously strange by very familiar means.'[126] The medium of photography was crucial to the production of this dream world because it created a narrative space where the model and setting are constrained in relation to the photograph's framing edge. Without such constraints its dream-like effect –a quality predicated on these conditions of enclosure– disperses. In his analysis of the 1956 film *Written on the Wind* starring Lauren Bacall and Rock Hudson, one of the ICA group's favourites, Coleman identified juxtaposition as the means with which a dream-like effect was produced:

> The film was a dream-world inventory of all the super mod cons. A low red sportscar from the Detroit atelier, but with a strong European type flavour, attractively driven by Miss Dorothy Malone across derrick spiked wastes.[127]

The surreal quality to which Coleman refers, a process of de-familiarisation created by juxtaposing aspects of consumer culture with everyday settings is something that Smith had similarly recognised in his analysis of the everyday settings and props

---

[125] Lippard, 'Richard Smith: Conversations with the Artist,' *Art International*, Vo.8, No.9 (1964): 33.
[126] Roger Coleman, 'Dream Worlds Assorted,' *Ark* No.19 (1957): 31.
[127] Ibid.

in musical films:

> To perform an arabesque in front of a refrigerator does not add anything *per se* to the refrigerator or the arabesque, but by the quality of imagination of a choreographer such as Gene Kelly or Hermes Pan or Michael Kidd, the mass produced known environment can be re-seen in heightened form.[128]

Again the narrative framing of the image is crucial to achieving this effect, as it acts to insulate this carefully chosen relationship from the unregulated influx of the everyday. Smith noted in the same article that only within such theatrical boundaries could Gene Kelly roller-skate through the streets of Manhattan in *It's Always Fair Weather* (1955) without attracting the considerable ire of the various pedestrians and motorists whose personal movements his dance routine disrupts. Instead of hostile confrontations, he is instead greeted by 'mild stares from the well-bred extras, who eventually gather round in cheerful groups.'[129]

Smith's paintings enact an analogous form of defamiliarisation to that of the 'Vogue-type dream world,' feeding the emblems of the commercial environment through the gestural vernacular of abstract painting to produce another type of spectacular dream-world: a hallucinatory moment where Action Painting and the mass media are held in equilibrium. What was so attractive to Smith about choreographers like Kelly, Pan and Kidd, as well as photographers like Avedon, Penn, Stern or Somoroff, was how their efforts elevated aspects of the everyday environment. *Somoroff* and related paintings were attempts to produce similarly heightened forms using prompts supplied by photographic imagery.

Another device Smith used to signal an affiliation between his paintings and photographic imagery was the suggestion that gestural brushwork was analogous to the effect of speed upon perception. In a text for his friend Gordon House's 1959 exhibition at the New Vision Centre Gallery he made use of a number of phrases that signal his own preoccupations at the time:

---

[128] Smith, 'Film Backgrounds, On the Sunny Side of the Street,' 55.
[129] Ibid., 54.

The image in House's work is big within the canvas area, over exposed, making it loom towards one, large as a tunnel wall. It is as if they only had a second to register, like signs on the new motorways.[130]

Here the effect of House's paintings was compared to the perceiving subject's inability to collate sufficient information about a traveling object in the limited amount of time afforded to them. The resulting loss of focus on the viewer's behalf is to do in this instance with their immersion in a symbol-thick environment, one operating at a speed beyond that which their sensory apparatus can process.[131] A similar concern with speed can be inferred in many of Smith's paintings, in which compositional elements are placed off centre or acutely angled, as if the image has been hurriedly framed or is hurtling past. Effacing the iconography of the urban environment with fast brushwork, what Smith 'burnt out' of his paintings were the specific references such signs originally held, a process that retained only their broader pictographic traits.

Other technical devices borrowed from the commericial photography were that of the enlargement and the close up. Many sources appearing in paintings had been blown up from the size of magazine adverts, but the most extreme example of upscaling was to be found in the seven and a half by ten-foot canvas *Panatella* (1961). Its central motif being derived from a graphic printed on a cigar band this was also the largest canvas completed up until this point. Smith's fascination with such a tactic of enlargement lay in its dissociative effect:

Is it a pill or a boulder? …
The scale of the paintings is often physically related to hoardings or cinema screens which never present objects actual size; you could drown in a glass of beer, live in a semi-detached cigarette pack.[132]

In these circumstances an image's abstractness was produced not by an absence of representational imagery, but rather at the phenomenal level of spectatorship: the

---

[130] Richard Smith, *Gordon House* (London: New Vision Centre Gallery, 1959), n.p.
[131] As students at Luton School of Art in the late 1940s, and travelling there from the garden city of Letchworth where they both lived, Smith and House would ride the bus together on a daily basis. See Gordon House, *Tin Pan Valley: A Memoir with Paintings by Gordon House* (London: Archive Press, 2004), 72.
[132] Richard Smith, 'Trailer: Notes Additional to a Film,' *Living Arts*, 30, 35.

disconcerting effect of encountering an object conventionally of certain size at a dramatically altered scale. While related to a discourse around the 'big picture' engaging those London-based painters who participated alongside him in *New London Situation*, this strategy of enlarging popular imagery also closely linked Smith's approach to that of two other artists who were also to show at The Green Gallery around this time: Rosenquist and Oldenburg.[133] Despite considering his own subject matter to constitute a separate category Smith maintained a close interest in the development of Pop Art in New York. An acquaintance of artists like Rosenquist and Robert Indiana who had waterfront studios in Coenties Slip, he had participated with Indiana and Stephen Durkee in an exhibition called *Premiums* at the Studio for Dance Gallery in March 1961.[134] He was also 'a regular at those early Happenings,' attending Oldenburg's two part performance *Ironworks* and *Fotodeath (Circus)*, which took place at the Reuben Gallery in February.[135]

Rosenquist's previous career as a billboard painter played a pivotal role in his later attitude towards the representation of commodities. For him alterations to scale could abstract a source without having relinquish depicted imagery:

> I began thinking, what if I used generic fragments from ads and photos in *Life* magazine and juxtaposed them in different scales? And what if I made one of the images so large that close up it would initially be difficult to recognise? Wouldn't I then have created an abstract effect using representational images?[136]

Working feet away from a billboard image several stories high, the abstraction of these images related to their unintelligibility at such close range. Sitting 'below zero,' Rosenquist regarded such non-relational qualities as even more profoundly defamiliarising than those produced by a formal lineage of abstract art, drawing its power from a seemingly random assembly of sources. For Oldenburg too, another

---

[133] Rosenquist exhibited at The Green Gallery shortly after Smith, in January 1962. Oldenburg held a one-man show there in September the same year, having participated in two group shows previously.
[134] For this exhibition a range of unidentified pieces were produced, 'throwaway' constructions of wood and canvas that referenced 'a watch, a pinwheel, a pinball machine.' A work potentially related to this group, *Slot Machine* (1962), once owned by Smith's acquaintance Henry Geldzahler, is held in the collection of the Tate Gallery.
[135] Gilchrist, *Richard Smith: Paintings 1956-1962*, 22.
[136] James Rosenquist, *Painting Below Zero: Notes on a Life in Art* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2009) 83.

astute commentator on the role scale played in the presentation of commodities, a re-imagined object's size played a crucial part in replicating a dream-state of consumption. Sculptures featured in his first solo exhibition at The Green Gallery like *Floor Cake* (1962) suggest bodily associations with their enormous kapok stuffed forms [Fig.16]. Like Rosenquist, he saw his oversized confections as superceding traditional categories of representation:

> What I hope art will establish is a superreal vision far more inclusive than any previous idea of realism (including sur-realism)… and my art is here to prepare you for this, a place and actual space where the spectator learns to see my objects in relation to what he has accepted previously.[137]

Sitting 'beyond' everyday experience Oldenburg's super-realism revealed aspects of the modern environment through spectacularly re-presenting it, and in doing so assigned a more overtly psychological role to an artwork's size than the technical one prescribed to it by British abstractionists.[138] Situated between a British and an American discourse Smith's pictorial solutions could be said to draw on a combination of these two mindsets, seeing the larger than life commodity and the environment presence of modern abstract painting as interconnected categories.

## The Corrugated Field: London, 1962-63

Smith returned to London during the summer of 1961. Looking to replicate the amount of space available to him in Manhattan he established himself in a large studio on Bath Street in the East end, at a time when artists were mainly concentrated elsewhere in the city. Situated in an industrial building formerly housing a lampshade factory, containing a floor to live on and another in which to work, this enabled him to continue to comfortably produce works of the scale he had become accustomed to

---

[137] Claes Oldenburg, *Writing on the Side: 1958-1969* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2013), 152. Possibly unbeknownst to Oldenburg the 'superreal' had previously been employed in a British context by Herbert Read as an alternative term to describe the surrealist tendency within art. See Herbert Read, *A Coat of Many Colours: Occasional Essays* (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1945), 190-199.
[138] See Barbara Rose, *Claes Oldenburg* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1970), 92.

in New York.[139] He would stage an exhibition at the studio in July 1962, being followed by another presentation of seven paintings that opened at the ICA in October. These continued to explore themes laid out in earlier works but differed in their growing experimentation with pictorial depth. Alongside the graphic emblems of corporate identity, another aspect of consumer culture gaining importance for Smith was the manner in which commodities were physically packaged.

If the paintings featured in his first exhibition at The Green Gallery could be largely characterised by their use of simplified graphic motifs, what these subsequent works demonstrate is an increasingly layered treatment of patterned forms. No longer reliant on a monolithic element the pictorial space in works like *Album*, *Product* and *Flip Top* (all 1962) are instead constructed from assemblies of tilted, overlapping planes. Smith's own term for this denser assembly of pictorial space was 'corrugation', a quality he regarded as capable of either 'accepting' or 'denying' the material flatness of the canvas surface.[140] Corrugated space –a reference to the lamination of multiple, thin layers typically used in the production of packaging– was a shallow, malleable assembly of planes into which more aggressively illusionistic excavations could be carried out. This corrugated depth is to some degree present in earlier works, albeit as a more 'accepting' sequence of compacted laminations. With their elaborate spatiality these subsequent paintings introduced a greater amount of denial.

Key to many of these paintings' newfound spatiality was their simultaneous presentation of multiple viewpoints. One such painting, *Kent* (1962), depicts a packet of Kent cigarettes from several angles at once [Fig.17]. The filter tip is visible from above as it emerges from the pack, the top and side of which is repeated to the left of this from an axonometric view. With this form's bluish tinge referring to the brand's patented 'micronite' filter, Smith also found the company's overall advertising strategy 'a beautiful idea,' saying 'that white package on a white background is so perfect.'[141] As a four-dimensional articulation of its source, capturing its subject at several

---

[139] Richard Smith, *Artist's Lives*. Audio Recording, Interviewer Cathy Courtney (London: National Library Sound Collection, 2010-2015), Track 8, 2:47:29; Track 11, 1:39:29.
[140] Robertson, *Richard Smith: Paintings 1958-1966*, n.p.
[141] Smith quoted in Amaya, *Pop Art and After*, 138.

moments in time, *Kent* displays a commonality with an existing tradition of Cubist disassembly. What such handling also suggested was a familial link to contemporary cigarette advertisements that presented a schematic view of their construction to demonstrate a brand's technical superiority [Fig.18]. Situated somewhere between these two points of reference was Stuart Davis, an American painter admired by Smith whose practice suggested a greater relationship between Cubism and Pop Art than those like Greenberg –who regarded Cubism's contribution as a formal development in spite of the everyday source material it routinely incorporated– were prepared to accept[142]. In quite different terms McLuhan too considered the advent of Cubism to mark the ascendency of a new relationship between the modern subject and their surroundings:

> By giving the inside and the outside, top, bottom, back, and front and the rest, drops the illusion of perspective in favour of instant sensory awareness of the whole. Cubism, by seizing on instant total awareness suddenly announced that *the medium is the message.*[143]

For McLuhan the Cubist artwork, by breaking down a perspectival viewpoint and the temporal conditions attendant to it, heralded a broader shift within the technological environment. Repurposing its central tenets as a means to dissect and re-present the packaged commodity Smith too saw it as a device capable of apprehending structural conditions underlying the world around him.[144]

Another related painting *Flip Top* (1962) depicts a patch of zig-zag stripes with four cylindrical forms emerging above it. A leitmotif of cigarette advertisements of the time, and present in almost all of the promotional material for brands alluded to in Smith's paintings, such as Salem, Kent and Lucky Strike, was the image of a cigarette protruding from the top of an open package. The open but as yet un-depleted pack performed what could be described as a form of 'soft sell' advertising, differing from the 'hard sell' represented for example by claims for a product's technical superiority. Depicted subsequent to purchase but prior to consumption the multiple layers of

---

[142] See Robert Rosenblum, 'Cubism as Pop Art' in *Modern art and Popular Culture: Readings in High and Low*, eds. Kirk Varnedoe and Adam Gopnik (New York: H. N. Abrams, 1990), 116-133.
[143] McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, 12.
[144] See Roger Coleman, *Richard Smith* (London: ICA, 1962), n.p.

cardboard and foil packaging separating consumer and goods worked in tandem with a tantalising view of its interior. Opening up more internal space within his paintings Smith's strategy mimics this vernacular, and in doing so lay claim to a similarly flirtatious form of address.

Vance Packard in his study of advertising *The Hidden Persuaders*, a text read by Smith and widely discussed in British artistic circles at the time, outlines the emergence of a particular focus within the field known as 'Motivational Research,' or MR.[145] MR, according to Packard, was a means through which the psychological motivations of a consumer could be closely studied, and more effectively 'persuaded' by brand strategies. In many of the examples provided throughout *The Hidden Persuaders*, the contradictions that lay at the heart of a consumer's decision making meant that a direct assertion of a brand's strengths often proved less successful than oblique approaches that exploited unconscious insecurities and needs. In his interviews with those working in the advertising industry Packard found that the symbols and images printed upon packages required careful calibration to correlate with these subconscious desires. One such conversation with a designer proceeded as follows:

> To get the woman to reach and get the package in her hands designers, he explained, are now using he explained "symbols that have a dreamlike quality". To cite examples of dreamlike quality, he mentioned the mouth-watering frosted cakes that decorate the packs of cake mixes, sizzling steaks, mushrooms frying in butter. The idea is to sell the sizzle rather than the meat.[146]

This dreamlike quality, the evocation of the sizzle as opposed to the meat, has much in common with Smith's own indirect treatment of consumer culture, as he was also more concerned with making painterly representations of associative values that lay beyond the commodity itself. One of the most effective methods of persuasion developed by 'depth' advertising was to subliminally implicate the viewer while

---

[145] At an ICA event run in conjunction with his 1962 exhibition there, Smith was questioned in particular about Packard's ethical concerns about MR, and responded that while he was familiar with them, he didn't take as negative view on advertising and its effects. See Mellor, *The Sixties Art Scene in London*, 131.

[146] Vance Packard, *The Hidden Persuaders* (London: Penguin, 1960), 95.

advancing the impression of free choice. A parallel function can be attributed to Smith's use of a corrugated picture plane, which becomes a space into which the viewer is prompted to delve.

A group of paintings made in London were sent to Smith's second exhibition at The Green Gallery, which opened in February 1963.[147] Judd, reviewing it for *Arts* magazine observed that a more perspectival painting like *Nassau* (1962), one of those that for him 'worked,' relied on 'loose, soft brushwork' to maintain the 'the part-plane, part-volume frontality of the scheme' [Fig.19]. Judd interpreted its perpetual shifting from plane to volume as reliant on the intrusion of a horizontal strip into the ovoid form, peeling back to back to reveal a dotted surface that 'converts the pool back into an oval at the last minute.'[148] Acceptance and denial, or literal surface and depicted illusionism are balanced in *Nassau*, its ambiguity aided by the loose brushwork used to soften transitions between painted areas. Here a portion of the blue ovoid form that centrally defines the image is difficult to read as flat due to the modulated shading that surrounds it. The effect produced is more akin to a circular spotlight hitting a stage at an angle than a flattened ovoid. The transformation from pool to oval described by Judd is something that is continually in process, if not strictly in movement. Like a ring-pull or perforated tab it signals a procedure to be enacted by those who encounter it.

Such implied operations on behalf of the viewer reflected in turn Smith's abiding fascination with the theatrical, something that had begun with trips to see Music Hall acts as a student with his then flatmate Peter Blake. Representing these preoccupations in paintings of 1962 were a number of recurring 'Odeon forms' such as spot lit ovals and rainbow coloured devices.[149] Also made around this time was a

---

[147] Although primarily made up of unshown paintings this presentation did include three works from the previous two exhibitions. *Mister* (1962) had been shown at Smith's Bath Street Studio. *Time Piece* and *Twin Pack* (both 1962) were shown at the ICA.

[148] Donald Judd, 'In the Galleries,' in *Donald Judd: Complete Writings, Review, Articles, Letters to the Editor, Reports, Statements, Complaints* (Halifax NS: Nova Scotia School of Art and Design, 1975), 85.

[149] Among the paintings to carry these references are *Premiere* and *Garland* (both 1962). *Premiere* was loosely derived from the 20th Century Fox logo, while *Garland* alluded to the actress Judy Garland and her well known song from *The Wizard of Oz*.

ten minute, 8mm colour film entitled *Trailer*, upon which Smith collaborated with the photographer Robert Freeman. In addition to producing pictures focusing on the iconography of the modern city Freeman had acted as the unofficial photographer to the London abstractionists, a series of his images of artists' studios appearing in the catalogue for *New London Situation*[150]. Shot in London upon Smith's return *Trailer*, screened at the ICA in November 1962, explicitly demonstrated a fixation with advertising techniques. Constructed from close-ups of consumer products and interspersed throughout with details taken from Smith's own work, it was set to a soundtrack of contemporary pop including a number of singles by The Shirelles.[151] At one point a painting is taken onto the street and filmed from the opposite pavement with cars and pedestrians passing by in the foreground, the urban environment repeatedly violating the sanctity of the pictorial plane. Stills from the film were reprinted alongside a text entitled 'Trailer: Notes Additional to a Film' that appeared in the ICA periodical *Living Arts*.

Two paintings, also titled *Trailer*, directly acknowledge their debt to this collaboration by a sequentially repeating a single motif as it would appear on a filmstrip. In the first of these, *Trailer* (1962) a cropped fan shape appears running across the surface from top left to bottom right, a shadowed form underneath it. This device recurs in *Trailer 1* (1963), but with the canvas support itself being directly equated to the parallel edges of the filmstrip leader [Fig.20]. A box-like form is depicted within each of these segmented compartments. These get larger as they ascend, replicating the action of a camera closing in on its subject. Unable to mechanically animate its subject in the same manner as a projected film does, the same motif instead appears multiple times within one painting to re-produce its effect. Denied the temporality available to the film of the same name these paintings show Smith struggling against the static constraints of his chosen medium.

---

[150] See also Freeman, Robert. 'Comment.' *Living Arts*, No.1 (1963): 80-95. These activities took place prior to Freeman becoming known for his portraits of The Beatles. In addition to shooting several album covers he also worked on the credit sequences of their films *A Hard Day's Night* (1964) and *Help* (1965).
[151] As the film lacked integrated sound, these songs were played separately from the film itself. See Mellor, *The Sixties Art Scene in London*, 131.

**Packaged Paintings: Shaped Canvases between London and New York**

In 1963 Smith embarked upon what was to become a lengthy period of experimentation with the use of shaped canvases. While it marked a significant shift in his working methods this development proceeded from existing reflections on the iconic properties of packaging. With the increased conglomeration of corporate interests in the 1960s the package had become the paramount means of brand individuation, as Smith himself observed:

> The carton is an incessant theme in present-day civilisation: shops are full of boxes and you see these before you see the goods; they practically stand in for the goods –it is not just a question of labeling or depiction. Everything comes in boxes: you buy boxes when you are shopping; you don't buy cigarettes only cartons. The box is your image of the product.[152]

Made with the help of artist Clive Barker, these shaped canvases were initially planned from a series of preparatory works made in cardboard, a series of wooden frames then being developed from these studies.[153] Barker had also studied at the Luton School of Art, although somewhat later than Smith, and had moved to London in 1961. Smith's decision to work in this manner may well have been influenced during his first tenure in the United States. Later he would recall having been impressed by how much more substantial the 'canvas chassis' being sold to artists by carpenters like Lou Sgroi were in comparison with those typically used by British painters.[154] The stretchers for Frank Stella's series of Black Paintings for instance, which Smith saw when they were first shown as part of the *Sixteen Americans* exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, were constructed from four inch thick timber and projected considerably from the wall.[155] Certain American sculptors may also have played a part. After encountering a relief by John Chamberlain installed in an apartment owned by his friends Rose and Stella,

---

[152] Ibid.
[153] Smith used cardboard from packaging for Winsor and Newton oil paint. See Mellor, *The Sixties Art Scene in London*, 129.
[154] Beatty and Lorin Trower, *Richard Smith: The Green Gallery Years*, 31.
[155] *Sixteen Americans* ran from December 1959 until February 1960, opening immediately after Smith's arrival in New York.

Smith described its surreal effect being not unlike 'having a sofa over a mantelpiece.'[156]

A parallel interest in consumer packaging is also visible elsewhere in British works of the period, like *Tea Painting in an Illusionistic Style* by Hockney, or *Special K* by Boshier (both 1961). Once again though, what differentiates Smith's approach from other artists with similar interests in popular sources is that his references manifested themselves more obliquely:

> In painting these box images, the box was an ideogrammatic two-dimensional representation of a box. Representation in a precise sense. There was no suggestion, ever, of a replica, as in Warhol. I have tried to keep as close to the sensibility, ethos almost, of objects themselves in present-day life (like boxes) rather than reconstructing the objects themselves, or painting collages of them, which seems to be the dominating characteristic preoccupation of most pop artists.[157]

What 'representation in a precise sense' pointed towards was an interest in the ideogrammatic properties of branded packaging, as opposed to its specific signification. Whereas Warhol's screen-printed boxes, first exhibited at the Stable Gallery in April 1964 directly equate the artwork with the brand of package they reference, Smith's strategy was an equivocal one. Individual examples of packages were less important than their ubiquity in the modern environment, the surrogate role they performed as representations of corporate interests.

This series of paintings were put on display in London at the Kasmin Gallery in November 1963 [Fig.21]. The exhibition at the Kasmin Gallery closely coincided with *The Popular Image*, an early survey of American Pop Art in Britain, which had opened at the ICA in late October. Smith's exhibition included several eccentrically shaped, two-dimensional canvases, as well as a number of volumetric, three-dimensional ones that projected from the wall into the gallery space itself. Borrowing once again from the iconographic traits of cigarette advertising, a thematic influence present in paintings since 1958, this exhibition analysed a different aspect of its presentation. Here, Smith would use the painting's support as the means with to draw

---

[156] See Seymour, 'Richard Smith,' 258.
[157] Robertson, *Richard Smith: Paintings 1958-1966*, n.p.

attention to the membrane-like surface he saw his work as sharing with cigarette cartons. In these a seductive illusionism was counterpoised with an aggressively literal projection. The most overt reference to the iconography of the Tobacco industry was made by *Gift Wrap* (1963), a seventeen foot-long, multi-panel painting which featured two Phillip Morris cigarette packs jutting outwards into midair. Ironically this work would be acquired by the Stuyvesant Art Foundation, a charitable wing of Peter Stuyvesant cigarettes.[158] An extension of the logic proposed by *Place*, painting was once again repurposed as an environmental agent. Analogous with the media landscape this presentation loomed over the viewer, surrounding them on all sides. In this respect it mimicked the all-pervasive conditions of 'spectacle' Debord described as having permeated every aspect of modern society: a place where 'not only is the relationship to the commodity visible but it is all one sees.'[159]

Despite displaying distinctly sculptural characteristics, it was Smith's opinion that these shaped canvases remained paintings due largely to the dialogue they maintained with the wall, a relationship extensively tested by different works in this installation. In the two-dimensionally shaped paintings like *Fleetwood* (1963) this reliance on the wall is clear-cut: the areas excised from its silhouette diagrammatically rendering its box-like form. This reliance becomes more difficult to account for though when analysing the three-dimensional works that colonised an extensive amount of space in front of the wall upon which they are shown. *Surfacing* (1963) depicts a pointed form growing upwards and out of a shimmering painterly surface, whereas in *Piano* (1963) a rhomboid slumps forward from its rectangular picture plane onto the ground, unable to maintain painting's typically accepted separation from the floor beneath it [Fig.22]. Such logic is carried to an even greater extreme in *Re-Place* (1963), where a significant portion of the work stands alone in space, tenuously

---

[158] During the 1960s the Stuyvesant Foundation was probably the most significant corporate patron of contemporary British art, amassing a substantial collection and distributing a number of awards every year at the *New Generation* exhibitions. Initially the collection was exhibited in the Stuyvesant Factory in Zevenaar. See Charles Spencer, 'The Peter Stuyvesant Collection, Paintings While you Work,' *Studio International*, June (1963): 18-21. See also Whitney Straight, *British Sculpture in the Sixties* (London Tate Gallery, 1965); Alan Bowness, *Peter Stuyvesant Foundation, A Collection in the Making* (London: Whitechapel Gallery, 1965); Alan Bowness, *Modern British Painting, Peter Stuyvesant Foundation Collection* (London: Tate Gallery, 1967).
[159] Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle* (London: Rebel Press, 1992), Section 42, n.p.

connected to the perimeter of the room by a pair of canvases that double as its artificial shadow [Fig.23].

What all of these three-dimensional works share is a scant but ultimately insoluble frontality that, despite prompting the viewer to engage in a 180 degree engagement with each painting, conceal its rear portion from view. They press forward from the wall plane, captured in the process of growing outwards, transforming an increasing amount of the gallery into inaccessible space, a space now internal to the works themselves. Reflecting on this impression of expanding colonisation Lucy Lippard saw the installation as evoking 'a gigantic Kafkaesque commercialism which swallows the unwary, digests the populace and spews it up in the image of the advertising world.'[160]

Equally important to maintaining these works' status as paintings was the spatial ambiguity of their surfaces. This was a factor that Lippard identified as distinguishing Smith's approach from other artists beginning to experiment with the shaped canvas. By retaining a gestural method of paint application and illusionistic pictorial space in a work like *Piano* she saw the image appearing on the canvas as standing in clear opposition to its bulk, making a series of 'visual puns on volume.'[161] Painting a sequence of receding forms onto the protruding facets of this object Smith undermined the impression of solidity or physical weight that the volumetric support would otherwise present. This is a theme that recurs in both *Surfacing* and *Re-Place*, where literal planarity and cast shadow are each matched with a painted double, collisions of literal projection and depicted recession that act to cancel each other out.[162]

---

[160] Lippard, 'Richard Smith: Conversations with the Artist', 33. In his review of the Kasmin Gallery exhibition Pierre Rouvé assigned the work a similarly critical outlook to that applied to it by Lippard, stating that Smith 'incarnates our obscure craving to see our playthings as idols. He portrays modern man in search of his Easter Island.' See Pierre Rouvé, 'Smith and Space,' *Arts Review*, 17th November (1964): 8.
[161] Ibid., 33.
[162] Other British critics were less certain as to the merits of this new approach. Lynton for one saw it as resulting in 'a stalemate between different qualities and motives.' See Norbert Lynton, 'London Letter: American Pop Art and Richard Smith,' *Art International*, Vol.3, No.1 (1964): 42-43.

Such puns on volume also foregrounded another quality supplementary to that of depicted recession and literal projection: the impression of emptiness as opposed to fullness. While a flatly painted canvas surface suggests an object that is of the same material consistency throughout, it is in fact a thin membrane wrapped around a support. What Smith's illusionism worked to diminish is an impression of a volume's internal solidity, as by acknowledging the thinness of this tensioned surface he also drew attention to what it concealed: a hollow cavity that separates it from wall onto which it is mounted. Such allusions to hollowness are also what connected these paintings to the spectacular ones to be found in the world of consumer packaging. Visible in both instances is a box as opposed to its contents, an ephemeral display of outward appearances concealing a capacious interior.

While maintaining a critical distance from his subject matter, a stance cultivated in earlier paintings, Smith's return to London and adoption of the shaped canvas support took place against a critical backdrop quite different than that which he had left several years previously. Pop Art had begun to enjoy widespread visibility with the 1961 *Young Contemporaries* exhibition held at the Whitechapel Art Gallery in February, as well as Blake's prizewinning entry to the John Moores Painting Prize in November. Smith became readily implicated in this groundswell of attention, his 1962 article 'New Readers Start Here…' being amongst the first to furnish the paintings of Boshier, Hockney and Phillips with a critical interpretation distinguishing each of their individual approaches.[163] Despite regarding his own 'midtown' interests as distinct from the fascination with 'out and out non-fine art' pursued by these younger artists, it nonetheless show Smith to be intimately acquainted with the developments in British painting that had come to fruition while he was abroad, and supportive of its progress. When asked by Bruce Glaser in 1965 whether he saw a division between his work and that of artists like Phillips and Jones, two other interviewees in a feature on a British artists living in New York, he replied that he thought one existed but that

---

[163] This text opens with the statement: 'R.C.A., Derek Boshier, David Hockney, Peter Phillips are linked in their use of mass-media imagery but separated by the uses to which they put it. Visually the paintings differ in character. Hockney's space for instance is a thin wafer, Boshier's scattered and fragmented, Phillips battened to the canvas surface.' Richard Smith, 'New Readers Start Here…' *Ark*, No.32 (1962): 38.

it was more 'of a degree as opposed to an absolute difference.'[164] He was furthermore socially involved with this group, Boshier having worked for a short period as his assistant.[165] The most visible indicator of Smith's involvement with the burgeoning London scene though saw his loft studio being used to record a party sequence for Ken Russell's film *Pop Goes the Easel*, which featured amongst others his friend Blake.[166] A canvas by Smith appears in the background of this scene, filmed prior to his own exhibition of paintings there later that year.

By contrast, when Smith relocated once more to New York at the end of 1963 his shaped canvases were received in an altogether separate context. Consolidated by shows like *New Realists* at the Sidney Janis Gallery in the winter of 1962, and *Six Painters and the Common Object* at the Guggenheim Museum in March 1963, Pop Art had taken hold as a style there also, prompting critic Max Kozloff to famously complain that 'the art galleries are being invaded by the pinheaded and contemptible style of gum-chewers and worse, delinquents.'[167] Many of the protagonists referred to by Kozloff had followed much the same career trajectory as Smith, also having shown in the initial wave of exhibitions held at The Green Gallery. However, in spite of his vocal affiliations with mass culture upon his return to the States, Smith's practice would instead be interpreted largely in relation to another discussion beginning to take shape around this time: one concerning the relevance of disciplinary distinctions between painting and sculpture.

Included in *The Shaped Canvas*, an exhibition curated by Alloway that took place at the Guggenheim in December 1964, and showing alongside Stella, Paul Feeley, Sven Lukin, and Neil Williams, Smith was presented as part of a vanguard of artists

---

[164] Glaser, 'Three British Artists in New York,' 183.

[165] Derek Boshier, *Artist's Lives*. Audio Recording, Interviewer Hester Westerley (London: National Library Sound Collection, 2000-2009), Track 22, 1:19:27.

[166] See John Wyver, 'The Filmic Fugue of Ken Russell's *Pop Goes the Easel*,' *Journal of British Cinema and Television*, Vol.12, No.12, October (2015): 438-451; Lisa Tickner, 'Pop goes the Easel, Derek Boshier in 1962,' in *Derek Boshier, Rethink Re-entry*, ed. Paul Gorman London: Thames and Hudson, 2015), 75-85.

[167] Max Kozloff, 'Pop Culture, Metaphysical Disgust, New Vulgarians,' in *Renderings: Critical Essays on a Century of Modern Art* (London: Studio Vista, 1970), 221.

exploring the relationship between a shaped support and the image painted upon it.[168] While addressing what Fried would identify as the 'literal' and 'depicted' aspects of abstraction Smith differed from the rest of this grouping, and in particular Stella, due to his retention of a painterly method of application.[169] Geometric compositions were on the whole deemed best suited to maintaining a stable symbiosis between pictorial composition and physical shape, as clearly defined transitions between flat areas of colour more closely complemented the sharp lines of the stretcher edge. To maintain this semblance of symbiotic rapport the pictorial elements that appear on the surface of the canvas had to remain to some extent in accord with the volume suggested by the support; any pictorial elements not adhering to such logic risked being interpreted as being in direct conflict with its three-dimensional properties. This is a stance that Smith would depart from markedly, as not only were vestiges of pictorial illusionism unsuppressed in many of his shaped canvases, often they were deliberately exaggerated. Reviewing *The Shaped Canvas* Judd found this contradiction to suggest an 'insoluble' problem:

> Smith even paints his surfaces airily. I don't understand that, and if I don't I can't see why he uses canvas when the forms could be made easily and better with substantial materials.[170]

Disregarding any of the veiled references to cigarette cartons inferred by the patterned surface of *Slices* (1964), one of the paintings included, Judd regarded the shaped canvas as 'essentially a technical aspect, the material the work is made of.'[171]

Requiring a significant amount of carpentry prior to the act of painting these

---

[168] Smith was represented in this exhibition by five paintings: *Slices*, *Landfall*, *Sudden*, *Wallflower* and *Thin Slice* (all 1964). See Lawrence Alloway, *The Shaped Canvas* (New York: Guggenheim Museum, 1964), n.p.

[169] This is not to suggest that Alloway's selection was by any means homogenous. While flatter in appearance than Smith's, Feeley's methods also departed from that of Stella or Williams. Additionally, while Lukin's use of volumetric supports was still at an early stage there are a number of compelling and as of yet undeveloped comparisons that could be drawn between his practice and Smith's, as both artists cultivated volume as a means of alluding to the modern environment.

[170] Donald Judd, 'In the Galleries, February 1965', in *Donald Judd: Complete Writings 1959-1975*, 161.

[171] Ibid. Following on from *Package*, *Packet of Ten* (both 1962) and *Tip Top* (1963) all rectangular, two-dimensional paintings sporting the banks of circular, cigarette filter ends cropped by box-like silhouettes, *Slices* utilized this motif as its physical outline, adding another cubic form to it as a physical relief. It reappears in the screenprint *PM Zoom* (1963), an image that retains the Phillip Morris logo.

complex technical armatures seemed by default to condition the composition that appeared upon them. It was these pre-determined circumstances that closely tied the shaped canvas to what Alloway would two years later propose as a 'systemic' impulse within abstract painting, which along with modularity and hard edge paint application suggested a situation where 'the end state of the painting is known prior to completion.'[172] While not suggesting the working process was entirely premeditated Alloway's formulation elevated the 'conceptual act of the artist' over 'his physical engagement with a medium.'[173] The particular contribution that the eccentrically shaped canvas made to a systemic approach was that it imposed an intransigent condition upon an image prior to the act of painting itself. Also at stake within such discussions was whether the employment of a shaped support constituted an incorporation of sculptural values. This revolved not only around painting's newfound physicality, but had as much to do with the working methods associated with either discipline. By adopting a programmatic working method more generally associated with sculptural production, a systemic mindset in turn abandoned the improvisatory values associated with more gestural styles of painting.

This topic was something that strongly divided Modernist critics like Fried from Minimalists like Judd. For Judd pictures sporting sculptural traits indicated the exhaustion of a painterly discourse, and the emergence of a new paradigmatic category of object, one in which serial modularity and obdurate factuality were dominant characteristics. By contrast Fried argued for an increasingly extreme but resolute espousal of painting's opticality. Key to this was the premise that in successful paintings depicted elements were capable of 'absorbing the literalness or objecthood given up by the support,' in such a way as to preserve its fundamental characteristic: flatness.[174] While being in such strident opposition to one another neither Fried nor Judd regarded their models of advanced art as drawing in any way from popular culture, embodying what could be respectively described as formalist and neo-formalist positions. Expanding painting into the physical space occupied by the viewer, but at

---

[172] Lawrence Alloway, *Systemic Painting* (New York: Guggenheim Museum, 1966), 19.
[173] Ibid., 15.
[174] Michael Fried, 'Shape as Form: Frank Stella's Irregular Polygons,' in *Art and Objecthood: Essays and Reviews* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 77-99.

the same time continuing to employ illusionistic effects, the difficulty of locating Smith fully in relation to either of these critical narratives is due in no small part to the range of other cultural associations his paintings alluded to.

Despite his earlier reservations, Smith's practice was seen to warrant inclusion in 'Specific Objects,' Judd's seminal roll call for the 1965 edition of *Arts Yearbook* of the 'best new work' that was 'neither painting nor sculpture.'[175] Reproducing an image of *Quartet* (1964), this article retained previous misgivings, as evident in the statement 'Dick Smith did some large pieces in London with canvas stretched over cockeyed parallelepiped frames and with the surfaces painted as if they were paintings.'[176] Regarding them as sculptural forms treated 'as if they were paintings' these works met some of Judd's criteria while failing to align themselves with others. Just as problematic as an 'airy method of paint application' in these circumstances was Smith's retention of a tensioned canvas support, something Judd described many artists jettisoning in favour of a more 'obdurate' materiality, saying: 'oil paint and canvas aren't as strong as commercial paints and as the colours and surfaces of materials, especially if the materials are used in three dimensions.'[177] Outlining an artistic climate dominated by mechanistic or 'cool' facture, Judd took the view that such a commitment to traditional processes anachronistically harked back to disciplinary distinctions that advanced practice had made redundant.

For Smith though the retention of a canvas membrane not only anchored his work to painting as a discipline, it was also what connected it to the spectacular aspects of the media landscape. This was because those material qualities that appeared insufficiently substantial to Judd carried with them a multivalence capable of connecting abstract painting with the ideogrammatic status of the packaged commodity. Unlike the rigidity of the industrial materials central to Judd's own

---

[175] Elsewhere, Smith's work appeared in another key text documenting the rise of minimalism as an artistic tendency. Although it was omitted from later, anthologised versions of this text, Barbara Rose's 1965 article 'ABC Art' reproduced an image of Smith's *Untitled* (1964), along with a short statement from the artist. See Barbara Rose, 'ABC Art,' *Art in America* (October-November, 1965): 67; 'ABC Art,' in *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Gregory Battcock, 274-297 (Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 1968).
[176] Donald Judd, 'Specific Objects,' in *Donald Judd: Complete Writings 1959-1975*, 183.
[177] Ibid.

sculptural vocabulary it was comparatively provisional volumes produced in cardboard or foil that Smith's structures worked to imitate. As he would phrase it in 1968 'the stretcher is packaged in canvas.'[178] Building upon a longstanding fascination with the construction of origami and paper kites, canvas presented 'a continuous surface' that could 'be bent, crumbled, torn and twisted,' an enquiry in some senses anticipating the exploration of more pliable materials by Post-minimalist artists a couple of years later.[179]

### Part of the Passing Show: The *Sphinxes*, 1964-65

Smith's preoccupation with the volumetric supports would persist in a group of works that he began in the summer of 1964, the frames for which were, according to Lippard, fabricated from technical diagrams by a carpenter in Chinatown. [180] Collectively titled *Sphinxes*, these thin, column-like paintings sat directly on the floor, projecting a flat rectangular plane a considerable distance forward from the upper edge of a sweeping concave arc. The series formed a major part of his third and final exhibition at The Green Gallery in April 1965 [Fig.24], displayed alongside a number of wall mounted reliefs whose pictorial plane splits into several separate parts as it extends outwards into space. [181] As with previous shaped works the *Sphinxes'* compositional elements punned upon their own volume. In *Wall-Flower* (1964)

---

[178] Richard Smith, 'Instant Archaeology,' in Barbara Rose, *Richard Smith* (New York: Jewish Museum, 1968), n.p. The same year Smith would qualify this statement in a documentary on his work, saying 'actually physically with the paintings the stretcher is wrapped. It's more like a kind of parcel than a package. It's an odd folded shape wrapped in canvas.' Smith, quoted in *Who Is Richard Smith?* directed by Denis Postle (London: BBC, 1968), Televised Documentary.

[179] Looking for comparisons of this kind one could, for example, point towards the loose fabric works made by both Richard Tuttle and Barry Flanagan in 1967. Recently Rose has suggested that Smith's interest in these kite-like forms arose during the time he spent as a RAF serviceman stationed in Hong Kong in the early 1950s, a connection that would resurface living nearby to New York's Chinatown. Barbara Rose, *Richard Smith: Kite Paintings* (London: Flowers Gallery, 2015), 4.

[180] See Lippard, 'Richard Smith: Conversations with the Artist,' 34. However, speaking in 2011, Smith offered an alternative version of events. The *Sphinx* paintings he asserted were made while on an extended honeymoon in Cape Cod, following his marriage to Betsy Scherman in June 1964. According to this account the frames for these works were fabricated by his wife's uncle, who lived nearby. See Richard Smith, *Artist's Lives*, Track 14, 1:27:45.

[181] Photographic documentation of the exhibition illustrates the inclusion of the wall-mounted work *Triptych* (1965). Prior to this a work from the *Sphinx* series had already been included in a group show at The Green Gallery, in October 1964.

banded stripes of equal width literally recede from the viewer, only to project once more towards them as they travel down along the curved 'foot' towards the floor.[182] This logic is adapted in *Red Carpet* (1965), which privileges its uppermost rectangle, or 'head' as the primary area of focus [Fig.25], and once more in *Grosgrain* (1965) where a painted area imitates a cleft running through the centre of its composition. Much like a funhouse mirror, an object with which the *Sphinxes* display a striking affinity both in terms of their construction and human scale, the distortions they present are an admixture of the literal and the illusionistic.[183]

According to Lippard these works marked the end of a more legible involvement with popular culture: 'Smith has moved from an image orientated "pop art" to an entirely non-objective concept, despite the fact that he still sees his work in relation to commercial techniques.'[184] The first paintings Smith executed using acrylic paint the *Sphinxes* would give way to simpler compositions and increasingly indirect references to the media environment in subsequent paintings.[185] This 'radical change' of approach constituted however less a break with themes derived from popular culture than their deeper obfuscation.[186] Contributing greatly to the perception that Smith's withdrawal from the use of such source material was definitive, as opposed to gradual, was the American context in which his practice now appeared. There an affiliation with commercial techniques was only interpreted in relation to artworks demonstrating an 'image-orientated approach,' or sufficiently mechanistic facture. The *Sphinxes* were not in fact a complete disavowal of previous subject matter, but remained in Smith's words 'still vaguely based on the packaging theme, on the zoom,' while remaining 'part of the passing show.'[187] The connection these paintings shared with the wider operations of the media environment did not derive from any discernible debt to its imagery, but rather by replicating its spectacular intrusion into

---

[182] As Seymour phrased it 'a box with a foot becomes a *Sphinx.*' Seymour, *Richard Smith*, 257.

[183] Further comparisons could be made between this stretcher design and certain slot machines and other penny arcade amusements of the period.

[184] Lippard, *Richard Smith: Conversations with the Artist*, 34.

[185] Five years later Smith would remark that 'very little advertising, a root interest in paintings to 1965, directly hits me anymore'. Anne Seymour, 'Preoccupations, Richard Smith talks to Anne Seymour,' *Art and Artist*, June (1970): 20.

[186] See Cyril Barrett, 'Richard Smith: Sculptor or Painter?' *Art International*, Vol.2, No.8 (1967): 36.

[187] Ibid., 33.

everyday life.

Such allusions were lost on Dore Ashton whose review, like Judd's, found that Smith's thinner, more spatially indeterminate application of paint 'detracted from the impact of three-dimensionality and gave the works a flimsy provisional look that the style he works in cannot support.'[188] In contrast to Ellsworth Kelly or Stella, against whose work his was respectively pitted by Ashton and Judd, Smith's ambiguously decorated surfaces were regarded as inconsistent with their obtrusive bulk.[189] Such critical interpretations were resolutely formal ones, offering little space for the multivalent readings Smith sought to imbue paintings with. Focusing instead on the position these works occupied as part of a debate around painting and its status as an object, neither were prepared to acknowledge the range of other prompts they contained. Even American commentators less critical of these intentions fought to establish a working terminology with which to encapsulate such indeterminacy. Reviewing Smith's second exhibition at the Green Gallery, Irving Sandler noted that the painting *Soft Pack* (1963) looked 'like an enormous sign that might have been painted by Bonnard.'[190]

The *Sphinxes* laid claim to their status as paintings by claiming a strict frontality. Whereas previously the painted image had wrapped around the support, expanding to cover each facet of the shape these newer works were only painted on their narrow face, their sides remaining a primed white. Assuming the logic of a traditional stretcher frame, this frontality served to delimit the boundaries of painting. Speaking to Robertson, Smith described his reasoning:

> The latest solution, in 1964 was when I realised that in order for a painting to remain a painting, it had to remain as a continuous surface. Because a painting only has a front: there is no back to it. And I wanted in these new paintings to

---

[188] Dore Ashton, 'New York Commentary,' *Studio International*, June (1965): 42.

[189] To such comments the following could be added: 'When one looks at the list of honours this thirty five year old artist already has to his credit, his muddy surfaces and generally careless execution becomes more inexcusable. The power is there, the finish is not… My guess is that Smith, unfortunately, has been satisfied to stop with the concept, otherwise permitting pressures of show deadlines etc. to prevail over aesthetic considerations.' Corinne Robbins, 'New York' in *Art and Artist*, January (1967): 65.

[190] Irving Sandler, 'Review and Previews,' *ARTnews*, April (1963): 14.

have the surface facing the spectator as a continuous fact, though it could be bent or folded radically. The sides of the painting, the projection forwards are equivalent to a frame. There is no question at all of a multi-faceted sculptural object. I have always retained a wall plane.[191]

In a feature that appeared in the winter 1964 issue of *Ark*, two of these paintings were illustrated in their preparatory stages.[192] These photographs show the facing edge of each work completed, their sides unfinished, and demonstrate that over these wooden supports only across the narrow frontal area has canvas actually been stretched [Fig.26].[193] This was in part a technical consideration relating to the elastic properties of the canvas itself, which needed to be cut, so as to be tensioned across an internal curve. That aside, what this documentation demonstrates is that the face of the support, where 'painting' was designated to occur, was not only conceptually but materially distinguished from its framing sides.

Given their slender frontality, in order to apprehend a *Sphinx* correctly, a viewer had to situate themselves perpendicular to the wall against which they were placed, circumstances that preclude the ideal presence of more than one participant. Although demanding a more discrete, one on one engagement with each individual work than the omni-directional address suggested by paintings shown previously at the Kasmin Gallery, a number of similarities remain. In trying to orientate themselves in relation to an earlier work like *Piano* for instance, the viewer readily becomes aware of what could be best described as a sweet spot, a distance from the piece where the elements painted onto the canvas surface appear to most closely complement the literal qualities emphasised by the support. Moving around the work these two qualities shift in and out of alignment with one another.[194] The impulse to find this optimal position to

---

[191] Robertson, *Richard Smith: Paintings 1958-1966* , n.p.

[192] Illustrated in this article were the *Ripe* and *Wall-Flower* (both 1964) from the *Sphinx* series. These were photographed along with *Slices* and *LandFall* (1964), two paintings that mark the transition between those shown at the Kasmin Gallery in 1963 and the *Sphinxes*. See Richard Smith, 'Paintings' *Ark*, No.37 (1964): 32-37.

[193] In these photographs the sheeted sides appear to be made from plywood, although related technical drawings, erroneously dated to 1970, specify the use of masonite on the facing edge of a frame not unlike that used for *Grosgrain*. See Marco Livingstone, *Richard Smith: Works on Paper, A Forty Year Survey* (London: Flowers Gallery, 2014), n.p.

[194] Along similar lines, Walker has noted that 'seen from a frontal position, Smith's 3-D device worked well enough; but from other viewpoints the contradiction between the forward lurching of

engage with the artwork is something that remains the case with the *Sphinxes*, a quality that in turn could be likened to the 'vistas' of each individual's paintings hidden within the layout of *Place* six years previously. The difference is that whereas in shaped works from 1963 a viewer is free to seek out this alignment between surface and volume, here it is aggressively signaled. Motivating this shift from a mobile engagement to a static one was a desire to enact upon a viewer what Smith referred to as the 'zoom,' another device borrowed from the field of cinematography. Present in earlier works like *Trailer 1*, *Zoom* and *Vista* (both 1963), which each repeat a compositional element several times at an increasing scale, in this case it was the viewer who was being physically zoomed in upon, the uppermost section of the painting projecting some four feet outwards from the wall towards them.

While failing to meet the criteria outlined by Judd, such characteristics could be described as in keeping with what Fried called 'theatrical' qualities in 'Art and Objecthood,' his 1967 polemic against Minimalist art. Here theatricality did not pertain to any specific devices used within the theatrical arts *per se*, an area that resonated particularly with Smith, but rather what he regarded as the adoption of its temporal properties. It was a 'persistence in time' that a Modernist artwork needed to defeat or suspend by 'evoking or constituting, a continuous and perceptual present.'[195] As opposed to an absorbed intensity that he saw as embodied by the best artwork Fried stated that 'the experience of literalist art is of an object in a *situation*– one that virtually by definition includes the viewer.'[196] Such theatricality for Fried displaced artistic content, transferring it away from the object itself by aggressively implicating the viewer. The viewer's awareness of their own body is a factor that could certainly be inferred in the environmental address of Smith's three-dimensional paintings. Furthermore, by demanding an increasingly singular positioning of the body to them the *Sphinxes* presciently anticipate Fried's statement:

> Here it should be remarked that literalist art too possess an audience, though a
> somewhat special one: that the beholder is confronted by literalist work within

---

the projections and the flat picture plane became obvious.' See John A. Walker, *Art Since Pop* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1975), 16.

[195] Michael Fried, 'Art and Objecthood,' in *Art and Objecthood: Essays and Reviews*, 167.

[196] Ibid., 163.

a situation that he experiences as his means that there is an important sense that the work in question exists for him alone, even if he is not actually alone with the work at the time.[197]

Zooming in on their subjects as they did the *Sphinxes* align with such a definition, due to how they work to produce an isolated circuit connecting viewer to object. As a pre-determined 'situation' it is their slender frontality that acts to exclude multiple viewpoints, and to promote this singular engagement between viewer and artwork.

Another related theme within Fried's text is what he perceived as the inherent hollowness of the literalist artwork, regarding 'the quality of having an *inside*' as 'blatantly anthropomorphic.' [198] Such hollowness he considered to embody characteristics not unlike of that of another 'personage,' an interpretation Lippard similarly invoked when she described the *Sphinxes* as having a 'playful and rather charming reference to the figure.'[199] Jill Johnston echoed this interpretation, when she referred to the 'vaguely hourglass appearance,' and 'waists' of these paintings.[200] It is this anthropomorphism that suggests a familial relationship between the *Sphinxes* and another artwork that had also been exhibited at The Green Gallery two years previously. *Column* (1961) by Robert Morris occupies a privileged position in any discussion of Fried's attack on Minimalist art, due to its original function as a theatrical prop prior to its subsequent repurposing as an artwork [Fig.27].[201] Like *Box for Standing* (1961), another related work, what the hollowness of this plywood structure was initially intended to contain was Morris himself, its later utilisation as a sculpture alluding to his concealed presence *in absentia*.

That the space internal to the artwork was sufficiently capacious to accommodate a human body, either in actuality or as a suggested presence is a critical

[197] Ibid., 163.
[198] Ibid., 156.
[199] Lippard, *Richard Smith: Conversations with the Artist*, 34.
[200] See Jill Johnston, 'Review and Previews,' *ARTnews*, September (1965): 18-19.
[201] Performed for the Living Theater in February 1962, Morris intended to occupy the prop and at an allotted time tip it over from inside. Following an injury sustained during rehearsal its toppling instead took place remotely by means of a rope. Column was included as part of a group exhibition in January 1963 entitled *New Work 1*, a display that placed Pop Artists alongside an emerging Minimalist tendency that would play an increasingly significant role in Bellamy's programme. See Edward Strickland, *Minimalism: Origins*, (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1993), 263-264.

point with which to consider Smith's employment of similarly scaled, conspicuously hollow forms. Although he did not intend to inhabit his structures as conspicuously as Morris once did, the 'stage presence' of the literalist artwork was nonetheless a major contributing factor leading to this use of volumetric supports, as it was this quality that connected them to commercial techniques employed by advertisement hoardings, supermarket displays and so on. While he considered the opportunity the maximal world of advertising offered to 'live in a semi-detached cigarette pack' less a believable proposition than a metaphorical possibility, the dramatic intrusion of Smith's paintings into the gallery space looked to match its psychological annexation of the urban environment. Departing from the austere factuality privileged by the Minimalist artwork his softer, more painterly surface was retained to as an affiliated link with the soft sell tactics it employed, as a method of retaining an ideological connection with this other plane of experience.

**Conclusion**

Subsequently Smith would seek to actively downplay the importance of the *Sphinxes* within the overall development of his artistic practice, remarking how 'ridiculous' or 'problematic' this overly determined concept of a one on one engagement with the viewer was.[202] Furthermore, when he first exhibited these works they appeared to an American critical audience, whose concerns were largely formal, as a misguided attempt to reconcile aspects of painterly lyricism with sculptural objecthood. What these interpretations and Smith's own revisions combine to obscure however is the key role they play in articulating a transition from works with a clearly legible debt to advertising culture –the apogee of which was his 1963 exhibition at the Kasmin Gallery– to shaped canvases made from 1966 onwards whose volume and colour alone signaled their indirect relation to the world around them. Equivocal in

---

[202] Beatty and Lorin Trower, *Richard Smith: The Green Gallery Years*, 43. Although featured in surveys of Smith's work that took place at the Whitechapel Art Gallery in 1966 and the Jewish Museum in 1968 none of *Sphinxes* were included in Smith's 1974 retrospective at the Tate Gallery. He still however thought highly enough of the series in 1967 to commemorate it in miniature form with an edition of aluminium facsimiles, printed using a transfer process. See Richard Smith, *Richard Smith, A Retrospective Exhibition of Graphics and Multiples* (London: The British Council, 1979), n.p.

their connotations the *Sphinxes* capture Smith's sensibility at a moment wholly distinct from the development of a figurative Pop sensibility in Britain, but also from a formalist model of abstraction then dominant in the United States. Radically intruding into the viewer's space they embodied the structural principles of the mass media and its encroachment into daily life, while at the same time retaining an idiosyncratic position in relation to questions of painting's status as an object, their hybridity rendering them open in equal measure to either form of interpretation.

Despite employing a range of formal methods, each of the bodies of work Smith was to produce between 1957 and 1965 coalesced around a singular conceptual focus: the analogies it was possible to draw between general aspects of the modern environment and those characteristics specific to abstract painting alone. In order to 'get into the act of painting' one had to first 'get the measure' of the cultural atmosphere in which that painting was to occur. First visible in early articles for *Ark*, and resurfacing once again in the collaborative film *Trailer*, what these other forms of cultural production suggested was a 'background' of ideas, cues that allowed for a reappraisal of the dominant modes of subjectivity underpinning British art up until this point. Keen to imbue his paintings with some of the atmosphere that he found so inspirational in trips to the cinema in London, or jazz clubs like the Five Spot in New York in later years, these sources were seen more as a new 'angle' from which to view the world, rather than scenes to be directly depicted. Here the topicality of abstraction and its critical distance to a source played a vital role, in that it afforded Smith the means to remain committed to a painterly discourse while alluding to 'a visual octave' previously beyond the reach of the fine arts.

Paralleling his taste for the ambience found in midtown, abstraction was a decorous method with which to shift a reference from the specific to the general, using a gestural method of paint application to efface all but the broadest characteristics of a graphic form. The act of painting, an enterprise as much reliant on the vagaries of recalled memories as it was technical devices borrowed from commercial photography, was maintained so as to assert a calibrated autonomy from the world around him. Although openly enamoured with the operations of mass

culture, and unwilling to denounce its influence as readily as many other abstractionists of the period would, Smith's principal goal was to enlarge the visual domain available to him as a painter. Replicating the ideogrammatic address of the packaged commodity –whether through the seductive use of corrugated layers in two-dimensional form, or as an obtrusively three-dimensional entity staking claim to increasing portions of the gallery space– these devices were appropriated in service of the medium, albeit one that punned upon two altogether different definitions of the term used by art critics and media theorists. Being at once a form of communication and a discipline, Smith's nuanced model of abstraction sought to strike a balance between the 'public scale' of the modern urban environment, and the 'private situation' inhabited by the artist. This was a compromise he summed up by saying 'it is not quite a question of bringing painting to the people but more of the spectator to art.'[203]

---

[203] Smith, 'Trailer: Notes Additional to a Film,' 30.

# The Sculpture System: New Generation Sculpture and its Sources, 1961-1966.

If the question of a painting's objecthood was in 1965 a pressing issue for those British artists like Richard Smith who identified themselves as painters, a parallel concern was manifesting itself in the sculptural community at much the same time. While new developments such as the shaped canvas meant painting was increasingly coming to resemble sculpture, prompting fears for its disciplinary identity, similar concerns were being raised around the indebtedness of contemporary forms of British sculpture to painting. Opening in March, the month after Smith's third exhibition at The Green Gallery, was *New Generation 1965*, a pivotal survey of recent sculpture at the Whitechapel Art Gallery [Fig.28]. Emblematic of a sculptural tendency that dominated London in the first half of the decade, the success and visibility of this exhibition extended beyond British shores. This reception was especially favourable on the West Coast of America amongst the editorial staff working at *Artforum*. John Coplans, keen to include an article on the show in the magazine, put forward his opinions on its international standard in a letter to Robertson, then director of the Whitechapel, saying 'for the first time, *a body of work ahead of American Art* is being substantially produced in England.'[1]

The primary attraction of this new work to critics like Coplans was the radical break it appeared to make with previous notions of sculpture, and in particular a reliance on the appearance of weight embodied by traditional sculptural materials. In his introduction to the exhibition catalogue Robertson characterised this change in attitude:

> What all the work has in common is *weightlessness*; bright non-associative colour; a tendency to hug the floor or snake along the ground, as a liberation from separate bases as well as a reaction against an earlier totemic or "personage" kind

[1] Letter from John Coplans to Bryan Robertson, 17th March 1965, Whitechapel Art Gallery Archive. See Tim Marlow, *The Marketing and Impact of New Generation Sculpture*, MA Report (Courtauld Institute, 1988), 32-33.

of image; an equal shift away from landscape or any figure in landscape: this is all "indoor" sculpture… and a new range of dynamics in which *inert* elements are combined with great flexibility, with a slow or grave flow of *movement*.[2]

Combined with the liberal use of non-associative colour this weightlessness imbued the work with a festive nature. This appeared far removed from the sombre works of sculptors like Reg Butler, Lynn Chadwick or Bernard Meadows that had dominated the British landscape during the 1950s. As Andrew Forge noted, in the *Artforum* article commissioned following the exchange between Coplans and Robertson, this work:

> Disposes of the image of the sculptor locked in some inchoate private experience, and it disposes of the pathos of traditional materials, bronze in particular. There are no broken surfaces here, no expressive imprints. Instead, fibreglass, plastic, sheet steel, aluminium, all handled impersonally and with an unwinking industrial finish.[3]

The same qualities were however in certain instances mistaken for an open engagement with the cultural scene burgeoning in London around this time. As Robertson would later reflect:

> Part of the intensive reaction –but only a small part– tended to trivialise the work on exhibition by lumping it in with the more colourful and cheerful aspects of Pop art. Some critics tended to write breathlessly of the new coloured sculpture in the same gushing tones used to describe Mary Quant's miniskirts, or the new haircuts, new colours in lipsticks, the Beatles and swinging London. This confusion came partly, of course, from the immaculately "designed" appearance of some of the sculpture itself which one could not touch like earlier and more tactile kinds of sculpture, and which seemed at first to have arrived like a brightly coloured, non-functional spectacle from another planet, free of any past, devoid of association.[4]

Surfacing alongside such topical associations however were other critical voices anxious to establish a genealogy for this new category of sculpture. Owing little it seemed to the work of earlier British sculptors, this work's bold colouration was widely surmised to have been derived from the same influx of Abstract American painting

---

[2] Bryan Robertson, *New Generation 1965* (London: Whitechapel, 1965), 8.
[3] Andrew Forge, 'Some New British Sculptors: Whitechapel Gallery breaks out one of the most exciting developments in recent British art,' *Artforum*, May (1965): 32.
[4] Bryan Robertson, *Colour Sculpture: Britain in the Sixties* (London: Waddington Galleries, 1999), 10.

which had exerted such a catalysing effect on younger British painters. Nor was this interdisciplinary influence rejected by the sculptors participating in *New Generation 1965*, many of whom cited *The New American Painting* exhibition at the Tate Gallery as a revelatory experience. King, for one, described it as a 'message of hope and optimism, large scale, less inbred.'[5]

If painting was in fact becoming increasingly difficult to delineate from sculpture, and vice versa, a question inevitably arises with regards to whether the maintenance of such a distinction was necessary at all. Despite such common interests however it would be reductive to consider this field as an interdisciplinary one. This is in no small part due to the continued importance of the distinction to practitioners at the time. It would perhaps be more accurate to identify 1965 as a focal point where the disciplinary boundary between painting and sculpture was at its thinnest and most permeable, while still remaining intact. As discussed previously, the parameters of painting were of vital importance to Smith even as he sought to actively problematise them. This is arguably even truer in the case of the collection of sculptors who rose to prominence as part of *New Generation 1965*. For them an increasingly thorough definition of what a sculpture was, or could become, represented nothing short of their principal motivation.

## Nomenclature: 'New Generation Sculpture'

New Generation sculpture is at least partially interchangeable with the more descriptive term 'British coloured sculpture,' and can in its broadest sense be used to characterise any 1960s British abstract sculpture that employs polychromatic surfaces, and synthetic materials.[6] On the other hand, it harbours a collegiate bias, and is just as often employed as shorthand for a select group of individuals who studied under Caro in the Sculpture Department at St. Martin's School of Art between 1955 and 1962. It is these individuals who have tended to be regarded as sole representatives of

---

[5] Phillip King 'Phillip King Talks about his Sculpture,' *Studio International* (June 1968): 300.
[6] See Robertson, *Colour Sculpture: Britain in the Sixties*.

the style in subsequent surveys of British sculpture.[7] The 1965 Whitechapel exhibition featured nine sculptors: David Annesley, Michael Bolus, Phillip King, Roland Piche, Tim Sanderson, Tim Scott, William Tucker, Derek Woodham and Isaac Witkin. Although composed heavily from former St. Martin's students, the inclusion of Piche and Woodham, previous students at the Royal College of Art, and Sanderson, a previous student at the Slade, was intended to provide a broad overview of abstract sculpture emerging from London art schools at the time. That these three artists are largely absent from subsequent academic treatments of the subject is due to a number of reasons, but testifies to the centrality that St. Martin's has come to occupy in subsequent accounts of the New Generation.[8]

Another factor complicating the sobriquet New Generation sculpture is that the 1965 exhibition was not the first of its kind, but rather followed on from a 1964 edition that featured only painters, including Jones, Huxley, Phillips and Riley.[9] For the 1965 exhibition a sculpture-specific show was programmed in order to redress the balance. This second sculptural exhibition was marked by its complete absence of figuration, something that, the year before, had marked the paintings of Jones or Phillips out as distinct from those of Huxley or Riley. It was this collective identity that seemed to those like Robertson and Coplans to point towards the future direction of modern sculpture, while also indicating that this future was resolutely abstract[10]. These factors have led in many survey of the period to this exhibition being twinned with another discussed previously: *Situation*.[11] Like *Situation*, *New Generation 1965* is

---

[7] At no point has the original selection of artists been replicated in any subsequent show. For example, exhibitions such as *The Alistair McAlpine Gift* held at the Tate Gallery in 1972, *Britse Sculptuur: 1960-1988* held at the Museum Van Hedendaagse Kunst in Antwerp in 1989, and *Colour Sculpture: Britain in the Sixties* at the Waddington Gallery in London in 1999 have only featured those St. Martin's students represented in *New Generation 1965*.

[8] For another, more expanded treatment of the phenomenon see Gene Baro, 'British Sculpture: The Developing Scene,' *Studio International* (October, 1966): 173-181.

[9] Bryan Robertson, *New Generation 1964* (London: Whitechapel, 1964).

[10] Also worth noting is the third, less celebrated rendition of the exhibition in 1966 referred to in the introduction, which included sculptures by Justin Knowles, Francis Morland and Victor Newsome, as well as constructed reliefs by John Carter. Despite sharing significant formal similarities with work shown the year previously, and at the time being colloquially dubbed New Generation sculptors, these artists have also been excluded from subsequent treatments of the subject.

[11] A chapter based around *New Generation 1965* follows a Mellor's discussion of *Situation* (1993), as well as forming the basis of Bulgin's *Situation and New Generation: A Study of Non-Figurative Art in Great Britain during the 1960s*.

employed to signal a similarly paradigmatic development in sculpture as to what this exhibition in 1960 heralded in painting. But, just as the conceptual grouping of those painters who participated in *Situation* was conducted more or less on the scale of their work alone, *New Generation 1965* too amalgamated a variety of artist's practices at the expense of a multitude of factors that distinguished them from one another.

Despite these issues, and not to mention the fact it has never been enthusiastically endorsed by any of the artists themselves, the term New Generation sculpture nonetheless retains a value, one that extends beyond its mere efficacy as a brand. It serves to temporally locate a sculptural discourse that was developing in London in the early 1960s, one that was articulately manifested in work made by graduates of St. Martin's School of Art. As Joy Sleeman has noted 'New Generation is best seen as an ending rather than a beginning to a conversation'; a watershed moment where this private discourse became publicly visible.[12] 'British Coloured Sculpture,' a term used by Robertson amongst others, is a less loaded label to apply to such work, as it is predicated mainly on formal traits. However, what it fails to adequately capture is the specific temporality of this conversation around sculpture and its relation to new materials, or the particular optimism that accompanied such concerns in the early to mid 1960s.

This chapter will address how such a short-lived discourse evolved among this small group of sculptors, and the elements imperative to its functioning. Its principal focus is the means by which each individual's artwork operated in relation to what became collectively labelled as New Generation sculpture; or alternatively, how one sculpture related to the others within this enclosed system. The main problem facing such an approach is that any properties that demonstrate such communality also act to undermine the auratic qualities of an artwork, and in turn the authorial identity of each artist. In this sense the stability any proper language requires to function is diametrically opposed to prevalent concepts of artistic originality, and as such the intentions of each producer. This is an issue that requires careful consideration, as although a host of factors can be drawn upon to link works by different New

---

[12] Joy Sleeman, *The Sculpture of William Tucker* (Aldershot: Lund Humphries, 2007), 26.

Generation sculptors together in a familial network, it would be altogether wrong to suggest that these artists were prepared to surrender authorial control of their practices. Each primarily sought to develop their own individual response to the questions of sculpture and its fundamental properties, as opposed to a common identity. While this also reflects a tension present within any collective grouping of artists, in this instance it is specifically aligned to the growing currency of a formalist approach within art education, and the image of a hermetic community that it gave rise to.

While it is not possible to present New Generation sculpture as a stable linguistic enterprise, there is a metalinguistic emphasis that these artworks collectively shared: a sustained preoccupation with the principles underpinning their own production and display. Supporting such an interpretation are a range of critical accounts referring to such works in a correspondingly linguistic manner: describing their 'semantic' appearance, the arrangement of compositional elements as 'syntax,' or the 'rhetorical' role these sculptures played when exhibited in public places. It is through the analysis of such claims that a direct connection between these sculptures can be established. It is here also that the threat posed to traditional authorial standards by 1960s British abstract sculpture, and specifically the collective ideology that formed at art colleges such as St. Martin's, can be best understood.

## Learning and Teaching: The Sculpture Department at St. Martin's

Inherently linked to the mythology accompanying these former St. Martin's students is the Vocational Sculpture Course established there by Frank Martin in 1952, and his appointment of Caro to assist with its delivery in 1953.[13] Recruiting a higher number of students with prior experience in higher education, this course was not subject to requirements laid out by the National Diploma for Design. Not being tied to such legislation it was free to adopt a more experimental structure. Set within large, un-partitioned studio spaces the pedagogical aspects of the course were organised around collective discussions taking the form or crits, forums and

---

[13] In 1963 this was renamed the Advanced Course.

experimental workshops. It was these factors that acted as a catalyst in the shift from figuration to abstraction in the department. This collegiate identity was further consolidated by the subsequent appointment of former students as tutors to the course. By the time that *New Generation 1965* opened every one of the St. Martin's sculptors featured in the exhibition was either working, or had previously been employed, at the school.[14]

Just as crucial as the discursive environment establishing itself at St. Martin's in general was the privileged relationship formed between these younger sculptors and Caro specifically. Many of the formal characteristics that marked Caro's own lauded solo exhibition at the Whitechapel Gallery in 1963 can be seen to directly predict those that defined *New Generation 1965*: the presentation of a series of large, abstract sculptures placed directly on the floor without the need of pedestals, and an apparent lightness obtained from modern materials painted in bright colours [Fig.29]. The critical success afforded to Caro's Whitechapel exhibition relied heavily on the extent to which he had been able to cast off the patrilineal shadow of Henry Moore, whom Caro had himself worked for as an assistant between 1951 and 1953.[15] While working at Moore's studio at Much Hadham, and in the years immediately following this, Caro's own sculptures were figurative and predominately executed in plaster and bronze, using techniques of carving and casting bearing much in common with those employed by Moore.[16] It was only after travelling to the United States in the winter of 1959, and meeting Americans like Clement Greenberg, Kenneth Noland and David Smith that he was inspired to abandon these methods in an effort to answer Greenberg's provocation 'if you want to change your art, change your habits.'[17] Ironically, it was through developing a method to free himself of Moore's influence that Caro himself came to inherit this patriarchal mantle for those British sculptors emerging in the 1960s.

---

[14] Annesely and Bolus had starting teaching there in 1964, Scott in 1962, Tucker in 1961, and Witkin in 1963. King had previously taught there between 1959 and 1960.

[15] Following Caro's example both Phillip King and Isaac Witkin also subsequently worked for Moore as assistants, King between 1958 and 1959 and Witkin between 1961 and 1964.

[16] Additionally, one could point also to formal similarities between Caro's early sculpture and that made by Paolozzi, a fellow tutor at St. Martin's, or the European influence of Jean Dubuffet.

[17] Ian Barker, *Anthony Caro: Quest for the New Sculpture* (London: Lund Humphries, 2004), 89.

When tracing this familial relationship it is also important to note that it was only during the period that Caro was teaching Annesley, Bolus, King, Scott, Tucker and Witkin that he renounced these more traditional methods and developed his signature brand of abstract, constructed metal sculpture. At the same time as he was attempting to effect these changes within his own practice, Caro was encouraging students to question their own habits. Perhaps the most extreme example of his pedagogical approach was a series of experimental Tuesday evening workshops held at St. Martin's in the late 1950s and early 1960s. There each week participants were asked to produce a sculpture based around an oblique theme, such 'Male and Female' or 'Full Fathom Five.'[18] In Lynton's mind Caro's influence extended beyond mere formal dicta, representing an expansive attitude of radical self-questioning:

> As a teacher Caro is felt as a toughening, faith shaking influence. His students learn from him not a style but a discipline of doubt and enquiry.[19]

Considered in such a light these students could be said occupy the role of privileged bystanders, if not potential collaborators, in Caro's development.[20] This collaborative interpretation is furthermore supported by the fact that several of these individuals directly assisted with the construction of several of Caro's most ambitious sculptures of the early 1960s. Witkin for example helped to make *Midday* (1960) and *Lock* (1962).[21] Bolus in 1962 aided with the construction of *Early One Morning* [Fig.30], while Annesley worked with him to assemble the aluminium piece *Hopscotch* the following year. [22] In the frontispiece of the catalogue for Caro's Whitechapel exhibition, their involvement was tacitly acknowledged by the following inscription: 'Isaac Witkin, David Annesley and Michael Bolus helped make the sculptures.'[23]

[18] David Annesley, Rolouf Louw, Tim Scott, William Tucker, 'Anthony Caro's Work: A Symposium by Four Sculptors,' *Studio International*, January (1969): 20.

[19] Norbert Lynton 'Latest Developments in British Sculpture,' *Art and Literature*, Summer (1964): 196.

[20] The mapping of such activity formed a central part of the symposium 'Collaborating with Caro' held at Central St. Martins in October 2014, which was based around an analysis of Caro lifelong interests in establishing discussions with students, assistants and workshop participants.

[21] Barker, *Anthony Caro: Quest for the New Sculpture*, 97.

[22] Ibid., 104.

[23] Michael Fried, *Anthony Caro*, (London: Whitechapel Gallery, 1963), n.p.

Caro, by his own admission not an accomplished welder, relied sporadically on these kinds of improvised arrangements until the recruitment of Charlie Hendry as a dedicated studio assistant in 1967.[24] Hendry was previously the factory foreman for the Wembley-based firm Aeromet, who had fabricated elements of Caro's sculpture since 1964. While Hendry's appointment did not put an end to sculptors from St. Martin's working as assistants, it did signal a new phase in Caro's working process. The original arrangement had involved Caro working by himself at first, to place elements and determine in broad terms the overall composition of the sculpture. This initial composition would be held in place by a series of clamps, sawhorses and jigs. Once satisfied, he would then enlist the help of a 'friend' to secure the sculpture together in a more permanent fashion.

By no means could Caro be regarded as the sole beneficiary of this process of collaboration. The reciprocal value of such an arrangement is clearly evidenced in Bolus' *Sculpture Two* (1962), made in the same year as he assisted with the construction of *Early One Morning*, which bears a striking resemblance to his own subsequent piece [Fig.31]. Although lacking either the scale or dynamism of what has frequently been designated as Caro's seminal work, Bolus' piece nonetheless contains two of the key tenets of constructed sculpture as it came to be exemplified by his tutor. The first of these was an additive process produced by the welding together of steel components, and the second was the use of a painted coating that worked to cover the raw metal surface. What this comparison highlights is that there was little to no time separating Caro's experimentation with such techniques and their adoption by St. Martin's students. Bolus for instance began to weld steel sculptures in 1960, the same year as Caro. Visiting scrapyards together in search of suitable parts, Caro and students such as Annesley and Bolus were collectively engaged in the same material enquiry.[25] Furthermore, held in the same venue as Caro's own breakthrough 1963 exhibition, and sharing many of the formal characteristics that prompted its success,

[24] Barker, *Anthony Caro: Quest for the New Sculpture*, 168-169.

[25] Norman Reid, ed., *The Alistair McAlpine Gift* (London: Tate Gallery, 1971), 38.

*New Generation 1965* appeared to reinforce many of the sculptural principles that would come to be closely associated with the school in coming years.[26]

If the label 'New Generation sculpture' acts to conceal an underlying collegiate bias, what then prevents the comfortable attribution of 'St. Martin's sculpture' to this same group of individuals is another issue. This revolves primarily around the kinds of devolved sculptural practice that developed at the school in the wake of the 1965 Whitechapel show. Given the significant contributions made to areas like land art, performance art or photo conceptualism by a subsequent generation of St. Martin's students –including Bruce McLean, Richard Long and John Hilliard– the term St. Martin's sculpture conjures a fractious conflict between those at the school who sought to consolidate sculptural selfhood, and those who sought to liquidate it. Supported by the well documented activities of other teaching staff like John Latham, these later student's opposition came as a reaction to a prevailing Caro-esque model of production that they regarded as increasingly mannered.[27] Unfortunately, what this binarised, Oedipal narrative does is relegate the New Generation sculptors to an epigonal status in a struggle between Caro's work and its historical supersession by a range of other 'dematerialised' practices[28]. What this overlooks is the considerable extent to which Annesley, Bolus, King, Scott, Tucker and Witkin's aesthetic sensibilities also departed from that of Caro's.

What proves most problematic to another label circulating around the time of *New Generation 1965*, that of the 'Caro Generation,'[29] is the 'love/hate' relationship these younger sculptors occupied to those American Modernist critics speaking in

---

[26] In particular, a continued exploration of the precepts of constructed metal sculpture as established by Caro is evident in the work of a later group of St. Martin's sculptors such as Roland Brener, David Evison and Peter Hide, who upon graduating established studios in Stockwell Depot.

[27] Latham's now infamous *Chew and Spit* event, in which he and several students physically ingested pages from *Art and Culture*, would later lead to him losing his teaching position at the school.

[28] Including a wealth of examples drawn from younger St. Martin's sculpture students, including Jan Dibbets, Richard Long, Rolouf Louw, and Bruce McClean, Lucy Lippard's landmark survey of dematerialized practices reflects both the importance of these artist's contribution on an international stage but also the opposition they posed to the conventions of sculpture as outlined by Caro and the New Generation sculptors. See Lucy Lippard, *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object* (London: University of California Press, 1997).

[29] See Robert Hughes, 'Caro Generation,' *Sunday Times*, 10th April (1966).

support of Caro's work, a specific focal point being Clement Greenberg.[30] In September 1963 a group of artists, including Annesley, Scott, King, Tucker, and Witkin had contributed to a fund to pay for Greenberg's plane fare from New York to London, in exchange for direct commentary from him in the form of 'crits' in their studios.[31] Greenberg was for his part guardedly supportive of these other 'young English sculptors,' although keen to assign them supporting roles to Caro, who he saw as the leading 'example.'[32] His most emphatic endorsement of the group came in an interview with Edward Lucie-Smith in 1968:

> I think certain younger Englishmen are doing the best sculpture in the world today –sculpture of originality and character. I'd also mention range, variety of affect. That's what makes for "big" art. Anthony Caro is a major artist –the best sculptor to come up since David Smith… It's Caro, I gather, who set on fire the new English sculptors: King, Tucker, Annesley, Scott, Witkin, Bolus, and maybe still others.[33]

This endorsement did not represent unequivocal approval, but formed more a shortlist from which a further winnowing could occur:

> More than one, more than two important sculptors are going to come from the group –though Witkin has emigrated to this country. I was disappointed with King's piece in the Guggenheim International Exhibition (of sculpture) this fall: it was inflated and declamatory. But every artist is entitled to his bad moments.[34]

By contrast Caro appears in messianic terms, triumphantly marking Britain's entry into the Modernist canon:

> Caro is the Moses of English sculpture– not Moore; Moore's the Abraham maybe, a father, a generator, but not a leader, not even an example. What's more, Caro's a Moses who hasn't just gotten a Pigsah view of the Promised Land; he didn't merely point the way, he has walked into the land of Canaan and spread himself out in it.  If the other new sculptors want to spread themselves out,

---

[30] James Roberts, 'The Right Stuff,' *Frieze*, June-August (2002), 92.

[31] Mellor, *The London Art Scene in the Sixties*, 102.

[32] Clement Greenberg 'Recentness of Sculpture,' in *American sculpture of the Sixties*, ed. Maurice Tuchman (Los Angeles: LA County Museum, 1967), 25.

[33] Edward Lucie-Smith, 'An Interview with Clement Greenberg,' in *Studio International*, Jan (1968): 4.

[34] Ibid. The sculpture by King that Greenberg is referring to here is called *Brake* (1966), a work representative of his more rectilinear work from later in the decade. See Edward Fry, *Guggenheim International 1967* (New York: Guggenheim Museum, 1967), 119.

they'll have to go further and cross over the Jordan –which is what I think Tim Scott is doing.[35]

Given such high-handed pronouncements the question that arose was how it was possible for even favoured sculptors like Scott to develop under such auspices. By the late 1960s several of the group had come to question the relationship between Caro and those critics who spoke for him, feeling that this support narrowed the interpretation of the work itself. Tucker recalled how the connection he felt with his contemporaries like King parted from their former tutor in that 'we both shared an interest in the identity of sculpture, we could not take for granted the nature and existence of sculpture as did Caro, under the influence of Greenberg.'[36]

Writing on the pedagogical models powering the Vocational and Advanced Courses at St. Martin's in the 1950s and 1960s Elena Crippa argues that the boundaries of this struggle between sculptural consolidation and its dissolution are not as clear as they are typically made out to be. Outlining how the performance-led aspects of early work by McLean or Long owed a considerable debt to pedagogical exercises developed by Caro, Tucker and others to encourage students to more thoroughly question the nature of sculpture, Crippa observes that it was this discursive environment that gave birth to the latter position. Crucially, she highlights the particular pressures placed on abstract artworks within this framework, saying:

> As art was becoming increasingly abstract, it expressed more demands on the linguistic abilities of the critic and of the artist discussing his/her work, in the need to make language serve the experience of art. In the Sculpture Department at St. Martin's, the demand on artists' linguistic abilities may have been even greater because they not only needed to bridge the gap between the description and analysis of abstract forms and their possible content or the experience they solicited.[37]

---

[35] Ibid.

[36] William Tucker, 'Beginnings in Sculpture,' in *Collaborating with Caro*, Symposium Pamphlet (London: Central Saint Martins, 2014), 6.

[37] Elena Crippa, *When Art Schools Went Conceptual: The Development of Discursive Pedagogies and Practices in British Art Higher Education in the 1960s*, PhD Thesis (London: University of Birkbeck, 2014), 148-149.

This symbiotic relation between abstraction and its attendant language was highlighted during an exchange that took place as part of a symposium on Caro's work in 1969:

> TUCKER: I think it's unfortunate the way he [Caro] allows himself to be projected by the Greenberg-Fried thing, because I think he's been much more intelligent and thoughtful and personally original.
> ANNESLEY: But he doesn't think he's articulate, and he thinks *they* are.
> TUCKER: I think he's very articulate, when he tries. And his work is far more articulate in a far richer way than it's usually allowed to be.[38]

It is in Tucker's final remark that perhaps the goal of sculptors like himself can be inferred: a kind of sculpture that was allowed to, and capable of, speaking for itself. In other words, this indicates a concept of sculpture sufficiently pure as to be linguistically self-sufficient. By attaching New Generation sculpture to the same teleological arc as later anti-sculptural practices emerging from St. Martin's, what Crippa's interpretation provides is a way to envisage such artworks as striving to operate as discursive entities in their own right. Rather than approaching these kinds of making as opposing categories, the distinction that should instead be drawn is between a later generation who looked outside traditionally accepted sculptural boundaries to expand its language, and an earlier one who sought to tailor their surrounding conditions in such a way as to make sculpture's proposed linguistic self-sufficiency intelligible.

## The Language of Sculpture: Syntax and Relational Assembly

Compiled from a series of lectures delivered at the University of Leeds, and supplemented with a number of additional articles originally published in *Studio International*, Tucker's later book *The Language of Sculpture* analysed the work of a range of 20th century artists including Constantin Brancusi, Marcel Duchamp, Julio Gonzalez, Henri Matisse, Pablo Picasso and David Smith. Of the New Generation sculptors it was Tucker who was most concerned with contributing to a critical

---

[38] David Annesley, Rolouf Louw, Tim Scott, and William Tucker, 'Anthony Caro's Work: A Symposium by Four Sculptors,' 19.

account of the discipline. As Sleeman notes, by the time of the book's publication in 1974 he was garnering at least as much attention for his written output as his own artwork.[39] Alongside a catalogue essay for an Arts Council exhibition he curated, entitled *The Condition of Sculpture*, it represents his most concrete articulations of Tucker's thinking around the topic in the decade following the Whitechapel show.[40]

As suggested by the Tucker's title, these sculptural practices collectively constituted a language of sorts. But on what level would such linguistics be capable of operating? This is somewhat of a vexed issue, as despite himself writing extensively on the subject, Tucker was by 1975 at least, of the opinion that contemporary sculpture was not reliant on critical writing for anything beyond the factual articulation of its most fundamental properties. Sculpture's resistance to interpretation of this kind came from the increasing emphasis sculptors placed upon its intransigent materiality and its obdurate physicality. Sculpture he wrote was 'its own evidence; it needs neither apology nor justification.'[41] To this effect sculpture had evolved into an autonomous language as a result of the avant-garde experimentation addressed in *The Language of Sculpture*, although one that had become homeless as a result of this development. Its homelessness resulted from the removal of earlier ritualistic or architectural functions that sculpture might previously have had laid claim to, freeing the discipline from social responsibilities while raising significant questions as to its alternative role.

Instructive in this respect is Stephen Bann's analysis of early twentieth century abstraction in his essay 'Abstract Art: A Language?'[42] The central problem facing any such claim for linguistic stability Bann finds to reside in the conflicting claim made for the originality of abstract art. As a consensual phenomenon language is inherently

---

[39] Joy Sleeman, 'William Tucker: The Language of a Sculptor' (Leeds: Henry Moore Institute, 1995), 2.

[40] This by no means represents the limits of Tucker's commentary at the time. For a more detailed account of his written output see Sleeman, *The Sculpture of William Tucker*, 184.

[41] William Tucker, *The Condition of Sculpture: A Selection of Sculpture by Younger British and Foreign Artists* (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1975), 6.

[42] Stephen Bann, 'Abstract Art– A Language?' in *Towards a New Art, Essays on the Background to Abstract Art*, ed. Michael Compton (London: Tate Gallery, 1980) 125-145. See also Stephen Bann, 'Language In and About the Work of Art,' *Studio International*, March (1972): 106-11.

at odds with the individualism commonly associated with artistic production, and this is what denies it the ability to be intelligible in this manner. Any vocabulary of visual forms sufficiently stable to be communicable as such would act in direct opposition to the auratic qualities of the artwork, suggesting an orthodoxy anathema to modern notions of artistic production. While acknowledging that there is not sufficient consensus to permit abstraction to function as a stable code, Bann instead identifies 'certain artist's need to foreground the metalinguistic function' of their work, as well as the specific suitability of geometric abstract forms to carry out such a function.[43] Examining the late works of Theo Van Doesberg what Bann highlights is a point where the authorial standards that traditionally mark artistic production are problematised to the extent that a stable pictorial syntax of 'plastic elements' begins to suggest itself.

New Generation sculpture embodies a similarly metalinguistic bias, a desire to make explicit the rules structuring its identity. The decision to treat a number of sculptors as a cohesive group in spite of the many formal aspects that differentiate each individual's practice is based on this same claim: that amongst them there was shared interest in making such structural principles apparent. Key to the claim that sculpture for artists like Tucker represented a self-sufficient system is the further assertion that New Generation sculptures are in part rhetorical entities: insofar as a substantial portion of its address is not to a viewer, nor the specificity of any site, but rather to other sculptures within that system. While this rhetorical quality shares much in common with a Modernist concept of reflexivity, a distinguishing factor it is the way in which modern materials were employed in these sculptures to conjure a sense of enclosure or privacy, as opposed to the open linearity advocated by Greenberg. This is a crucial factor; as it will be demonstrated that it is primarily the artificial nature of colour and the synthetic materials employed New Generation sculptors that proved most difficult to account for in Greenbergian terms.

Nor can this artificiality be regarded as solely a capitulation to pictorial values derived from abstract painting, in spite of the numerous contextual links that present

---

[43] Ibid., 130.

themselves to support such an interpretation. Synthetic materials and non-associative colour served to advance the elementary nature of this vocabulary. This related in turn to what, prior to the repurposing and subsequent canonisation of the phrase towards the end of 1960s, were frequently described as the 'conceptual' aspects of New Generation sculpture: forms so apparently free of human touch that that it was as if they had seemingly been willed into existence. The diminished tactility of synthetic materials, their smoothness or weightlessness, worked to reinforce the impression of work that was arranged as much by the mind as the body. For Tucker, when making a work:

> The stages are as mental as they are physical. If you decide for instance to cut a shape in half, the decision to cut is the important thing, not the actual marks the saw makes.[44]

It was a privileging of this mental state of conception that opened this form of sculptural arrangement up to comparisons with other forms of language. Related to this is a term that appears in the earliest of Michael Fried's texts on Caro's sculpture: 'syntax.' The analogy Fried begins his analysis with is that of a child overhearing a conversation amongst a group of adults. Although not being completely conversant with what is being said, the child is still able to understand and learn from this conversation to some degree. This form of engagement Fried argues is both abstract and gestural, and similar in some respects to a viewer's experience of one of Caro's pieces.[45] The parts that make up one of these sculptures are abstract in that they have a limited meaning if apprehended in isolation. Divested of their original functionality –for instance the original role such reclaimed metal played in reinforcing architectural structures, as the constituent parts of industrial machinery etc.– Fried's viewer can only apprehend the factual materiality of such fragments in abstract terms. Furthermore, such an experience is only partly intelligible to the viewer as they are only aware of Caro's gestures, the subjective combination of the abstract parts that constitute his syntax, at one remove. The viewer is effectively charged with apprehending two distinct things at once. Firstly, there are the feats of engineering

---

[44] Lynton, 'Latest Developments in British Sculpture,' 211.
[45] Fried, *Anthony Caro, Sculpture 1960-63*, n.p.

that secure the parts together and allow the sculpture to stand upright, while secondly there are the 'optical' characteristics that seek to defy such a pragmatic reading.

Within the field of linguistics proper the term syntax denotes the study of the rules governing linguistic formation. A sentence for instance is a specific, syntactical formation of a limited number of words, drawn from all of those available to the language in which it is formed (a lexicon) and formed in accordance with a sequence of established conditions governing their arrangement (a grammar). How then could these conditions be seen as operating in relation to Caro's work, is there a way in which one of his sculptures could be interpreted as functioning like a sentence? To a certain extent such an analogy would be possible, insofar as the sculptures are largely formed from a collection of pre-existing elements gathered together, arranged in a particular order, and finally presented in a fixed configuration. This is supported by a method of construction, a combination of welding and bolting that allows each element to appear simultaneously as an isolated component, as well as part of a complex assemblage. This quality of simultaneous separateness and connectedness is what makes the kind of additive abstract sculpture practiced by Caro and others susceptible to being interpreted as syntactical in nature, and correspondingly semantic in appearance. Implicit in this method of additive construction, something it seems to share with spoken language, is the impression of contingency that it bestows on each individual part. Just as words remain un-depleted and endlessly reusable within a spoken language, the impression given by the placement of any one component in a sculpture of this kind does not appear to exhaust its potential for re-deployment elsewhere.[46]

To this extent Fried's dual categories of abstraction and gesture can be understood as complementary to a pair of terms that lie at the core of a Sausurrean model of linguistics: that of 'langue' and 'parole.' Here *langue* corresponds to the lexical aspects of language, a body of conventionally agreed forms that determines its intelligibility. *Parole* corresponds to speech, individual actions drawing from this

---

[46] This is not to say that these elements were not adapted, or otherwise tailored to fit compositional needs. It is more that they did not fully relinquish the appearance of pre-existing, or found material.

reserve, but capable of fashioning specific formulations from this generic material. Central to Saussure's employment of these two terms was the aim of accounting for the way in which languages were capable of continual evolution, yet remaining intelligible to those who employed them in spite of such change. The grounds for such evolution he speculated could only take place through *parole*, which fed back into and shaped *langue* in turn.[47] Also crucial to the inter-relation of *langue* and *parole* was the relational properties of each component within langue, what Saussure describes as the 'arbitrary' nature of the linguistic sign. This arbitrariness arises from a profound separation that he saw as existing between the signifier and the signified. According to Saussure a signifier does not point directly to what it signifies. Rather it functions indirectly, pointing to the near infinite plethora of things that it does not. The arbitrary nature of the signifier is for this reason a differential or negative one as:

> In language, as in any semiological system, whatever distinguishes one sign from the others constitutes it. Difference makes character just as it makes value and the unit.[48]

What links the arbitrary nature of *langue* to what Fried regards as the 'abstractness' of the metal components that make up a Caro sculpture is their differential characteristic. It is not so much its own material properties that each part signifies as their 'negative' relation to the other parts. For instance, it is not so much that a rolled steel joist signifies its own functional qualities as a rolled steel joist, more that it does not signify other stock available from the metal yard: for example a piece of box section, round tube, channel, sheet and so on. It is the apparent 'plasticity' of these elements that imbues them with semantic qualities. These were qualities that, Robertson observed, had afforded sculptors like Caro the opportunity to make 'I beams and the refuse sheets, mesh, debris and found shapes from steel foundries and junk yards assume an edgy, alert didacticism that's sometimes, perhaps, nearer to

---

[47] 'Speaking is what causes language to evolve: impressions gathered from listening to others modify our linguistic habits. Language and speaking are then interdependent; the former is both the instrument and product of the latter. But their interdependence does not prevent them from being two absolutely distinct things.' Ferdinand de Saussure, *The Course in General Linguistics* (New York McGraw-Hill, 1959), 19.

[48] Ibid., 121.

words than the silent vocabulary of sculpture.'[49]

If such a connection can be made between the abstractness of Caro's metal components and *langue*, can a similar relation then be traced between his gestures and *parole*? Fried saw the syntax of the work, the 'internal relations of the sculpture alone' as representing the gestural assemblage of abstract parts.[50] In this respect *parole* is a useful category with which to interpret Modernist claims for the superiority of Caro's work to that of others employing similar methods of production –the growing ubiquity of brightly coloured, constructed metal sculpture that exploded around and about him in the 1960s– beyond arguments that rely on his early adoption of such a technique. [51] Inherent in Fried's qualitative reading of Caro's sculptures is a sophisticated compositional handling that he considered made them exemplary, and which elevated them beyond those other sculptors exploring similar issues. And it was by extension this greater sophistication that granted Caro's work entry into the narrow historical lineage of Modernist sculpture, an honour that Greenberg and Fried had until this point only been granted to a handful of artists such as Picasso and David Smith.

What the overlaying of these formalist and semiological terminologies provides is a method with which to prise apart that which in Fried's advocacy of Caro's sculpture represents a diachronic claim for their novelty (abstraction) from a synchronic claim for their sophistication (gesture). The speech act, a subject's engagement with an existing body of meaning is, using Saussure's terms at least, incapable of exceeding its own synchronic nature.[52] It does not constitute the creation of a new language *per se*, just an original articulation made within an existing one.

---

[49] Bryan Robertson 'Notes on British Sculpture 1952-1977', in *A Silver Jubilee Exhibition of Contemporary British Sculpture* (Greater London Council, 1977), n.p.

[50] A further comparison can be drawn between what Morris Halle and Roman Jakobson describes in spoken language as separating the most basic characteristics of 'distinctive features' from their complex assembly at a higher, 'semantic level.' See Morris Halle and Roman Jakobson, *The Fundamentals of Language* (New York: Mouton, 1956), 14.

[51] For example, to support this argument one could point to the painted steel sculptures by Brian Wall that appear to marginally predate Caro's adoption of welding as a technique. See Chris Stephens, *Brian Wall* (London: Momentum Books, 2006).

[52] 'Speaking is thus not a collective instrument; its manifestations are individual and momentary.' De Saussure, *The Course in General Linguistics*, 19.

Only in this indirect manner is it in turn capable of determining the consensual conditions of language as a whole. In this way it could be furthermore said that the diachronic properties that made Caro's sculptures novel can also be regarded as 'denotative' and generic: their freedom from the pedestal, the employment of new materials and techniques such as steel and welding; while the synchronic properties that made them sophisticated could regarded as 'connotative' and specific: gestural qualities particular to the arrangement of components in each individual sculpture.[53]

If denotative factors could be understood as the bare minimum required to secure a sculpture advanced status within any given historical period, then connotative values, those more elusive, emotive qualities that each work individually evokes are then what sustained it in the present. And it is here that a paradoxical aspect of Modernist approach to sculpture lies; it was not simply an issue of arriving at a solution to the problem first, it also needed to repel imitation in the present as well. For Fried it was not simply the fact that a Caro sculpture contained syntax, it was because it contained a superior kind of syntax to that employed by others. As Harrison put it this had to do with compositional arrangements of discrete forms 'bound together by some sense of rightness of the total configuration –though it was far from clear how this rightness was to be defined.'[54]

It was the nuanced manner with which Caro approached his compositions that made him such a valuable asset to those critics like Fried who sought to denounce a literalist sensibility underpinning minimalist sculpture.[55] A useful demonstration of how Caro's work differs from a literalist position in syntactical terms, one in keeping with the present linguistic analogy, can be found in the poetry that the American sculptor Carl Andre was producing contemporaneously with Caro's development of constructed metal sculpture. The following piece composed by Andre in November 1962, and published as part of a dialogue with Hollis Frampton, clearly illustrates the

---

[53] For an extended description of the denotative and connotative properties of language see Roland Barthes, *Elements of Semiology*, trans. Annette Lavers and Colin Smith (New York: Hill and Wang, 1973), 89-94.
[54] Charles Harrison, 'Sculpture's Recent Past,' in *Since 1950: Art and its Criticism* (London: Yale University Press, 2009), 31.
[55] Caro is for example the only British artist to be mentioned by Fried in 'Art and Objecthood.'

difference of approach:

> roseroseroseroserose
> roseroseroseroserose
> roseroseroseroserose
> roseroseroseroserose
> roseroseroseroserose
> roseroseroseroserose
> roseroseroseroserose
> roseroseroseroserose.[56]

Reducing compositional agency to a bare minimum this text predicts the first single layer, floor bound sculptures Andre was to make from 1966 onwards, in which individual sculptural components were rendered systematically uniform. In works like *Field* (1966) these simpler arrangements remain composed of distinct parts, and as such still constitute a syntactical framework much like Caro's [Fig.32]. What differentiates the two is that in Andre's work relative dynamism has been replaced by reductive seriality. To those like Stella, Andre's close friend, such a difference also carried with it a geographical signification. Speaking to Bruce Glaser in 1964 Stella denounced relational composition as a retrograde European value that he saw advanced American art as trying to move beyond.[57] By comparison it was the dynamism of Caro's more subjective form of syntax that Fried saw as holding the durational aspects of abstract sculpture in abeyance.[58]

## Semantics: Primary Structures 1966.

Similar traits could be attributed to New Generation sculpture, which also

---

[56] Carl Andre and Hollis Frampton, *Twelve Dialogues* (Halifax NS: Nova Scotia School of Art ad Design, 1980), 38.

[57] Bruce Glaser, 'Questions to Stella and Judd,' in *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Gregory Battcock, 149. Stella's comments were made against European painting specifically, but seriality and the limitation of 'compositional effects' were issues that applied equally to the three kinds of dimensional objects considered advanced by Judd also.

[58] As outlined in the previous chapter, a key factor determining the quality of an artwork for Fried was its perceived relationship to time. His position to the subject is encapsulated in the two sentences that famously conclude 'Art and Objecthood': 'We are all literalists most or all of our lives. Presentness is grace.' In this respect sculpture needed to combat its own durational properties no less than painting. See Fried, *Art and Objecthood*, 169.

presented itself simultaneously as constituent, relational parts, and as a constructed, syntactical whole. What degree of traction the work of these younger sculptors achieved with Americans like Greenberg and Fried likewise hinged on the abstract, and arguably arbitrary, nature of its parts, as well as the gestural nature of their assembly. Presaged by terms like opticality –seen as favourable, used to indicate a cerebral freedom from corporeality– and the pictorial –often used to pejoratively indicate an unresolved debt to two-dimensional media– the terminology used by Modernist critics to address New Generation sculpture duplicate that which was also applied to Caro's work. The compositional strategies these younger sculptors employed also sat in stark contrast with the severity of Minimalist art that had developed more or less contemporaneously with their own in the United States. Nowhere was this difference made more apparent than during the exhibition *Primary Structures: Younger American and British Sculpture*, which opened at New York's Jewish Museum in April 1966 [Fig.33]. Featuring seven of the nine artists included in *New Generation 1965*, British and American sculptors were presented by the exhibition curator Kynaston McShine as jointly engaged in the furthering a dramatic new tendency taking shape on either side of the Atlantic, another sign of the enthusiasm with which the Whitechapel show had been greeted internationally.[59]

Further testifying to the significant visibility of British abstract sculpture in the United States around this time were the number of exhibitions New Generation sculptors held in commercial galleries in New York. This spate of shows again followed Caro's example, coming immediately on the heels of his first solo presentation with Andre Emmerich in December 1964. Tucker first exhibited in America with the Richard Feigen Gallery in December 1965. Both King and Witkin's first New York solo exhibitions coincided directly their inclusion in *Primary Structures,* King with Richard Feigen and Witkin with the Robert Elkon Gallery. Alongside Riley, King and Tucker were several of the British artists Feigen shared with the Rowan Gallery in London, a co-operative venture that had begun with the dealer's

---

[59] The New Generation sculptors included were Annesley, Bolus, King, Scott, Tucker, Woodham and Witkin. Among the 43 artists showing, *Primary Structures* also featured sculptures by Caro, as well as David Hall, Peter Phillips, Gerald Laing and Peter Pinchback. See Kynaston McShine *Primary Structures: Younger American and British Sculptors* (New York: The Jewish Museum, 1966).

trip to London in 1965.[60] A solo exhibition by Annesley also opened at Poindexter in 1966, along with a presentation of sculptures by Bolus at Kornblee. Scott's inauguration into the American commercial network followed a little later, at Lawrence Rubin's New York branch in 1970. This period of activity took place very soon after the first commercial exposure for these artists' work in Britain. Annesley's first New York solo exhibition happened in the same year as his first solo exhibition at the Waddington Gallery in London.

Much like the Whitechapel Art Gallery exhibition the year before, McShine's selection also presented abstraction as the dominant tendency driving 1960s sculpture. But *Primary Structures* served to demonstrate a growing disparity between artists working with anti-compositional strategies such as seriality and those whose work demonstrated a 'relational' approach to sculptural form.[61] Seen from an American perspective like Mel Bochner's, whose review of the exhibition appeared in *Arts* in June 1966, relational sculpture served as a 'dilutant' to a more serious tendency evidenced in the minimal objects presented by Andre, Judd or Morris. Against the harder line Bochner saw as being taken by these artists, the relational compositions featured in *Primary Structures* seemed overly mannered, the retention of 'outmoded' forms.[62]

What the curatorial rationale driving *Primary Structures* rendered in stark relief was a division forming between two 'camps' of abstract art at this time. On one side there were those who could be designated as Modernists, and on the other factions like the Minimalists. While Modernists accused their opponents of wilfully pursuing a criteria of extremity or the 'far out,'[63] their opponents argued that the critical pronouncements of the former were hopelessly predicated on antiquated notions of

---

[60] Simon Faulkner, *A Cultural Economy of British Art: 1958-1966*, PhD Thesis (Manchester University, 1998), 157.

[61] Gathering the British contingent for the exhibition together with artists from the Park Place Gallery like Peter Forakis, Robert Grosvenor and Forrest Myers, Meyer for example identifies New Generation Sculpture as belonging to this second, relational category. Meyer, *Minimal Art: Art and Polemics in the 1960s*, 30.

[62] In addition to the New Generation sculptors Bochner was also referring to Americans associated with the Park Place Gallery. Mel Bochner 'Primary Structures: A Declaration of a New Attitude as Revealed by an Important Current Exhibition,' *Arts*, No.40, June (1966): 32.

[63] Greenberg, 'Recentness of Sculpture,' 25.

'quality' that were impossible to consensually verify.[64] If syntax can be understood as the discursive interplay of a sculpture's internal parts, this is something that the Minimalist artwork actively suppressed. It is not that such an object lacks syntax, but rather that it acts to limit its expressive range by means of seriality and reduction. Also worth noting, as Judd did, is that such strategies drew greater attention to the 'obdurate' materiality of the work itself, while acting to limit the anthropomorphic readings to which three-dimensional objects all too easily fell prey.[65] A diminished compositional agency was likewise recognised by Morris as constituting a rejection of the sensual values that existed in the 'compressed internal arrangements' of more traditional forms of sculpture and other 'imagistic' media.[66]

By contrast the kind of dynamic arrangements employed by New Generation sculptors appear to have been arrived at in a more subjective manner. Assembled from parts of varying sizes and shapes, these revel in a sense of perceptual play suppressed by the serialised modularity of works by Andre or Judd. Courting a spatial ambiguity denounced by critics such as Judd, these arrangements instead sought to achieve a lyrical quality through precarious forms of balance and a sense of disembodied weightlessness. Contrary to the kind of compositional strategy embodied in Minimalist artworks, one that sought to preclude further discussion, the purpose here was to actively generate it. This is a critical difference, one that distinguishes an allusive syntax favoured by New Generation sculptors from a suppressive syntax adopted by their Minimalist counterparts.

A 'constructed method' was adopted by the majority of the New Generation sculptors as the principal means with which such an allusive syntax could be facilitated. The resulting compositions were complex, often making use of discrete components and arrangements that stressed the contingency of their placement. Quite unlike Minimalist artworks these arrangements were heavily predicated on ideas of choice

---

[64] See Bruce Boice 'The Quality Problem,' *Artforum*, October (1972): 68-70; 'After the Quality Problem,' *Artforum*, February (1973): 73-75. For an example of the position Boice was repudiating see Walter Darby Bannard, 'Quality, Style and Olitski,' *Artforum*, October (1972): 64-67.
[65] Judd, *Donald Judd, Complete Writings*, 187.
[66] Robert Morris 'Notes on Sculpture II,' in *Continuous Project Altered Daily: The Writings of Robert Morris* (1993) 17.

and subjectivity, sharing more in common with a trail blazed in American sculpture by David Smith. If a literalist sensibility worked to suppress or neutralise a discourse surrounding compositional decision-making, then this work was tailored to explicitly provoke it.

Such discussions necessarily addressed individual sculptures as opposed to all of the works that constituted an individual's overall practice, as it was only at this level that an assessment of the connotative properties of a work was considered possible. While returning to the same motif, or utilising the same method of construction in a number of sculptures, what these sculptors in turn looked to resist was the use of a serial methodology. As Coplans detailed in his 1968 essay 'Serial Imagery: A Definition,' seriality was employed as a device to undermine with the auratic signification of an original and notions of a 'masterpiece concept' that accompanied it. What replaced this was a schematic overview of a body of work as a whole, a self-reinforcing 'macro-structure' visible in every single iteration of a series.[67] As such the pre-conditions suggested by seriality were anathema to the conditions enshrined in the discursive atmosphere of the St. Martin's Sculpture Department, one that placed a great stake on the implied re-arrangeability of each artwork.

By electing to explore such complex internal relations within individual pieces these artists were by extension continuing to explore the expressive capabilities of sculpture at a time when such an agenda was being actively discouraged elsewhere. In the eyes of both those American and British artists who sought to dissolve disciplinary boundaries and replace both sculpture and painting with a new class of object, such activity appeared to be nebulous connoisseurship. Much of the early work of Bruce McLean, a St. Martin's sculpture student between 1963-66, occupied itself with satirically debunking such departmental discussions. These events he felt to avoid 'every broader issue,' being occasions where 'twelve adult men with pipes would walk for hours around sculpture and mumble.'[68] Epitomising such seditious critique was his

---

[67] John Coplans, 'Serial Imagery: Definition,' in *Provocations, Writings by John Coplans*, ed. Stuart Morgan (London Projects, 1996), 77-98.
[68] Nena Dimitrijevic, *Bruce McLean* (London: Whitechapel Gallery, 1981), 7.

piece *Found Steel Girder and Scrap Metal Sculpture* (1968), a photograph of detritus arranged on the street in a parody of the compositions typically subjected to sustained interrogation by his New Generation tutors [Fig.34]. To McLean and a number of his other classmates, the kinds of sculpture seemingly better suited to these pedagogical exercises had become so orthodox as to be considered linguistically stable.

Writing in 1969, another former St. Martin's sculpture student Roland Brener, although less critical of the situation evolving at the school than McLean, reinforced this opinion when he spoke of a 'rhetoric' that had come to increasingly dominate the work of the New Generation sculptors teaching at the school. This in Brener's mind had arisen from an increased refinement of process, one that concealed a dogged refusal to acknowledge the 'environmental' prompts suggested by the diminished tactility of these sculptures:

> In the [Whitechapel] exhibition of 1965 the salient common factor was the apparent emancipation from traditional conceptual inhibitions. That exhibition resulted widespread recognition and acceptance for those sculptors and their subsequent work has suffered as a result. They have for the most part, lapsed into a form of sculptural rhetoric, but perhaps it is reasonable for the artist to make one bold statement which he then consolidates and refines until it ceases to elicit a positive response…
> The (theoretical) concern with "realness" and "openness," the attempt to free sculpture from a descriptive function and associative connotations fail if the work relies for its success on the specialized environment made for it. The contrived social and environmental situation in which it works best is its own contradiction.[69]

Within this circle of sculptors an expansion of sculptural methods was permitted only to the extent that it supported a more thorough definition of sculptural identity, or to use a popular maxim what was 'proper to sculpture.'[70] Much in keeping with Fried's treatment of Caro, these discussions could be said to largely revolve around notions of an artwork's compositional sophistication as opposed to its radically unified appearance. If pressed to identify the point at which New Generation sculpture is

---

[69] Roland Brener, 'The Concerns of Emerging Sculptors,' *Studio International*, January (1969): 25.
[70] A term frequently used in the Sculpture department at St. Martin's. See Alan Gouk, 'Proper to Sculpture,' *Artscribe*, No.25 October 1980, 12-24.

most indebted to the ideological apparatus of American Modernism it would also be here, on such qualitative terms.


## Synthetic Skins: Coloured Sculpture and Modernist Criticism

What this grouping on the basis of gestural syntax conceals however are the number of ways with which these younger sculptor's work departed from that of Caro's, both in terms of the role assigned to colour and their retention of closed volume, organic forms. One of the clearest signs of this departure involved the use of polychromatic surfaces, and several contrasting materials within one sculpture. While this discussion extends to include artificial materials like fibreglass or acrylic, its roots can be traced to metal sculpture, and the means by which a painted coating served as a kind of overlaid 'skin.' Polychromatic sculpture was a particularly contested issue in Modernist circles. Caro's own engagement with the issue was more tentative than that of his students. The few works he made that sported more than one colour were almost uniformly dismissed by the critical circle from which he gained his primary support. In 1965 Greenberg expressed his concerns about sculpture coated in even a single colour, describing its appearance in Caro's work as a 'secondary property':

> I know of no piece of his, not even an unsuccessful one, that does not transcend its colour, or whose *specific* colour or combination of colours does not does not distract from the quality of the whole (especially the case when there is more than one colour). In every case I have the impression that the colour is aesthetically (as well as literally) provisional –that it can be changed at will without decisively affecting quality.[71]

Fried was similarly ambivalent about Caro's decision to paint his sculptures, seeing it as something 'that does not come easily to him' but 'is the natural concomitant of his aspirations towards openness and weightlessness.'[72] While recognising the conditions of weightless opticality that a brightly painted sculpture produced, colour nonetheless assumes a similarly secondary status in Fried's texts on Caro, being evident in the pronouncement 'everything in Caro's art that is worth

---

[71] Clement Greenberg, 'Anthony Caro,' *Studio International*, September (1967): 117.
[72] Fried, *Anthony Caro: Sculpture 1960-63*, n.p.

looking at –except the colour– is in its syntax.'[73] While not dismissing it outright what this does demonstrate is Fried's unwillingness to associate the subjective decisions underpinning Caro's choice of colour for a completed form with those underpinning the arrangement of the sculptural components that preceded it. By not forming part of Caro's syntax in Fried's description, colour lay outwith his 'gestures' proper. As such colour was only able to augment a sculpture's existing optical characteristics as opposed to producing them. In both Greenberg and Fried's opinions, the process of painting a sculpture was only capable of contributing to its denotative radicality, in other words its abstractness, but not to the connotative sophistication represented by its gestures. This ontological separation of colour and form typifies a Modernist treatment of sculptural hierarchy in general. Here the founding inability of colour to integrate itself directly into the process of construction leads to it being considered a subordinate or extraneous factor. In turn, this logic leads to a paradoxical situation in which the decision to paint a sculpture can be justified, but not the choice of colour itself.

This ontological division was further problematised in those instances where more than one colour was employed to emphasise or delineate certain elements of the sculpture. In a work by Bolus such as *Sculpture Four* (1965), changes in colour correspond directly to individual components used in the construction of the work, increasing the sense of their syntactic separateness.[74]. This strategy was however characterised by some Modernist commentators as a retrospective attempt to salvage sculptural arrangements that otherwise would have proved unsuccessful. In a later catalogue essay for Caro's retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, written at a point where Caro had ceased to paint his sculptures with anything other than a clear varnish, this is the position that the curator William Rubin takes to the issue. Singling out *Month of May* (1963), a sculpture that possibly represents Caro's most ambitious use of multiple colours [Fig.35], Rubin sees the decision to polychrome a piece after assembly in order 'to open it up more,' and 'discomfort' the

---

[73] Ibid., n.p.
[74] According to Annesley, Bolus was supposedly the first of the New Generation sculptors to experiment with polychrome finishes.

composition, as also acting to 'render a coherent reading of the already complex configuration exceedingly difficult.'[75] The implication is of a subsequent attempt to rectify concerns that proved irreconcilable within the primary activity of construction. Once again it is the perceived lack of integration between the processes of construction and painting that indicates how deep-seated the misgivings to coloured sculpture were from a Modernist perspective.

What these examples demonstrate is how polychromy exacerbated a disjunction between colour and shape also incipient in monochromy. It proposed a second relational system, one that operated seemingly at odds with an initial constructed one. How 'discomforting' its effect was to those like Rubin revolved around how this subsequent relational system was in no way beholden to the practical factors presiding over the first. By the time Rubin's comments were made Greenberg had become embroiled in a public dispute over his decision, as executor of the estate of David Smith, to post-humously strip a number of these sculptures of their painted surface.[76] The argument Greenberg presented for his alterations was that the white paint in which these works were coated was not a final layer but a primer onto which Smith would have placed another colour. Others however have presented Greenberg's dislike for painted sculpture on the grounds that it suggested a potential point of ingress for mass-cultural values into the domain of high art. As Sarah Hamill has pointed out:

> Excessive, textured, unnecessary– the language of Greenberg's 1960s critique of colour alludes to kitsch as its unspoken term. Paint was an unnecessary detour on the road to opticality.[77]

It was at this point that Greenberg recognised the threat of kitsch entering into the hermetic discourse he had worked to cultivate, an ornamentality that was bound up in the optical benefits of painting sculptures. And if monochromy ran the risk of conferring upon a sculpture the appearance of needless ornamentality, then the polychromy routinely employed by New Generation sculptors actively courted it.

---

[75] William Rubin, *Anthony Caro* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1975), 56.
[76] See Rosalind Krauss, 'Changing the Work of David Smith,' *Art in America*, September–October (1974): 30–33.
[77] Sarah Hamill, 'Polychrome in the Sixties: David Smith and Anthony Caro,' in *Anglo American Exchange in Postwar Sculpture, 1945-1975*, ed. Rebecca Peabody (Los Angeles: Getty Institute), 96.

Reflecting on these sculptures Barbara Reise concluded that 'the function of colour was neither incidental, nor supplementary,' but rather 'in a most surprising way it has become a vital and overwhelming aspect of their work.'[78]

Greenberg's vision of an opticality that could be achieved without recourse to colour was directly at odds with the interests of the New Generation sculptors in the early to mid 1960s. These practitioners saw a painted coating as an important means with which to augment their work, and took little heed of the ontological issues that concerned critical commentators. Likewise, in opposition to a Modernist reading that supported the use of such a coating to render a sculpture more optically unified, but was unable to offer comment on the merits of the colour itself, for these sculptors the precise matching of hue to form was imperative in securing the correct appearance of a work. King for one spoke of the need to alter the colour of a sculpture anything up to ten times before finding it satisfactorily linked to the concept he was pursuing with its shape.[79] Unlike in Greenberg's description of Caro work, where the colour could be 'changed at will without decisively affecting quality,' King's system of production placed as strong an emphasis on the chromatic qualities of a sculpture as it did on its form.[80]

The primary contribution colour was seen to make was to the emotive capabilities of a sculpture. Scott wrote that colour was 'an extension of the expressive power of space and volume,' seeing it along with sculpture's direct placement onto the floor as 'a principal area of innovation.'[81] Given this disregard for the ontological problems presented by applied colour, polychromy simply offered him even greater scope for such forms of expression:

> For example if one paints two identical shapes two different colours, they are going to have different qualities. It can even suggest structural differences, i.e.

---

[78] Barbara Reise, 'Colour in Sculpture,' *Quadrum*, No.18 (1965): 71.
[79] Phillip King, *Phillip King, Sculpture* (Paris: Galerie Lambert, 1968), n.p.
[80] Irrespective of Greenberg's opinions, when painting sculptures Caro remained very concerned about the effect colour had upon the finished work, and often took advice from his wife, the painter Sheila Girling. See Barker, *Anthony Caro: The Quest for New Sculpture*, 95.
[81] David Annesley, Phillip King, Tim Scott, and William Turnbull, 'Colour in Sculpture,' *Studio International*, January (1969): 22.

one form would seem lighter than the other.[82]

Witkin echoed this opinion that painting a sculpture could help to clarify aspects of a work's overall arrangement. In the catalogue statement accompanying his work in *Primary Structures* he stated 'colour is used to balance the relative weights of the units and to emphasise the rhythmic structure of the work.'[83]

King also saw applied colour as a means to alter the apparent mass of an object, due to how 'colour and shape instead of material quality take over the task of deciding what weight a part might have.' The painting of sculpture functioned for him as a process of disembodiment:

> More recently colour's role in relationship to light and space, seems more dominant. In its final role colour seems to become the escape window through which matter or rather stuff is energized and seemingly reborn with light.[84]

Sculpture's movement from the tactile to the optical represented for King a process of energisation, an escape window through which form could become detached from its corporeal restraints. Far from being a secondary property to be viewed with suspicion, it was instead regarded a liberating innovation, a strategy that acted not only to abrogate the impression of a sculpture's weight, but that conferred upon it an added lyricism. This position placed King not only in opposition to the principles espoused by Greenberg, but also an earlier 'truth to materials' credo that had dominated sculpture in Britain until this point.

Equally important in this regard is the effect that applied colour had on the internal solidity of a sculpture, particularly those sculptures where a coating concealed larger volumes. In some circumstances it was perceived to act as a skin or epidermal layer placed over a hollow framework. In others it was seen to produce the illusion of a uniform internal consistency: a shape that if cut into would appear to be made of the same material throughout. Choosing to leave this open to interpretation, Scott noted

---

[82] Bryan Robertson, *Tim Scott: Sculpture 1961-67* (London: Whitechapel Gallery, 1967), 6.

[83] Witkin quoted in McShine, *Primary Structures: Newer American and British Sculpture*, n.p.

[84] King, *Phillip King, Sculpture*, n.p.

that it is this uncertainty that distanced coloured sculpture from a truth to materials aesthetic enshrined by earlier British sculptors. 'A dominant assumption of sculpture of the past,' he stated, relied upon a volume:

> Constant throughout its mass. That is to say of material as a complete expression of constant section. With the exteriorisation of mass by surface expression through colour, definition by section immediately becomes of an ambiguous nature; thus extending volumetric space INTO as well as AROUND the work.[85]

While remaining self-contained objects, what the use of bold colour combined with smooth, reflective surfaces helped to produce was a less distinct boundary or edge between the closed volumes of these sculptures and their nearby environment, a characteristic that echoes the material energisation envisaged by King.

Of the New Generation sculptors Annesley was amongst those most committed to the exploration of colour as an expressive element in its own right. Enrolling initially as a painter at St. Martin's in 1958, his move into the sculpture department shortly afterwards had been motivated by the rigour of the discourse that he saw evolving there. After exhibiting a series of sculptures at the Grabowski Gallery in 1962, Annesley developed a process of working ¼ inch steel plate into volumetric shapes that he continued to explore until the late 1960s. While his earliest metal sculptures were either finished with lacquer, or painted black so as to circumnavigate the issue, the later works became ambitiously polychromatic, often using more than one colour upon the same metal part. Initially constructed from a series of bolted together components that expanded horizontally, snaking their way across the floor, in the mid to later part of the decade these gave way to a series of industrially fabricated works that were more compositionally self-contained.[86]

Often formed from geometric elements such as circles, triangle and squares, arranged one inside the other, Annesley's sculptures were amongst the most staunchly

---

[85] David Annesley, Phillip King, Tim Scott, and William Turnbull, 'Colour in Sculpture, 22.
[86] These sculptures were fabricated using a powered rolling machine by Aeromet, the same Wembley-based firm that produced parts for Caro's sculptures. Bulgin, *Situation and New Generation*, 382.

frontal produced by any of the New Generation sculptors. Their playful lightness subscribed to the tenets of opticality that defined this brand of sculpture as a whole; but it was this frontality that suggested a connection to pictorial values derived from painting. Such is the thinness of the material employed that it is possible to interpret each of these elements as lateral extrusions of two-dimensional forms, drawn shapes given the most basic volumetric rigidity. The cursive linearity visible in a work like *Circle* (1966) elicits a similar spatial ambiguity as that referred to by Scott [Fig.36]. However, whereas the primary goal of Scott's work could be seen to render closed volume as an ambiguous space, by appearing so insubstantial and frontal, Annesley's sculptures tempt interpretation as freestanding diagrams.

Subsequent to Caro's trip to Bennington, Vermont upon an invitation to teach at the college in 1963, a number of his former students had travelled there in the following years.[87] Pivotal to Annesley's own month long visit to Bennington in 1966 was the opportunity it afforded to spend some time with Noland, a painter whom he held in high regard, at his nearby studio in South Shaftsbury.[88] Central to these discussions was Noland's use of colour. Displaying a striking similarity to the sculptures Annesley began to make around the time of his visit are the series of 'target' and 'cat-eye' paintings Noland produced in the early 1960s, a number of which had formed part of the inaugural exhibition at the Kasmin Gallery in April 1963 [Fig.37].

In Noland's paintings a recurring format was used to accommodate a 'non-compositional' treatment of colour, giving it a stable framework onto, or against which to act. Certain works were pale and made use of a few closely keyed, or 'laid back' colours.[89] Others selectively employed dissonant tones in order to more dramatically effect the 'push and pull' of optical space as enshrined in Greenberg's description of Modernist Painting. In either case the 'centred images,' the less culturally oriented term by which Noland later wished his targets to be known, 'provided a convenient

---

[87] King taught at Bennington College for a semester in 1964, while Witkin permanently relocated in 1965. Peter Stroud, a painter who had participated in *Situation*, also worked there.
[88] Reid, ed., *The Alistair McAlpine Gift*, 42.
[89] Diane Waldman, *Kenneth Noland: A Retrospective* (New York: Guggenheim Museum, 1977), 25.

framework for relations of colour unencumbered by convention.'[90] These layouts that carried with them a degree of anonymity. Noland's own term for this kind of compositional configuration was 'a self-cancelling structure,' saying:

> With structural consideration eliminated I could concentrate on colour. I wanted more freedom to exercise the arbitrariness of colour. [91]

It is along similar lines that Annesley's extruded forms can be read: as neutral surfaces onto which colour can be more arbitrarily applied. By 1968 he had begun to have a number of his sculptures fabricated in editions of three, and rather than use the same colours for each version of the edition, he would paint each one differently.

Remarking upon Annesley's sculptures Seymour draws comparison to Noland, but also Josef Albers, whose *Homage to the Square* paintings of 1950 onwards had repeatedly utilised the same format to test the relational effects of colour.[92] At one time a teacher of Noland's –the two having encountered one another at Black Mountain College, North Carolina in 1947– Albers' reputation as a colourist was cemented internationally by the publication of his 1963 book *Interaction of Colour*. Based around a curriculum introduced initially at Black Mountain, then developed at Yale from 1950 onwards, this study aimed to articulate a 'discrepancy' in the visual perception of colour that existed 'between physical fact and psychic effect.'[93] The articulation of this discrepancy lay in the systematic handling of colour, and a careful consideration of the physical means through which chromatic values are relayed to a viewer. Remarking that colour 'is the most relative medium in art,' what Albers' experiments attempted to do was more exactly determine the nature of this relativity through the establishment of a number of systematic controls for its use.[94] It is in much the same light that Annesley's repeated use of the same sculptural format can be best understood. In his opinion, what he called 'reaching the Albers position, reworking the same motifs' allowed him to more freely approach the subject of colour

---

[90] See Terry Fenton, *Appreciating Noland* (Alberta: Edmonton Art Gallery, 1991), 30.
[91] Kenworth Moffett *Kenneth Noland*, (New York: H. N. Abrams, 1977), 50.
[92] Reid, ed., *The Alistair McAlpine Gift*, 47-48.
[93] Josef Albers, *Interaction of Colour* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971), 2.
[94] Ibid., 71.

in his practice.[95]

Throughout the 1960s Bennington College and its surrounding area provided the backdrop to a social discourse taking place between sculptors and painters, particularly those regarded themselves as part of the Modernist camp. Alloway, who taught at the college in 1961, noted in an article for *Cue* in 1965 that the weight Greenberg's thinking held there was such that it had been nicknamed 'Clemsville' in his honour.[96] A *Vogue* article published the following year collectively dubbed the 'colony' of artists who worked there as the 'Green Mountain Boys,' further acknowledging the extent of this influence[97]. But for those British artists who visited prior to his untimely death in the summer of 1965, a chance to teach at the college also provided an opportunity to come into direct contact with David Smith. A central figure in the development of American sculpture, Smith lived nearby in Bolton Landing, and was closely connected to the artists that had settled there. He was responsible for outfitting the metal workshop that Caro and others resident at the college would use. Smith's series of *Circle* sculptures, all but one of which was made in October 1962 [Fig.38], are along with Noland's paintings another important precedent for the works Annesley produced from 1966 onwards.[98]

Despite such connections, what is less discernable within this broad characterisation of Bennington as a Modernist encampment are the kinds of conversation that could take place there between painters and sculptors, given the kind of disciplinary entrenchment advocated by Greenberg. A key social element of this remote community revolved around small gatherings to analyse an artist's current work, these events bearing considerable resemblance to the discursive atmosphere

---

[95] Annesley quoted in Bulgin, *Situation and New Generation*, 456. At the end of the decade a dissatisfaction with the constraints of this system would lead Annesley to set aside sculpture and return to making paintings for a number of years.

[96] Whiteley, *Art and Pluralism: Lawrence Alloway's Cultural Criticism*, 167-168.

[97] 'Green Mountain Boys' conflated Greenberg's surname with an 18th century militia group established in the region. Alan Solomon, 'The Green Mountain Boys,' *Vogue*, August (1966): 104-109, 151-152.

[98] For a more detailed discussion of this series see David Breslin, ed., *Raw Colour: The Circles of David Smith* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014).

taking shape around the 'crit' or 'forum' at St. Martin's.[99] Just as painters including Moon and the Cohen brothers were present at crits in the sculpture department at St. Martin's, conversations at Bennington also featured a range of individuals from different backgrounds. Among those Americans involved in these gatherings were the painters Noland, Jules Olitski, Paul Feeley, Jack Bush, sculptors David Smith, Tony Smith and Cleve Gray, as well as critics including Greenberg, Fried, or Kenworth Moffett.[100]

One opportunity seemingly less available to the Modernist sculptor than the Modernist painter was the spontaneity of a 'one-shot' approach. A technique described by Noland as requiring a work be 'done that one time with no afterthoughts, and it had to stand,' this was envisaged as a method to preserve a sense of intuitive immediacy in the completed piece.[101] Upon learning of Noland's decision to paint his canvases on the floor, or laid flat on saw horses so as to limit his ability to step back and objectively engage with them, Caro had attempted to replicate aspects of this procedure by composing his sculptures in an enclosed garage space.[102] The intention was to make his work less 'compositional.'[103] Others though were uncertain whether sculpture could ever match the effects such an approach afforded to painting. In a recorded conversation that took place between Caro, Noland and Olitski at Bennington College, the two American painters directly questioned the ability of sculpture to equal the spontaneous informality they thought could be achieved in their own work:

---

[99] In turn these collective activities also carried with them some of the experimental ethos of the 'jam painting' sessions Noland had previously developed with Morris Louis at the Washington Workshop of the Arts in 1953, where both men routinely met to work together, at times on the same canvas. See Moffett, *Kenneth Noland*, 22.

[100] Nonetheless Caro would recall how these events proceeded mainly from the perspective of painting, and how liberating this 'divorce' was from the discourse he had left behind at St. Martin's. See Simon Wallis ed., *Caro in Yorkshire* (Hepworth Wakefield and Yorkshire Sculpture Park, 2015), 23.

[101] Noland quoted in Emile de Antonio's documentary *Painters Painting* (1973). See Emile de Antonio and Mitch Tuchman, *Painters Painting* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1984), 80.

[102] Phyllis Tuchman, 'An Interview with Anthony Caro,' *Artforum*, June (1972): 58.

[103] Speaking on the subject in 1961 Caro observed 'I know that when I work on a sculpture out of doors I have room to stand back and that only encourages me to worry about the balance and that sort of thing; and that invariably ruins it. Working indoors and in a restricted space all the time my decisions don't bear on the thing's all round appearance. They're not compositional decisions.' Lawrence Alloway 'Interview with Anthony Caro,' *Gazette*, No.1 (1961), n.p.

Caro:     When you make sculpture you've got to hang on and hope. Sculpture's slower.

Olistki:  And also I would think you've got to do a kind of planning in advance to a large extent, much more than I do or Ken, and that experience in the making of the thing is different.

Caro:     Not too much. I'll tell you something that I try to do, and that is make the method or making sculpture more and more like the method of making painting.

Noland: Quick and simple as you can possibly do it.

Olitski:  But you still have to take a piece of metal, or whatever you use, Tony, you still have to start with this material or take another piece of material and weld or attach it to this or that; you have to think about it or you might drop it. Now what I'm getting at is this –that I put a colour down and if I had to stop and think: "Now, what goes with this red?" Well, then I'm not a painter anymore… I mean that's already death I think.'

Caro:     That's right… but it's not so different; I just move it until it's there. The only thing is that occasionally because it's heavy, I have an idea, something strikes me, but it just doesn't seem worth the trouble to move it. In a painting you might have already gone ahead with it.[104]

As an inherently more methodical process, Noland and Olitski felt the kind of sculptural assembly practiced by Caro struggled to appear as spontaneous as painting. Importantly however, what is presumed by Olistki in this exchange is that it was those aspects relating to the construction of a sculpture that struggled to mimic painting's improvisatory capabilities with respect to colour.

Speaking to the curator Diane Waldman, Noland further articulated the problems he regarded as facing coloured sculpture:

The material takes precedence as a form, rather than colour establishing the form… it's difficult enough to get colour to work with the form that's necessary to make paintings, let alone something that is three-dimensional, with those other added factors.[105]

---

[104] 'Some Excerpts from a Conversation at Bennington, Vermont, USA' *Monad*, No.1, Summer 1964, 21

[105] Diane Waldman, 'Kenneth Noland: Color, Format and Abstract Art,' *Art in America*, May-June (1977): 103.

In Noland's mind, in both painting or sculpture form preceded colour. The difference was that a flat canvas presented less of a material precondition for colour to overcome in order to establish itself as an uninhibited category, thus making colour 'work' in three dimensions meant addressing a number of other 'added factors.' However what Noland was unable to conceive of is a situation that did not imitate the same procedural sequence as his paintings.

A theme commonly discussed with regards to painting at gatherings in Bennington was the 'cropping' of a canvas, a retrospective process of framing that took place after the initial activity of pictorial composition. The purpose of this approach was to allow a particular arrangement of painted colour elements to 'breathe.'[106] Equivalent sculptural discussions by all accounts revolved largely around the physical placement of individual elements, and their effect on the overall composition. In either case it is physical format of the painting or sculpture that is the primary focus of these conversations. Colour by comparison –considered a precondition of abstract painting and a value retrospectively added to abstract sculpture– assumes a personal signification less suitable for discussion. If physically cropping the canvas allowed an artist to retrospectively alter the amount of a colour visible within a painting, does it not then stand to reason then that the retrospective application of colour could be employed to redress aspects of the physical form of a sculpture? It is at this interstice that De Duve, in his meticulous examination of the dialectical relation of the generic and the specific in 1960s formalism, exposes a critical blind spot in a Greenbergian definition of sculptural purity. Speaking about the 'unspecific' qualities that were seen as the antithesis of advanced painting, and the tenets of medium specificity it was tasked to defend –the kinds of sculpture capable of holding literalism at bay– De Duve points out that by this logic Modernist sculpture must instead paradoxically function

---

[106] Paintings of the kind made by Noland or Olitski were typically painted un-stretched and the correct stretcher size for the image determined afterwards. Olitski described his process to the film-maker Emile de Antonio as follows: 'I paint generally on the floor. I roll out the length of canvas depending on the width, the length of the room, and I'll work within it. I'll keep working within that space, and it's only afterwards, as I work, that I'll decide where the painting is. You know the painting might well become just this piece here. I may well decide this is a painting here or it should be cropped here.' See de Antonio and Tuchman, *Painters Painting*, 148.

on the basis of being 'multispecific… both painting and sculpture.'[107]

The central aspiration of such a multispecific form of sculpture was disembodied opticality, a condition not unlike the structural self-cancellation proposed by Noland, having in common a general desire to produce colour which appeared to 'float,' or, as King put it, for form to be seemingly transformed into pure energy. What made this pursuit of chromatic disembodiment all the more difficult was sculpture's intransigent physicality, as in order to function on a practical level it could not simply mimic the procedures used by painters. What was discomforting about polychromatic sculpture from a Modernist perspective was that the procedural logic established by painting needed to be inverted in order to produce an equivalent opticality. This was an inversion Modernist critics writing in support of Caro's work were unwilling to countenance.

## Gestures of Control: Fibreglass and Closed Form Sculpture

One way in which several New Generation sculptors bypassed the heuristic solution adopted by Caro's painted metal sculptures was through employing various forms of plastics. Here it was possible use pre-made sheeting to produce a colour that was literally 'in' the material. On first impression this would seem to indicate a material truthfulness far in excess of what was achievable with painted metal sculpture: the structural properties of the form and its chromatic value being directly intertwined within a single process. This was certainly Fried's opinion when he praised Scott's 'freeing colour from surface, or at any rate from appliedness by the use of material–coloured sheets of Perspex colour in which colour literally inheres.'[108]

In actuality, this evolutionary development from painted metal to the disparate range of materials collectively dubbed 'plastic' is not so simple. In reality the majority

---

[107] These remarks were made in relation to Greenberg's advocacy of sculptures made by Anne Truitt. See De Duve, *Kant After Duchamp*, 230.

[108] Michael Fried, 'The Problems of Polychromy: New Sculptures by Michael Bolus,' in *Art and Objecthood: Essay and Reviews*, 194.

of New Generation sculptures employing resin impregnated fibreglass parts were painted subsequently. This took place in the more or less the same manner as their metal counterparts. In 1965 King and Tucker had both suggested that, if it were not for financial constraints, they would prefer those fibreglass elements in their work to be produced in cast aluminium instead.[109] This suggests that truthfulness, whether ontological or symbolic, was of little concern. Ian Dunlop summarised this ambivalence, saying:

> The new materials that are in use, fibreglass, plastic and aluminium are of no importance in themselves –if that were the case, a new truth to materials situation would have been produced– but they are important in what they allow the sculptor to do. They are more flexible and less intractable than the materials previously used and therefore more suitable for the forms and ideas these sculptors want to express.[110]

As an industrial material fibreglass was increasingly prevalent in the 1960s. King reportedly became aware of its sculptural potential as a result of building a boat using it.[111] Sculptures utilising a tent-like form like *Rosebud* (1962) were the first he made using the material [Fig.39]. Despite carrying industrial connotations, fibreglass also maintained a connection to traditional techniques of carving and modelling. In order that certain shapes could be laid up as a resin gel coat, strengthened by the addition of chopped fibreglass strands, they first had to be formed against a solid material such as wood or plaster. This was, as Scott has pointed out with regards to his own early work, simply the reversal of an existing casting method in which fibreglass occasionally featured. At any rate, fibreglass was envisaged as the ideal means with which to embody an 'anti-material' aesthetic fitting of a 1960s sculptor. It was a resource King saw as being in very much in contrast to the values held by the preceding generation:

> When I first started making sculpture, the 'truth to materials' notion of the 1950s, which Henry Moore had quite a lot to do with, was an anathema to someone of the 1960s like me. I was anti-material in a sense and that is what

---

[109] Alan Bowness, ed., *London: The New Scene*. Minneapolis: Walker Art Centre, 1965, 35. Aluminium casting was the method by which Paolozzi, another Sculpture tutor at St. Martin's between 1955 and 1958, had a number of sculptures fabricated around this time.

[110] Bryan Robertson, *New Generation 1965*, 12-13.

[111] William Tucker, 'Tate Rehang,' *Tate etc.*, Issue 28, Summer (2013): 85.

attracted me to fibreglass.[112]

For Greenberg, what had rendered Caro's sculptures paradigmatically abstract was their radical 'un-likeness to nature,' how successfully they had overcome the functional signification of the readymade components from which they were constructed.[113] What this refutation of natural principles also presents however is a compelling, if entirely unbidden, connection with what Jean Baudrillard writing in 1968 would describe as the growing abstractness of the commodity in advanced capitalist society. Baudillard's opinion was that this abstraction was representative of an ongoing transfer from a traditional operational field, predicated on gestures of 'effort,' to a modern one predicated on gestures of 'control.'[114] Mechanisation had produced conditions where human effort was no longer proportional to that exerted by the machines that they employed on a daily basis. This operational shift instead emphasised the semantic aspects of an object's function, something that had in turn begun to determine their design. Whereas traditionally a tool or utensil bore an ergonomic relationship to the human body, and was shaped accordingly, modern automation meant that this relationship was no longer so clear. Writing specifically about the increasingly amorphous appearance of consumer goods such as cars and refrigerators, Baudrillard pointed to the afunctional stylisation of the 'casings' in which these objects were presented:

> It is only their form which is present, that wraps that mechanism in its perfection and confines it within its contours, cloaking and eliminating an energy that has been made into an abstraction and, as it were, crystallised. As in the development of some animal species, the form is externalised, enclosing the object in a sort of carapace. Fluid, transitive, enveloping, it unifies appearances by transcending the alarming discontinuity of the various mechanisms involved and replacing it with a coherent whole.[115]

For Baudrillard the encasement of an object's functional elements within an abstracted carapace transformed the modern subject's tactile relationship to the world around them. What replaced this tactile relationship was a more cerebral engagement with a

[112] Roberts, 'The Right Stuff,' 92.
[113] Greenberg, 'Anthony Caro,' 116.
[114] Jean Baudrillard, *The System of Objects* (London: Verso, 2005), 56.
[115] Ibid., 56.

newly formed economy of disembodied signs.

Such observations could be said to resonate with a discussion of 1960s British sculpture; here too a reduced sense of tactility was conferred on an object by a synthetic skin or smooth encasement. The fact that such a mode of address was shared with modern consumer goods corresponds with Robertson's interpretation of the 'designed' aspects of New Generation sculpture. But it also allows for a more qualified definition of what this observation might actually mean. Robertson was right not to see any direct link between these sculptures and mass-produced commodities. This affinity was not based on the employment of technical processes, or even the symbolic connotations of materials like plastic. The 'designed' aspect of New Generation sculpture could be instead described as an abstract afunctionality: the cultivation of a form of audience engagement running in parallel to operational strategies employed within the field of industrial design. It was these strategies that transformed a consumer, or viewer's, previously tactile engagement with an object into a disembodied, semantic one.

Baudrillard argued that these commodities create a subject aware of the power they wield not through their own bodies, but rather a more passive consideration of their own agency. This is also possibly why closed volumes were considered as a kind of concealment in Modernist terms. These characteristics acted against the internal relation of individual parts, just like the bodywork of a car covers its mechanical sub-structure. Writing on the reductive tendency in 1960s sculpture, Greenberg noted, with some reservation, that:

> The look of machinery is shunned now because it does not go far enough towards the look of non-art, which is presumably an "inert" look that offers the eye a minimum of "interesting" incident– unlike the machine look which is arty by comparison.[116]

---

[116] Greenberg, 'Recentness of Sculpture,' 25.

Here the look of machinery has less to do with actual functionality than the comparative richness of its sculptural syntax.[117] What Greenberg was seeking to preserve in sculpture was an internal dynamism that he saw minimalist art, like industrial design, working to suppress within its closed volumes and serial arrangements. For him the operative principles of Modernist sculpture were reliant on the retention of such dynamism. This is why, in his opinion, advanced sculpture was better off harbouring a debt to painting than succumbing, like Minimalist art, to what he summarily dismissed as 'good design.'[118]

To further compare the structuralist interpretation of industrial objects offered by Baudrillard with the formalist interpretation of sculpture offered by Greenberg, another intervention could be offered. Contemporaneous with both Greenberg and Baudrillard's enquiries were the British writer J.G. Ballard's explorations of modern consumer society. Ballard's treatments of modern subjectivity and alienation were often indexed directly to technological advancements. One of his short stories in particular, first published in 1961, suggests how a broader operational field of design related to the psychological state suggested by the New Generation's use of fiberglass components. In 'The Overloaded Man,' Faulkner, an academic living in a modernist housing development called the Village, discovers he is able to 'de-identify' the objects that surround him. Stripped of its functional properties for instance the streamlined bodywork of his car becomes 'an enormous vegetable marrow, flaccid and gleaming.'[119] In this detached world each object assumes a new kind of purity, once their everyday signification has been switched off:

> Faulkner craned his head from right to left, systematically obliterating all traces of meaning from the world around him, reducing everything to formal visual values. Gradually these too began to lose their meaning, the abstract masses of colour dissolving, drawing Faulkner after them into a world of pure psychic sensation, where blocks of ideation hung like magnetic fields in a cloud chamber.[120]

---

[117] There was however as limit to the For example, the literal mechanisation of artworks by Jean Tingeley struck Greenberg as a step too far in this direction. Ibid.

[118] Ibid., 26.

[119] J. G. Ballard, 'The Overloaded Man,' in *New Worlds Science Fiction*, Vol. 36, No.108, July (1961): 32.

[120] Ibid., 35.

Facilitating Faulkner's slide into this disassociated state is the state of the art domestic environment in which he lives. Working to limit human interaction of any kind, and granted little contact with what Baudrillard calls gestures of effort, Faulkner ultimately becomes unable to recognise even his own wife's face as anything other than 'a blunted wedge of pink-grey dough.'[121] Lacking function, his own body likewise becomes an unnecessary impediment, a condition that somewhat echoes Greenberg's description of the disembodied viewer of Modernist artworks, a monocular subject whose movement is determined by 'eyesight alone.'[122] In Ballard's story the catalyst for such alienated objectivity is the technology that saturates the housing development, automating life to the extent that passivity becomes inevitable. Surrounded by so much 'good design' Faulkner's own corporeal presence grows increasingly problematic.

Seen in this context many of the fibreglass and resin sculptures produced by King, Scott, Tucker and Witkin could be interpreted as literalising the psychological dilemma confronting Faulkner in Ballard's story. Devoid of representational references, whilst still retaining a nagging vestige of prior functionality, this biomorphic abstraction appears quite different to the kinds of mathematical precepts that characterised Minimalist seriality. Describing a similarly existential scenario, but referring to the events that beset Roquentin, the protagonist of Jean Paul Sartre's novel *Nausea* to explicate his argument, Mellor observed that this alienated view of the modern world was for younger British sculptors working in the early 1960s closely bound up in their investigations into what made a sculpture a thing.[123] 'Thingness' was considered a property essential to sculpture, but it raised as many questions around the psychology of the object as it did about its formal tactility. In King's words thingness was a 'familiarity which resists recognition,' a description that suggests a fundamental distinction between the cancellation of representational content enacted by New Generation sculpture, and its *a priori* absence in Minimalist art.[124]

---

[121] Ibid., 39.
[122] 'The human body is never postulated as the agent of space in either pictorial or sculptural art; now it is eyesight alone, and eyesight has more freedom of movement within three dimensions than within two.' Clement Greenberg, 'The New Sculpture,' in *Art and Culture*, 143.
[123] Mellor, *The Sixties Art Scene in London*, 94.
[124] King quoted in William Tucker, 'Confessions of a Formalist,' *New Review*, June (1976): 52.

It is in these thing-like properties that a tangential connection to an existing tradition of Surrealist art can be similarly inferred. Standing in the place representational sculptures traditionally occupied, but instead emphasising their own abstracted thingness, New Generation sculpture retained some of the former's anthropomorphic properties. Like the increasing abstractness of styled commodities these artworks too radiated an uncanny agency, no longer communicating via a sense of wrought tactility, but rather through another, more subliminal mode of address. Constructed from the same plastic compounds as much modern design was, and yet wholly afunctional, the amoeboid or tent-like 'personages' produced by King and Witkin appear more as dreamlike, or nightmarish, surrogates for other objects populating the modern environment. As the American critic Grace Glueck put it, many of these sculptures appeared to be the 'products of a die-stamping machine on psychiatric leave from its factory.'[125]

### Anti-Material: The Influence of Brancusi

This separation between the precepts of American Modernism and the concerns of New Generation sculptors does not only relate to the use of synthetic materials. In addition to articulating a link between sculptural opticality and a growing sense of disembodiment visible in the operational field at large, what the use of fiberglass also highlights is a crucial factor distinguishing a narrow lineage of formalist sculpture as it was understood to have evolved by Modernist critics, and the historical precedents these younger British sculptors looked to as artistic influences. A principal factor distinguishing the two was the latter's continued interest in the use of monolithic, or closed volume forms.

Greenberg most clearly laid out his views concerning the future direction of the discipline in 'The New Sculpture,' a 1958 revision of his 1948 essay, 'Sculpture in Our Time.' There he described the recent 'liberation' of sculpture from a monolithic

---

[125] Grace Glueck, 'New York Notes,' *Art in America*, December-January (1965-1966): 119.

tradition dominant until this point. Arguing that this liberation had arisen from the rejection of existing sculptural materials, Greenberg identified the beginnings of Modernist sculpture in Picasso and Gonzalez's collaborations, and their efforts to produce sculpture predicated on 'openness' and 'linearity.' It is a commitment to these same qualities that he argued as persisting in the 'construction-sculpture' of David Smith, before officially adding Caro to this select pantheon of innovators in 1965. Like Gonzalez, both Smith and Caro relied on the welding of metal, a technique Greenberg considered to be have been extrapolated from the principles of cubist collage. A central tenet of this new sculpture lay in how it resisted the use of closed volumes. Championing the properties of 'openness and transparency and weightlessness,' Greenberg saw sculptural space as being 'there to be shaped, divided, enclosed, but not to be filled.'[126]

The impact this essay, published as part of Greenberg's anthology *Art and Culture*, had upon those working and teaching in the Sculpture department at St. Martin's is worth examining. To some extent New Generation sculpture can be seen to develop in line with the speculative position Greenberg took in 1958 to the near future of the discipline. Like Greenberg they too felt that 'the illusion of organic substance or texture' was outdated and worked to replace these with increasingly smooth sculptural forms. Similarly, Greenberg at this point deemed a relatively broad range of materials acceptable in the production of construction-sculpture:

> The new sculpture tends to abandon stone, bronze and clay for industrial materials like iron, steel, alloys, glass, plastics, celluloid etc., etc., which are worked with the blacksmith's, the welder's, and even the carpenter's tools.[127]

The main factor separating the vision outlined in 'Sculpture in Our Time' from practice as it evolved in and around St. Martin's in the late 1950s and early 1960s was the importance afforded to the work of Brancusi. Admired 'without reservation' by the young sculptors featured in the 1965 Whitechapel survey,[128] Brancusi was likewise accorded an important role in 'Sculpture in Our Time,' although only producing the

---

[126] Clement Greenberg, 'The New Sculpture,' 142.
[127] Ibid., 142
[128] Robertson, *New Generation 1965*, 11.

final stage in the development of the monolith. Giving the 'quietus' to a Renaissance tradition of sculpture with 'his geometrically simplified ovoid, tubular or conic masses' he had in Greenberg's mind glimpsed this new kind of sculpture but ultimately remained tethered to an older world.[129] However, given the recurrence of his name in statements by New Generation sculptors, as well as the continued use of closed volumetric forms evidenced in their work, it is clear that these British sculptors had not been able to set aside Brancusi's sculptures quite as easily as Greenberg had, or the monolithic tradition they had supposedly put to rest.[130] What their interpretation of Brancusi suggested was a way in which aspects of constructed sculpture could be reconciled with the use of closed volume form, while retaining a playful modularity that distinguished it from the use of monolithic forms by British sculptors like Moore or Hepworth.[131] Elevating Brancusi's work above the latter was his utilsation of what Sidney Geist called an 'artistic economy' of forms, one in which 'the syntax of sculpture is explored with programmatic thoroughness.'[132]

While Caro had embraced metal as his principal working material from the early 1960s onwards, the same was not true of his students, most of who continued to explore a substantially broader vocabulary of sculptural substances. If anything this use of multiple materials distinguishes the New Generation from Caro to an even greater degree than the issue of polychromy.[133] From around 1960 onwards the work of Tucker, King, Scott and Witkin consistently featured a variety of materials within one work, including acrylic sheeting, resin, aluminum, plaster and wood. Annesley and Bolus by contrast worked almost exclusively with metal, generating compositional

---

[129] Greenberg 'The New Sculpture,' 141.

[130] This however is not to overlook Brancusi's influence upon the development of American sculpture opposed to Greenberg for quite different reasons. For example, in 1966 Morris would write his Masters Thesis on Brancusi while a student at Hunter College, New York. Andre was also heavily influenced by the 'essentialising' nature of Brancusi's practice. See David Bourdon, *Carl Andre Sculpture: 1958-1977* (New York: Jaap Rietman, 1978), 18: Diane Waldman, *Carl Andre* (New York: Guggenheim Museum, 1970), 8-12, 19.

[131] To contextualise his account of British coloured sculpture Robertson lists a substantially wider selection of potential precedents, ranging from David Smith to Moore and Hepworth, to Archipenko, Arp, Calder and Noguchi. See Bryan Robertson, *Coloured Sculptures: Britain in the Sixties*, 11.

[132] Geist, *Brancusi: A Study of the Sculpture* (New York: Grossman, 1968), 177.

[133] The few Caro sculptures dating from the 1960s that did include more than one material were limited to a combination of aluminium and steel sections. These material differences were hidden underneath a uniformly painted coating.

differences additional to that of the forms themselves exclusively through the use of polychromatic finishes.[134] As such, their work has to be considered separately, a factor that Lynn Cooke has speculated is due to the way in which their own practices had evolved while working as studio assistants for Caro.[135] For the remainder of these individuals, the use of these other materials was a method of distancing themselves from Caro's accomplishments in steel, achievements that they either felt unwilling to replicate or unable to surpass.[136]

Another factor limiting the effect of Greenberg's vision of Modernist sculpture was these sculptors' familiarity with the artworks central to his account. As Scott recalled, the importance of Brancusi to his own artistic development was due in no small part to the comparative scarcity of information available on an artist like David Smith in the 1950s, images of whose work he had only encountered by chance in the USIS library whilst resident in Paris between 1959 and 1961.[137] Speaking of a time prior to this he noted:

> Brancusi seemed to me to be the outstanding *abstract* sculptor; you must remember that I had only just heard of David Smith, and had no knowledge of his work…
> Abstract forms as I was making automatically pointed to Brancusi.[138]

Until Caro's return from the United States, having met Smith and seen one of his works in the winter of 1959, British artists' firsthand experience of the kind of constructed steel sculpture so important to Greenberg's narrative would have been

---

[134] It should be noted though that this did not indicate that their working methods remained entirely unchanged throughout this time. Working with steel up until 1964 Bolus begins to use aluminium in his sculptures from this point onwards; Annesley adopts aluminium shortly after their Whitechapel Gallery exhibition, amongst the first of these sculptures being *Godroon* (1966).

[135] Cooke, 'New Abstract Sculpture and its Sources,' 175.

[136] The degree to which Caro was perceived to own the technique of welding and bolting metal components together was clearly a source of anxiety. In an unpublished note from 1963 King went so far as to call collage, a term more associated with Caro's methods welding than any other at the time, 'a door to plagiarism and academicism.' See R.W.D. Oxenaar, *Phillip King* (Otterlo: Kröller-Müller Museum, 1974), 19.

[137] Franz Erich, ed., *Tim Scott: Skulpturen* (Kunsthalle Bielefeld, 1979), 10.

[138] Scott quoted in Dieter Blume and Wilhelm Bojescul, *Tim Scott: Skulpturen* (Kunstverein Braunschweig, 1988), 194.

limited for the most part to examples by Gonzalez and Picasso.[139] While the reprinting of Smith's 'Notes on My Work' in the St. Martin's journal *First* testifies to the degree of interest in his work, there were limited opportunities available to British artists to see his sculptures in person.[140] The first major exhibition to take place in Britain, a posthumous retrospective at the Tate Gallery that would open in August 1966, would trail far behind the initial interest these sculptures provoked amongst younger British sculptors.

King, referring to works he produced between 1960 and 1962, noted how Brancusi's precedent presented an important method of sidestepping what he saw as the predominance of welding as a method:

> It was a development from Brancusi; [but] instead of piling things on top of each another, just leaning them against one another. Brancusi seemed important at the time as I was trying to avoid a collage technique in welding.[141]

Speaking in relation to a number of plaster works that predate his employment of fiberglass, including *Untitled 1* (1961) and *Drift* (1962), a Brancusian treatment can be found in the smoothness of their surfaces and volumetric solidity, but also in the way that the sculptural elements are themselves arranged as discrete elements rested up against one another. Another familial connection is evident in *Barbarian Fruit* (1964), a work that presents a sequence of stacked elements not unlike the arrangements favoured by Brancusi [Fig.40&41].

Nor was this method of stacked arrangement necessarily outwith the boundaries of what could be considered a 'constructed' approach to sculpture, as this too seemed to foreground the syntax of a work through a contingent arrangement of individual components. The primary difference was that Brancusi's highly finished forms

---

[139] The work by David Smith that Caro saw exhibited at French and Company was *Sentinel* (1957). See Barker, *Anthony Caro: Quest for the New Sculpture*, 86.

[140] A solo presentation of Smith's sculptures was not held in Europe until the 1966, although his work had been exhibited at Documenta, Kassel, in 1959 and 1964, and at the Venice Biennial, in 1954 and 1958. It was only in 1963 that the first sculpture was shown in Britain, as part of a group exhibition at Battersea Park. For a comprehensive account of exhibitions held during Smith's lifetime see Edward Fry, *David Smith* (New York: Guggenheim Museum, 1969), 172-182.

[141] Phillip King 'Phillip King Talks about his Sculpture,' 301.

appeared to derive from within an existing tradition of sculpture, not the pictorialism of cubist collage. In *Timidity* (1928), a curved form that bears more than a passing resemblance to the kinds of forms employed by Tucker in works like *Thebes* (1966), there is further evidence of how Brancusi's example informed the New Generation sculptors [Fig.42]. Tucker himself would observe of *Timidity* that the potential directions this work suggested were 'scarcely developed.'[142]

Replete with allusions to older totemic and votive forms, what Brancusi's practice suggested nonetheless was a potential method through which a new kind of sculptural purity could be secured. Collectively committed as they were to more thoroughly defining what sculpture was or could be it is perhaps unsurprising that the New Generation sculptors were unwilling to abandon such developments so readily. While to some extent enthusiastic about the possibilities offered by open sculptural forms, a sense of enclosed volume was still considered an essential characteristic of the medium. This was a point made most evident in Scott's statement:

> The problem of monolithic, closed volume sculpture is the one that has to be faced above all…
> In sculpture the tangible presence of the MASS is fundamental as Brancusi demonstrates, for it is through this "presence" that the IDEA of sculpture is felt.[143]

If Brancusi provided the main precedent for the New Generation's exploration of smooth, closed volume forms it was the technical possibilities presented by modern materials that allowed these younger artists to imbue his sculptural vocabulary with fresh meaning. Again, this was described by Scott as follows:

> I felt it was a way forward from Brancusi to make the sort of shapes he would have carved, but to make them light, suspend them in space even, and spread them horizontally, a defiance of gravity that he could never have achieved within the technical limitations of his time.[144]

---

[142] William Tucker 'Four Sculptors: Brancusi,' *Studio International*, April (1970): 159. Tucker reprinted an edited version of this text as a chapter entitled 'Brancusi: the Elements of Sculpture,' in *The Language of Sculpture*, 41-58 (London: Thames and Hudson, 1974). The original article has been cited except at points where text has been added.
[143] Scott quoted in Reid, ed. *The McAlpine Gift*, 75-76.
[144] Erich, *Tim Scott: Skulpturen*, 194.

Brancusi had been constrained by the intractable weight of bronze, wood and stone, and had been correspondingly limited to the vertical arrangement of components within his sculptures. What the comparative lightness of a material like fibreglass afforded Scott, but also King, Tucker and Witkin, was a less inhibited method of configuring their compositional elements. Exemplary in this respect, and almost certainly one of the works to which Scott refers in the above statement, is *Umber* (1961). Around the asymmetrical bisection of two wall-like forms a series of elements are positioned. Several of these rest against the ground, while two others are held in suspension by being affixed to this central partition [Fig.43]. These two suspended elements, one ovoid and the other cubic, both cantilever beyond their apparent ability to do so. Able to present substantial volumes with significantly diminished mass, it is this factor as much as the technique of welding that contributed to the weightless appearance of much British sculpture of the period.

The active relationship created between the base and a lightened sculptural motif in Brancusi can also be interpreted as being further articulated in Tucker's *Anabasis I* (1964) [Fig.44]. Composed of three diagonally stacked, X-shaped elements, these become less substantial as they ascend. A climbing mutation of the same form, the word anabasis in Greek meaning to 'go-upwards' or to 'increase,' the lowest element in the sculpture is an extrusion of the uppermost element with sharp right-angled edges. Interlocked with this base element is a bulbous central component. It shares the same profile as the one underneath it, although modeled spherically. This is capped by a final element taking its silhouette from the profile of the first, appearing in this instance as a two-dimensional plan view. Unlike the two lower elements, which are fabricated from fibreglass and resin before being painted white, this flattened form is cut from a sheet of transparent yellow Perspex. A critical question *Anabasis I* raises, one signaling its affiliation with Brancusi's thinking, was how a sculpture came into contact with the ground. This was something Brancusi had resolved by using of bases sculpted using similar materials and processes to that of the works themselves. It was a position he summarised by saying 'the pedestal should be part of the sculpture,

otherwise one should do away with it completely.'[145]

In tracing this connection however, it is crucial to note that Tucker did not himself confuse the sculpted pedestal in Brancusi's work with the sculptures themselves. Instead he saw it functioning as an intermediary between this 'completely new order of object' and the surrounding environment. There, it performed 'an exact ancillary function,' one in which:

> The base plays the role of studio as environment in relation to the individual work. Where the sculpture is polished, the base is rough; where the sculpture is tight and ordered, the base is free and playful; where the sculpture is concentrated, the base is expansive.[146]

For Tucker, sculpture's direct annexation of the floor space in the 1960s was only gestured towards by the older artist's sculpted pedestals, which were employed to prevent the encroachment of a hostile environment. The studio was the context to which Brancusi's bases referred. It was also to the studio environment that a sense of forestalled completion or contingent experimentation was symbolically linked. This is a quality most evident in the re-arrangeable configurations of sculptural elements Brancusi called his 'groupe mobile.'[147]

By adopting Brancusi as a lodestar for sculptural experimentation, the New Generation sculptors were fashioning a more secular image of the artist than had been attempted previously. Dominating scholarship on Brancusi in the 1950s and 60s was the romantic persona that the sculptor himself cultivated. David Lewis' study, published in 1957 by Alec Tiranti and almost certainly known to the group, was deeply affected by the Homeric image Brancusi promoted. Closely connected to this image of the artist as a 'man of the earth, born a peasant in Rumania, close to nature' was a claim for his privileged connection to the materials that he worked with.[148]

---

[145] Athena Spear, *Brancusi's Birds* (New York University Press, 1969), 35.

[146] William Tucker, 'Four Sculptors: Brancusi,' 161.

[147] The groupe mobile, a series that Sandra Miller has suggested developed directly in relation to the artist's friendship with Duchamp and a familiarity with his readymades, exist primarily as studio photographs of re-purposed arrangements of existing sculptural forms taken by Brancusi himself. Sandra Miller, *Constantin Brancusi* (London: Reaktion, 2010), 79.

[148] David Lewis, *Constantin Brancusi* (London: Alec Tiranti, 1957), 16.

Brancusi's ability to unlock an 'image from the centre of the stone' was an attribute Lewis sees as being later inherited by Moore, and rooted in a truth to materials approach.[149]

Opposing this viewpoint, one reliant upon Brancusi's work as a labourer, Romanian folk traditions and so on, Tucker noted disapprovingly that 'Brancusi's encouragement of his own myth reinforces the impression of a perfectly sealed off cycle of existence in which elements of the work and the life become virtually interchangeable,' and of the need to bring this work 'back into history' in order to assess its real merits.[150] The quality Tucker instead suggested had cemented Brancusi's legacy was the 'inspired dialogue' he facilitated between marble and bronze. He argued that this was an achievement that resided less in the inherent value of the materials, than in their contrasting inter-relation. Their interaction instead derived from Brancusi's capabilities as a 'finisher' and how the work seemed to 'hold or radiate' light. For Tucker this was what elevated the conceptual properties of these artworks over the feats of manual skill that produced them. This was due to how 'the arrival, the finish, denies and obliterates the often banal setting out, the laborious journey; and the final object is not complete until it is related through the world through the base and to the spectator.'[151]

In Scott's mind too, Brancusi's use of materials were instead representative of a pursuit of deeper kind of sculptural purity, one that did not rely on the inherent value of stone or bronze. In keeping with this attitude his own materials were chosen for their expediency:

> In fact the "truth to materials" cry of the thirties seems to me to have been largely a transplantation of architectural structural formalism combined with a misunderstanding of Brancusi as being a materials purist. The material I use… is simply the easiest and quickest, and incidentally the cheapest method of fabricating a desired shape.[152]

---

[149] Ibid., 14-15. The text Lewis refers to here is Henry Moore's, 'Statement for Unit One', in Herbert Read (ed.), *Unit One: The Modern Movement in English Architecture, Painting and Sculpture* (Manchester: Platt Hall, 1934), 29–30.

[150] William Tucker, *The Language of Sculpture*, 58.

[151] William Tucker 'Four Sculptors: Constantin Brancusi,' 161.

[152] Robertson, *Tim Scott: Sculpture 1961-1967*, 8.

Brancusi's willingness to produce numerous iterations of a single sculptural motif in different materials, and to display them on an equally wide range of bases would seem to support Scott's interpretation. What by contrast this interpretation seems to hamper is the procedural order by which these versions came into being. The first iteration of a motif like the *Bird In Space* was always carved in marble before any re-casting in plaster was attempted. Similarly, while there is evidence of Brancusi's gilding one of his *Maiastra*, and even exhibiting another of these painted blue,[153] the concealment of a material under any kind of additive coating was something he ultimately rejected. According to Athena Spear this was due to these additive techniques covered over a material's 'inherent reflectiveness.'[154] There was no question of Brancusi trying to suppress the natural appearance of a material in the way that a synthetic coating functioned in 1960s British sculpture. Finally, requiring long periods of sustained attention and patience to produce, as well as a stock of costly raw materials from which to work, it is difficult to argue that Brancusi's methods were in any way the easiest, quickest, or cheapest ways to arrive at a desired shape either.

It was a selective interpretation of Brancusi's work that acted as a catalyst for these younger sculptors. The influence that this more conceptual, 'anti-material' Brancusi exerted relied on two factors. One was the interchangeability of sculptural components, a strategy that seemed to indicate a system of material value mobilised primarily by contrast as opposed to inherent truthfulness. The other had to do with the interest both Brancusi and the New Generation shared in producing surfaces devoid of personal imprint, and the disembodying effect that this produced. Tracing the dematerialisation of sculptural form during the early twentieth century, Martin Hammer and Christina Lodder identified in Brancusi's use of polished bronze a paradigmatic attempt to render sculpture less substantial. This was a technique they contextualised against technological developments such as flight, electricity and radio

---

[153] Sidney Geist, *Brancusi: A Study of the Sculpture*, 43. The bronze sculpture Geist refers to as *Maiastra I* (1912) was painted blue, while the work he refers to as *Maiastra II* (1912) appears gilded in photographs prior to its re-polishing.
[154] Spear, *Brancusi's Birds*, 26.

waves.[155] Similar to King's opinion that the application of non-associative colour was capable of energising form, Brancusi's polished surfaces are interpreted in this case not necessarily as attempts to expose the truth of the material. Rather they act to disembody solid material by increasing the amount of light it is able to refract. As the artist once said of one of his simplified motifs, his intention was not to produce a static representation of a subject, but rather to capture the 'flash of its spirit.'[156]

### Rhetoric: Un-public Sculpture

Another way in which the New Generation seemed to be separated from postwar British sculpture produced up until the late 1950s lay in the question of its location. This was an issue that had been problematised by the removal of the pedestal, the device that had previously acted as an intermediary between artworks and their immediate surroundings. Placed directly on the ground, on the same physical plane as the viewer, sculpture was now an object in the world, and arguably subject to the same criteria as everything else. In his analysis of Brancusi, Tucker observed that the base plays an important role in replicating the effect of 'the studio as environment in relation to individual work,' acting to provide it with a portable context.

A new problem facing abstract sculpture was, lacking anything to perform this protective function, how to mitigate against its less insulated relationship with the space around it. The environment as a whole was now the pedestal upon which abstract British sculpture teetered.

Exhibiting sculptures in parkland, like the series of high profile showcases that took place in Battersea Park from 1948 onwards, carried with it a number of pastoral connotations that had been actively pursued by Moore and others in the postwar period.[157] Reinforcing such connotations were the rural locations from which this kind

[155] See Martin Hammer and Christina Lodder 'Dematerialising Sculpture: Methods and Motives,' in *Immaterial: Brancusi, Gabo, Maholy Nagy* (Cambridge: Kettles Yard, 2004), 47.

[156] Malvina Hoffman, *Sculpture Inside and Out* (New York: W. W Norton and Company, 1939), 52.

[157] See Eric Newton, *Souvenir Catalogue of the Open Air Exhibition of Sculpture at Battersea Park* (London County Council, 1948); Niklaus Pevsner, *Sculpture, An Open Air Presentation at Battersea Park, May to September 1951* (London County Council, 1951); Philip James, *Sculpture in the Open Air*

of work often issued, like Hepworth's Trewyn studios in St Ives, or Much Hadham in Hertfordshire where Moore was based. An association with these non-urban locations was something that both these artists encouraged in their work. Cornish Neolithic sites functioned as a talisman for Hepworth's own exploration of the standing form, whereas for Moore, sculpture was an 'art of the open air… its best setting and complement nature.'[158] In conjunction with this taste for exhibiting work outdoors, it was the belief of those like Herbert Read that modern sculpture could be made to serve civic interests, and that it could play an active part in the everyday life of the general populace. Amongst others it was Read's efforts that led to the popularisation of public sculpture commissions during the 1940s and 50s, and worldwide visibility for a select few British sculptors. These artists formed relationships with similarly high profile architects to fashion what would become archetypal versions of the corporate plaza in the latter half of the twentieth century. Inhabiting a space previously occupied by monuments dedicated to specific figures, events or causes, these public commissions were predominately abstract or semi-abstract, and employed in a more universal sense 'to humanise the architecture and serve as optimistic emblems of civic identity.'[159] By the 1950s this model of sculptural production was well established in Britain, a fact that would have been readily apparent to those like Caro, King or Witkin, who had all worked as assistants to Moore.

Nor was there any shortage of New Generation sculpture shown outdoors during the 1960s either. But, unlike an older generation of artists, those working at St. Martin's in the late 1950s and early 1960s felt a widespread antipathy to the idea of siting their sculptures outside, either in bucolic surroundings or in response to an architectural site. Just as unwelcome as connotations of the landscape was the way that open spaces diluted the effect a large sculpture could have, as when placed outside it

(London City Council, 1960); Herbert Read, *Sculpture: Open Air Exhibition of Contemporary British and American Works* (London County Council, 1963); Alan Bowness, *Sculpture in the Open Air, An Exhibition of British Contemporary Sculpture* (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1966).

[158] Henry Moore, 'Sculpture in the Open Air', in *Henry Moore on Sculpture*, ed. Phillip James, 97. (London: MacDonald, 1966).

[159] Harriet F. Senie, *Contemporary Public Sculpture, Tradition, Transformation and Controversy* (Oxford University Press, 1992), 95.

had to do more to assert itself. King, reacting to a request to exhibit *Slant* (1966) in Battersea Park, chose to re-paint his sculpture bright red so as to more strikingly contrast with the grass upon which it was placed.[160] Colour was pragmatically employed so as to prevent the work being overcome by its surroundings [Fig.45].

Despite being committed to ambitiously exploring scale, there was also considerable discussion as to whether this necessarily indicated that the sculptor needed to engage with architects and local authorities to secure public commissions. Partly these misgivings stemmed from practitioners' awareness of the widespread misunderstanding that had greeted abstract sculpture in the past. The objections that this type of work had solicited from the general public arose for the most part from its joint lack of symbolic function and representational subject matter. Much like the car that appears to Faulkner in Ballard's short story as a gigantic, defamiliarised marrow, abstract sculptures appeared to many members of this civic audience as little more than unannounced protuberances in the urban landscape. Insufficiently acquainted with the historical developments that had led sculpture to this point, and unable to infer any trace of the commemorative purpose that had previously characterised public artworks, this everyday viewer's sense of disenfranchisement was founded on an inability to comprehend not only a lack of mimetic characteristics, but also any sense of the cause it was erected in support of. Felt as a point of exclusion, the manner in which these alien forms occupied space was seen as inherently provocative, largely due to a limited understanding of either who or what it was that they addressed.

Read's viewpoint had also come under criticism from artists who saw public commissions as subordinating their work to an architectural site. There was even a word of caution from Moore, the British artist for whom such arrangements had arguably proved most favourable, who counseled that 'too often in modern building the work of art is an afterthought, a piece of decoration added to fill a space that is felt to be too empty,' and that 'the transition from private patronage to public

---

[160] *Slant* was originally painted green. See Tim Hilton, *The Sculpture of Phillip King* (Abingdon, Lund Humphries, 1992), 57.

patronage would mean a radical reorganisation of the ideals and practice of art.'[161] A 1962 article by George Whittet examining the fraught relation of art to architecture called 'Whatever Happened to Mama?' mused upon how 'unbelievable' it was that collective interaction had even advanced to the point it had given the fierce individualism of artists.[162] On the whole the position younger British sculptors took to the issue of public responsibility was an intransigent one. William Turnbull, who had been involved in a number of architectural projects including Theo Crosby's well documented AIA Congress Exhibition in 1961, offered the dire prognosis: 'the problem of public sculpture is largely with the public –not with sculpture.'[163]

For Barry Martin as well, a sculptor's disconnection from society was the result of a situation where there were 'too many sculptures and not enough "real" consumers of sculpture.' What he also saw this relating to was the way in which a sculptor's vocation was now linked to broader sociological conditions advanced under capitalism:

> The sculptor, serving society, was a craftsman. His alienation now carries the inevitable in-opportunities of a consumer society.[164]

For sculptors public commissions presented not only the potential for fractious conflict with architects and planners. They were also symptomatic of a dysfunctional relationship between sculpture and the systems of economic patronage that had previously sustained it. Lacking support from these quarters, the onus was placed on sculptors to now consider their output as products in the same sense as others within consumer society, circumstances that arguably subjected them to the same conditions of alienated labour as the general workforce. This is another reason why the functional purpose those like Read imagined for sculpture within the civic sphere was seen to compromise the core remit at St. Martin's: a more enclosed investigation into its

---

[161] Henry Moore 'The Sculptor in Modern Society', transcript of a talk given in September 1958, in *Henry Moore on Sculpture*, 87, 88.

[162] George Whittet, 'Whatever Happened to Mama?' *The Studio*, May (1962): 131.

[163] 'Public sculpture' Turnbull noted in a feature surveying a range of artist's opinions on the subject, 'hangs around sculpture like a guilt.' In Robert Carruthers, Garth Evans, Barry Flanagan et al., 'Peter Stuyvesant Foundation City Sculpture Project,' *Studio International*, July (1972): 23. See also Lawrence Alloway, 'The Public Sculpture Problem, *Studio International*, October (1972): 122-125; William Tucker, 'Notes on Sculpture, Public Sculpture and Patronage,' *Studio International*, January (1972): 9; 'Pro-Stuyvesant,' *Studio International*, December (1972): 215-216.

[164] Barry Martin, 'The Problem of British Sculpture,' *Studio International*, May (1972): 186.

irreducible identity. This sense of identity sat quite apart from any perceived sense of responsibility to the general public. What Turnbull's inflexibility demonstrated was a belief that 'real consumers of sculpture' could be eventually created through an obstinate refusal to capitulate to such external demands. As Garth Evans put it this was a hope that 'sculpture of a new kind would, by virtue of its internal properties, force itself on the world in a new way.'[165]

Writing after the initial success of *New Generation 1965*, it was Tucker who in 1969 offered the most succinct reflection on the contradiction that had developed between the size of these sculptures and their sensitivity to context:

> If the bright morning of those hopes has somewhat dimmed, it may well because neither the artists themselves, nor those who made themselves responsible for publicising and distributing the work, recognised the nature of the revolution that had occurred. The scale and availability of the new work was public, but its content was private. Society had not asked for it and there was no place for it, except in the non worlds of galleries, museums and circulating exhibitions.[166]

Public in scale but private in content, the problem facing this new class of object was that it took up unprecedented amounts of room whilst simultaneously trying to retain a sense of intransigent autonomy from its surroundings. Writing on the psychological impact of King's floor-based sculpture, and how unbidden it seemed, Lynton spoke of how it 'invades our territory.' It appeared to the viewer he said as an aggressive entity, 'a thing illegally parked.'[167] Seen in the manner outlined by Lynton, the non-associative colour and smooth surfaces that characterise King's work appear more introverted than spectacular. These characteristics function instead to aggressively assert a sculpture's presence, as a buoyant means of resistance against the context in which it appeared.

Less suited to outdoor display, New Generation sculpture operated better inside, where its large scale and non-associative colour could be employed to greater effect.

---

[165] Garth Evans, 'Sculpture and Reality,' *Studio International*, February (1969): 61.

[166] William Tucker, 'An Essay on Sculpture,' *Studio International*, January (1969): 13.

[167] Norbert Lynton, *Sculptures by Phillip King* (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1975), n.p.

In this regard these younger sculptors' decision to foster connections primarily with the 'non worlds of galleries, museums and circulating exhibitions' was in keeping with Caro's thoughts on the subject, who, speaking to Phyllis Tuchman commented:

> Almost all sculpture, I guess, needs to be indoors – or enclosed in some way… For my part, up to now, my sculpture (however large) is un-public.[168]

What the phrase 'un-public' indicates was a desire on Caro's part to shelter his work from the kinds of criticism to which public art was commonly subjected. This remark in turn raises questions around the kind of viewer that he saw as being able to engage with the kind of un-public sculptures he was making. Presumably his comments suggest an individual sufficiently initiated, or at least sufficiently prepared, to apprehend his artworks as purely formal propositions. In this sense the non-world provided by galleries and museums was not only a more neutral site for such un-public sculpture to inhabit, it also played a role in determining the type of audience who were likely to come into contact with it.

Having identified indoors as the optimal place of display, it was also at this time that some began to ask whether there was an altogether new kind of location that could house these large scale works in a more sympathetic fashion. Arising from an inability to locate a place in the world for sculpture, one solution presented to alleviate its homeless state was the creation of a new kind of tailor made space. It was along such lines that Colin McInnes in 1967, complaining of the limited opportunities to see work by Scott in favorable circumstances, asked:

> If people have libraries for books, why not rooms exclusively for sculpture? If theatres and halls are built specifically for plays and concerts, why not built places simply to show sculpture?[169]

The problem McInnes referred to in part was the longterm fortunes of sculptures by Scott and his peers. Following their initial exhibition and potential purchase by a collector there was little to guarantee that they would be shown again in favourable

---

[168] Tuchman, 'An Interview with Anthony Caro,' 57.
[169] Robertson, *Tim Scott: Sculpture 1961-1967*, 9-10.

circumstances. Those with sufficient wealth to buy such works he notes were likely to display them either on the grounds of their estates or indoors in too close a proximity to their domestic life.[170]

One individual to whom McInnes' comments were potentially addressed was Alistair McAlpine. One of the most active patrons of New Generation sculpture in the 1960s, McAlpine was an individual whose support was only matched at an institutional level by organisations such as the Leicestershire Education Authority.[171] He had sought to accommodate his acquisitions in a pavilion he had originally constructed to house his painting collection at his home in Henley upon Thames before donating these works to the Tate Gallery in 1971. An attempt to install a work by Scott in his garden had led to it becoming damaged,[172] whereas King's *Tra La La* (1963) occupied a dining room alongside a suite of Saarinen table and chairs, fiberglass objects whose shape and method of construction bore considerable similarities to it.[173]

Exhibiting their work in London at either the Kasmin, Rowan or Waddington Galleries, these sculptors had elected to use such commercial spaces as a primary mode of display. Brian O'Doherty, reflecting on the ideological premises underpinning the white cube gallery, has argued that such environments had emerged as a response to the same forces which had shaped the avant-garde and modernist art. Ecclesiastical in its overtones, the white cube was for him a space in which the artwork assumes precedence over the viewer, and where the temporal laws affecting the outside world were seemingly held in suspension. Prevailing in this environment was the faculty of sight, or 'the eye.' For O'Doherty 'the eye,' as opposed to 'the spectator,' was the kind of perceiving subject privileged by Modernism[174].

---

[170] 'The enlightened collector then? No, he won't be much better, for either he'll want to place the sculpture out of doors, or else inside as a decorative element in his household décor. So unless a collector is prepared to devote a room to sculpture (rather as he might a bathroom to a bath), this solution is unsatisfactory.' Ibid., 9.

[171] Commissions by the Leicester Education Authority were managed by Stuart Mason, another individual sympathetic to the aims of the New Generation sculptors.

[172] The Scott sculpture in question, eventually destroyed as a result, was most probably *January the 1st* (1965). See Reid, ed., *The Alistair McAlpine Gift*, 6-7.

[173] Alistair McAlpine, *Once a Jolly Bagman*, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1997), 113.

[174] Bryan O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space* (Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 1999), 35-64.

This aesthetic delineation enacted by the white cube and the role of social conditioning it performed can be further illustrated using the following anecdote. Kasmin, recalling the 'bloody students' who would come to his gallery –designed by the architecture firm Ahrends Burton and Korelek between 1962 and 1963, and arguably London's first bespoke, modern commercial exhibition space– complained that these young visitors often brought with them sandwiches to eat.[175] An important dealer exhibiting formalist abstraction in London at the time, the austerity of Kasmin's space had helped attract artists from both America and Britain. These included Caro and Tucker.[176] Transgressing its sanctity by adding the foreign faculties of smell and taste to the act of viewing, through their excessive corporeality the students contaminated the purified experience that Kasmin's gallery was purpose built to deliver. An initiated visitor, one more attuned to the prompts given by its 'restrained detailing' would have left such affairs at its threshold.[177] Instead the students, lounging on the pair of Mies Van De Rohe ottomans that occupy pride of place in Snowden's 1963 photographs of the freshly completed gallery, remained oblivious to such etiquette.

In this respect Kasmin's intentions were in keeping with the kind of ocular engagement New Generation sculptors sought with their audience. The controlled conditions provided by his gallery were particularly suited to acting as a laboratory in which sculpture could be effectively tested. This was due to how it neutralized the problem of context. As O'Doherty observed:

> The ideal gallery subtracts from the artwork all cues that interfere with the fact that it is "art." The work is isolated from everything that would detract from its own evaluation of itself.[178]

Reduced to a roving vector, one further displaced by the obtrusive volumes of the

---

[175] Lisa Tickner, 'The Kasmin Gallery,' Vol.2, No.30 (2007): 259.
[176] Caro held solo exhibitions at the Kasmin Gallery in 1965, 1967, 1971 and 1972. Tucker, following a period in which he exhibited with the Rowan Gallery, would show there in 1969 and 1970.
[177] See Peter Blundell-Jones, *Ahrends Burton and Korelek* (London: Academy Editions, 1991), 45.
[178] O'Doherty, *Inside the White cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space*, 14.

sculpture themselves –what O'Doherty termed as the more active presence of 'the spectator'– is displaced.[179] As Scott noted, the sculpture becomes the focal point of this transaction: 'the spectator is free to move, because by attending to the object he has disposed of his centrality, and must seek it out in the object.'[180] Ostensibly neutral in its geographical signification, and dampening any incident that would interfere with a formal interpretation of the work's properties, the white cube presented a solution, albeit partial, to the problem being posed by abstract sculpture's annexation of the gallery's floor.

The need for such a solution is clearly visible in the photographs of sculptures that appeared in the catalogue for the 1965 Whitechapel exhibition. Staged in garage studio spaces, attics and back gardens this photographic documentation clearly illustrates the dilemmas posed by having to improvise backdrops for such objects, an issue that grew all the more pronounced the larger a work became. In several cases, including *And the Birds Began to Sing* (1965) by King and *Assume, Concede* (1965) by Woodham, paper has been hung from the wall trailing onto the floor. This forms an effect reminiscent of the cycloramas used by commercial photographers, which places an item against an infinitely recessive field.[181] *Meru II* (1964) by Tucker, and *Alter Ego* (1963) by Witkin are placed outside, resting in the grass, with houses visible in the background.[182] Possibly the most theatrical of these improvised setting is the plate depicting Bolus' *Bowbend* (1965), in which the sculpture has been photographed against a dark pleated curtain [Fig.45]. It sits directly on top of a woven seagrass carpet.

The question of whether sculptors now had to play a more active role in determining presentational factors beyond the works themselves, or if it was possible to make sculpture so self-contained as to preclude any such responsibility, became nothing less than the principal ideological factor dividing successive groups of artists who would study at St. Martin's. For those like McLean, Long, Hilliard etc. who

---

[179] Indeed, it is hard to imagine O'Doherty's concept of the 'eye' being formulated in relation to anything other than Greenberg's 'eyesight alone', a theoretical construct formed primarily as a means to police the development of sculpture.
[180] Robertson, *Tim Scott: Sculpture 1961-67*, 28.
[181]  Robertson, *New Generation 1965*, 35, 83.
[182] Ibid., 67,75.

would go on to become important exponents of performance art, land art and photo-conceptualism, the removal of sculpture from a plinth was just the first stage in its environmental dissolution. Like Caro however, the New Generation sculptors sought to reinforce a sense of self-containment in their work. This seeming disregard for both site and audience is symptomatic of what could be called the rhetorical nature of the language they were developing.

Brener saw these rhetorical aspects as a sign of the increasing refinement of a collective grammar, one that failed to take into account the environmental implications such sculptural developments suggested. These rhetorical qualities were for him inwards looking and represented the work's founding inability to engage meaningfully with their surroundings. By contrast, those like Tucker saw their task as attempts to balance a series of internal and external factors. Writing in dialogue with Scott he outlined this stance:

> If it [sculpture] is not to be (simply active "dynamic") or aggressive in it passivity (simply "being there"), it must have a complex double character which might be called "reflective"; i.e. it exists and its structure reflects consciousness of its existence.[183]

For Tucker, scale, smoothness and non-associative colour acted in conjunction with one another to perform a dual function: to optically assert the external presence of a work, while at the same time working to preserve a sense of reflective interiority. As such, the un-public nature of this sculpture is not necessarily equivalent to privacy, but rather a measured calibration of its public and private aspects. To many of the critics of New Generation sculpture this was a sign of orthodox academicism, which is on first impression a fair assumption given how explicitly conjoined its public image was to the educational environment from which it sprang. 'The more one sees of the new English sculpture,' the American critic David Bourdon observed when reviewing *Primary Structures*, 'the more it all tends to look alike.'[184] This was a factor he attributed to how conjoined the biographies of artists like King and Witkin appeared, a founding narrative in which St. Martin's played a central role.

---

[183] Robertson, *Tim Scott, Sculpture 1961–67*, 31.
[184] David Bourdon 'Our Period Style,' *Art and Artist*, June (1966): 55.

What these readings do not take into account though is the manner in which sculpture's liberation from its previous material and presentational constraints sat in conjunction with the theme of liberation that dominated the society during the 1960s. Karen Wilkin, describing the evolution of Witkin's practice, tried to indirectly encapsulate this attitude by using the term 'Youthquake,' by saying how these sculptures 'embodied the mood of energy, experimentation and recklessness that pervaded London in those giddy years.'[185] What Wilkin's analysis fails to apprehend is that it was the rhetorical independence that this sculpture sought for itself that most visibly allied it to a widespread attitude of youthful rebellion in the 1960s, as opposed to any populist affiliation implied by Witkin's use of bright colours or synthetic materials. Embodying a significantly more cerebral outlook than that held by any of the teenage socialites who featured in Diana Vreeland's 1965 *Vogue* article inaugurating the youthquake, this sense of freedom instead grew from the critical rejection of sculpture's previous responsibilities.[186]

Any connection between such formally predicated sculpture and broader social issues is better established along lines of resistance as opposed to complicity. This was a factor that McShine, when speaking about the artworks included in *Primary Structures*, recognised when he remarked 'since most of the structures are made for the indoors, their immense size and assault on intimate scale carry an implicit social criticism.'[187] Elsewhere, searching for a way to encapsulate the specific impact of Caro's early work, Tucker settled on the phrase 'confrontation sculptures.'[188]

When assessing an undulating form like *Nagas* (1964), a sculpture Witkin presented in *New Generation 1965*, those biomorphic qualities often seen as

---

[185] Karen Wilkin, *Isaac Witkin* (New York: Hudson Hills Press, 1998), 16.
[186] Diana Vreeland, ed., 'Youthquake,' *American Vogue*, Vol.145, No.1, January 1st (1965): 112-119. By coincidence, Vreeland's article was published in the American issue of the magazine the same month as its London counterpart announced 1965 as 'the year of British sculpture.' The latter famously reproduced a full bleed image of King's *Genghis Khan* (1963) alongside a photograph of a model with a Vidal Sassoon haircut. See *British Vogue*, January 1st (1965): 21.
[187] McShine, *Primary Structures: Younger American and British Sculptors*, n.p.
[188] 'David Annesley, Rolouf Louw, Tim Scott, William Tucker, 'Anthony Caro's Work: A Symposium by Four Sculptors,' 14.

embodying a latent surrealism could also be defined in relation to contemporaneous notions of sexual revolution [Fig.47]. This was something Hilton Kramer identified when reviewing Witkin's work in 1967:

> Indeed the new sculptural freedom reminds one of nothing so much as the new sexual freedom. If the old modern view of sexuality could be summed up in Freud's observation that biology is fate, the new view inclines in the direction of polymorphous pleasure. In one realm as in the other, there is a deliberate blurring of function, identity, and limitation.[189]

Considered in this manner New Generation sculpture can be interpreted as seeking out for itself an analogous form of unencumbered status as that of the 'turned on' modern subject, defying an array of taboos and transcending the societal responsibilities placed upon it by an existing sculptural tradition. Unlike Minimalist art, whose clean lines and rational arrangements would readily court associations with the industrial complex, the writhing biomorphic forms that recur in many New Generation sculptures are more in keeping with a climate of permissiveness fostered in opposition to such hegemonic order.[190] Although developing in sheltered isolation from it, these characteristics also parallel the arrival of psychedelic culture in Britain, sharing as it did a propensity towards sensual colour and organic forms.[191]

Marcuse, attempting to theorise a 'biological foundation' upon which political activism could be based in the immediate aftermath of the Paris riots in May 1968, suggested that 'the aesthetic dimension could serve as a sort of gauge for a free society.' This 'fulfillment' he said could only be found in 'the struggle against the institutions that, by their very functioning, deny and violate these claims.'[192] Intransigently occupying space previously allotted to a more socially functional brand of sculpture, while seeking out an unencumbered purity for itself, New Generation sculpture it could be argued is aligned at least partly with the 'new sensibility' imagined by

---

[189] Hilton Kramer, 'The New Sculpture: Aspirations and Blind Alleys,' *The New York Times*, November 12th (1967): 37.
[190] See Anna Chave, 'Minimalism and the Rhetoric of Power,' *Arts*, January (1990): 44-63.
[191] Looking for landmarks of this kind one could point to Michael Hollingshead's arrival in London in September 1965, and his establishment of the World Psychedelic Centre in Belgravia shortly thereafter. See Miles, *London Calling*, 174-178.
[192] Herbert Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation* (London: Penguin, 1969), 35.

Marcuse. This was insofar as it operated as a 'surrealistic' interruption to the everyday order of things. [193] What are otherwise seen as the academic, or rhetorical characteristics of New Generation sculpture could be recast as attempts to establish a new kind of autonomy. These sculpture's maintenance of an un-public interiority forms another significant part of this emancipatory process. This because they claimed a diminished obligation to the viewer, by employing a sculptural argot resistant to the authoritative pressures placed upon it by an existing model of patronage. What made these works appear so fantastically alien to the spectator was the degree to which they appeared to confound conventional expectations of monumental forms; or the extent to which they seemed to have 'dropped out' of such debates.

**Conclusion**

Somewhat distanced from the dynamic social scene into which the New Generation sculptors dramatically debuted at the Whitechapel Gallery in 1965, the aim of these artists' enterprise was arguably to enhance the mobility of their sculptures as much as their own. Laying claim to the floor space and seeking out a range of new materials to extend the possibilities available to the discipline, their purpose was nothing less than to embody sculpture with its own nascent subjecthood, or sense of fundamental identity. The position these artists took up was a resolutely formal one, however one less reliant on a concept of historical necessity than a consideration of how materials could 'embody the formal quality of the object.'

What this indicates is that the attendant vocabulary provided by Modernist criticism was considered less important than the lexical signification of the elements that made up a completed sculpture itself. Predicated on the same contingent

---

[193] In order to establish these new societal conditions Marcuse saw the need to transcend previous boundaries and non-political art saying 'the political protest, assuming a total character, reaches into a dimension which, as aesthetic dimension, has been essentially apolitical. And the political protest activates in this dimension precisely the foundational, organic elements: the human sensibility which rebels against the dictates of oppressive reason, and, in doing so, invokes the sensuous power of the imagination.' Ibid., 37.

arrangements and experimental materiality privileged by group discussions held at St. Martin's, and quite unlike the Minimalist artworks they were exhibited alongside during *Primary Structures*, these sculptures were intended to prompt allusions as opposed to suppressing them. This playful contingency suggested an altogether less doctrinaire handling, and a more 'communally' formed language.[194] Lacking a pedestal to act as its intermediary, alternative strategies had to be employed in order to demarcate sculpture from its surrounding environment. To some extent the 'non world' of the white cube gallery space was capable of holding these issues at bay. But the sheer scale of such un-public sculpture was another factor that effectively stranded it in a hinterland between conventional methods of display, and the environmental tendencies that emerged soon afterwards.

When attempting to summarise the operative language of coloured abstract sculpture in 1960s British art, it is to this sense of duality that one is continually returned. Being at once part of the world and radically withdrawn from it, an array of new techniques simultaneously endowed sculpture with a spectacular buoyancy and a self-contained interiority. It is also within such a duality that that a formalist programme of abstraction practiced by the New Generation can be most closely articulated in relation to the question of its wider cultural affiliations. This is because the collegiate strategy that was developed to announce a sculpture's purity was in fact the same factor that most explicitly linked it to a broader sociological context. The point upon which such a comparison pivots is a pursuit of linguistic autonomy, visions of embodied semantics and unimpeded subjecthood that had come to regulate ever increasing portions of the modern environment.

---

[194] 'The Sculptures of Anthony Caro, and the direction they have been taking over the past ten years or so, could almost be described as communal. In few contemporary artists can there be seen such clear feedback from theory to practice, from the influences on the work to the work itself: an unbroken continuum of what modern sculpture can achieve in terms of pure expressiveness.' Michael Dempsey, 'The Caro Experience,' *Art and Artist*, February (1969): 17.

## Starting Hares: Jeremy Moon, 1962-1968

British formalist abstraction in the early 1960s, insofar as it can be understood to function linguistically, strove to insulate itself from mass culture while developing a greater reciprocal dialogue between artworks themselves. Beyond the collegiate adoption of a formalist approach by the St. Martin's Sculpture Department however, a similar strategy was being replicated with greater and lesser degrees of success elsewhere, with many other art schools in London and further afield 'going abstract.' Whereas artists who studied during the 1950s had to progressively cycle through a range of styles before reaching such a conclusion, a combination of innovative pedagogy and exhibitions showcasing recent international developments meant that by the early 1960s a student could align themselves with the latest artistic style much more quickly. Emblematic of these accelerated cultural conditions was the career forged by Jeremy Moon, who despite only beginning to paint seriously in his late twenties was rapidly propelled into a position as one of Britain's more visible abstract artists.

Having previously examined the complex inter-relation of spectacular sources and formal devices that overlap in the work of Richard Smith, as well as the semiological and emancipatory drives that informed New Generation sculpture; this chapter will focus on the way in which the personal identity of the abstract painter in 1960s Britain was constructed in opposition to older notions of artistic subjecthood, and how this in turn conditioned the artworks that these individuals produced. While British abstraction can be portrayed as trying to match the scale and ambition of examples being produced abroad, there was a significant contextual difference that it first needed to confront and overcome. In the United States the development of Abstract Expressionism, as well as the other avant-garde tendencies that followed it, had taken place in quite different social circumstances. Impeding parallel developments in Britain was a comparatively trenchant and academicised tradition of art making, one that many younger artists perceived as being closely intertwined with values espoused by the political Establishment. A question recurring across the full

range of the spectrum of cultural production at the time was the value of such an Establishment, and this was a debate from which abstract art was in no way exempt. Remarking in 1966 on the internationalisation of British art, Bowness would ruefully note the continuation of a 'native obsession with class and social distinctions,' saying 'nothing seems able to destroy these traditional and largely moribund elements of our culture.'[1]

Just as American abstraction had provided younger artists the means with which to conceive of themselves as independent of an earlier, inter-war avant-garde, it also provided the means with which to challenge what they perceived as the dilettantish persona of the British artist. Thomas Crow has stated that 'to distinguish themselves from the bohemian trappings of older British artists, the London abstractionists sought to present an attitude of tough-minded professionalism.'[2] It is this professional attitude that will be examined here, with regard to the type of abstraction that was considered to most potently embody it. Taking place alongside the general cultural emergence of a 'new class' more concerned with individual merit than social standing, the professionalisation of abstract painting was likewise conditioned by a faith in technological advancements linked to paints and the canvas support.

An individual considered by Charles Harrison to be every inch 'a highly professional' abstract painter, Moon was someone who was 'dedicated to a very demanding and unadulterated view of painting.' Art-making was a task he noted that Moon regarded as of no less than 'moral' importance.[3] Upon what basis was such a morality founded though, and how did abstract painting function to engender it? What will be put forward here is the argument that Moon and others of his generation felt a greater need to identify themselves with the processes of modernisation affecting society at large. To do so they had to part with the image of the amateur certain members of an older British avant-garde had cultivated. Inextricably joined to archaic social divisions that this younger generation felt compelled to question, amateurism

[1] Alan Bowness, 'British Art Today,' in *Art of Our* Time, ed. Will Grohmann (London: Thames and Hudson, 1966), 110.
[2] Thomas Crow, 'London Calling,' *Artforum*, Summer (1993): 83.
[3] Charles Harrison, 'Jeremy Moon's Recent Paintings,' *Studio International* March (1968): 134.

became nothing less than morally circumspect in this new, supposedly 'classless' climate. In these circumstances American art had a catalysing effect, one that was as much ideological as it was stylistic. As a result of this large-scale abstract painting presented a provocation not only to existing artistic traditions, but also to the so-called 'Establishment' that upheld them.

Another aspect of substantial significance to this enquiry is the relationship these artists, and for the purposes of this investigation Moon specifically, had to the studios in which their work was produced. This relationship formed part of an international shift in taste away from the domesticated European 'atelier' and the 'easel pictures' that issued from it, towards an industrial space epitomised by the Manhattan loft. Finding space to match this trend in central London presented its own distinct challenges. With artistic production increasingly coming to resemble a form of light industry, the fact remained that many successful British painters continued to work from their homes, in studios converted from front rooms or in garages attached to their property. Continuing to occupy the household –effectively a pre-industrial site of production– they ran the risk of being considered not sufficiently invested in their practices.

From a British perspective the image of American abstraction was not entirely separable from the technological superiority that marked the country as an industrial superpower in the postwar era. In actuality, a great many painters and sculptors from the United States worked in similarly domesticated circumstances to their European colleagues. Despite this, and much like the mirage of a consumer utopia that had proved so potent in discussions at the ICA years previously, the logistical advantages available to American artists, debatable as they were, likewise 'gained a measure of truth in a British context, particularly as an alternative to an endemically genteel, snobbish, and unadventurous artistic culture.'[4] Supporting the widespread feeling that these advantages were very real indeed were the accounts of the few artists who had visited New York. Gerald Laing, a St. Martin's student who had spent the summer of 1963 working as an assistant to Robert Indiana in his Coenties Slip studio following

---

[4] Crow, *The Rise of the Sixties*, 39-40.

an introduction from Richard Smith, observed how marked the distinction was:

> I was rapidly made aware of the differences between British and American working conditions and equipment. While we struggled in the small dark front rooms of houses in Notting Hill or Whitechapel, they had giant lofts, one hundred feet long, and masses of light. They could easily make vast paintings; their canvas stretchers were enormous, two inches deep, strong and rigid; ours were the pathetic slot-together ones you can buy in art shops: flimsy, small, and horribly prone to warping. They eschewed the use muddy palettes to which we seemed condemned, and mixed their paints wholesale on large sheets of glass, or, as in Indiana's case, cat food tins, making clear and deliberate decisions about colour. Even their paint tubes were bigger than ours.[5]

## Prologue: Abstract Professionalism

Only beginning to seriously consider art as an occupation at the age of twenty seven, Moon's career as a painter could in some ways be seen as anomalous, but in actuality his story corresponds with that of many others. Following WWII the United Kingdom had not fully demobilised and conscription remained in place. Two years National Service was mandatory for males under the age of 51 until 1960. This frequently prevented individuals from entering higher education until they were in their early twenties. Moon served as a Non Commissioned Officer in the King's Own Regiment between 1952 and 1954, being stationed in Korea and Japan [Fig.48]. Although he did not participate in combat he was nonetheless in active service during the Korean War, and had spent time in a number of major Asian capitals and regions by the time of his release from duty.

Upon returning to England Moon enrolled at Christ's College Cambridge to read Law. There he took an active interest in the arts, a CV from 1956 listing 'décor for the stage, posters for other college activities, murals for the Union,' as well as the scripting and production of a number of 8mm and 16mm films.[6] It was also at Christ's College that Moon met Phillip King, his coeval, who was studying Modern

---

[5] Gerald Laing 'A Brief Autobiography,' in *Gerald Laing Prints and Multiples: A Catalogue Raisonné*, eds. Rupert Halliwell and Lyndsey Ingram (London: Sims Reed, 2006), 13.
[6] Several copies of this CV were later used as paper for drawings. Jeremy Moon Archive, Drawings 1962: Box 4.

Languages. Tellingly, a number of the artists who would go on to staff the St. Martin's Sculpture Department in the early 60s, including both Moon and King, but also Caro and Tucker, held Oxbridge degrees in non-artistic subjects. Completing his qualification in 1957 Moon first moved briefly to Manchester and then to London. There he obtained a position in the finance department of Napper Stinton and Woolley, an advertising agency based in Soho. Occupied with the management of accounts this job allowed no opportunity to engage in the creative side of the profession so seductive to Smith and the ICA group. The cultural activities that had occupied Moon so much at Cambridge took place outside work. In addition to painting in his flat on Elvaston Place he also maintained a keen interest in dance and the theatre, taking amongst other things evening ballet classes.[7]

Underpinning Moon's decision to prioritise painting over these other pursuits was his visit to see *Situation* in September 1960, and his first exposure to large-scale abstract canvases. Speaking to Barry Martin about his early development in 1973, Moon would emphasise the importance of *Situation* in precipitating his move towards a full time career as an artist:

> It was like getting the whole message of what modern painting was about suddenly fresh on your door step… This was my first meeting with professional artists and once the sort of dam had burst it was just incredible –every other idea I had ever had, my interest in dance, jazz, my career, and various other things– all fell away and from there onwards there was no doubt in my mind what I was going to do.[8]

In the following year Moon continued to paint in the evenings after work and established contact with several of the *Situation* painters. Having already arrived at a style of abstraction prior to this, he subsequently began to make paintings that relied less on gestural brushwork, increasingly favoring compositions that presented large areas of flat colour. Looking back in 1973, Moon was keen to emphasise that the specific context in which *Situation* took place was imperative to an understanding of its effect. Arguably, however, the approach that he consistently took to making

---

[7] See Norbert Lynton, 'Jeremy Moon,' *Art International*, Vol.20, No.7-8 (1976): 41.
[8] Barry Martin 'Jeremy Moon, 29th October 1973, Interview with Barry Martin,' *One*, April (1974): 4.

paintings from this point onwards could be neatly summarised by this description of 'a more formal use of the canvas' that featured in Coleman's catalogue essay for the exhibition:

> The central feature of the formal painting as such is concern with surface, organised through the employment of "visual facts." The canvas is, more often than not, partitioned into a few simple areas, or fields, which are often very close in tone and hue…
> The effect is to make painting cartographically simple but perceptually complex – A kind of stable/unstable surface.[9]

Taking his cue from the visual facts evident in many of the works displayed in *Situation*, Moon's own move away from the existential connotations of previous abstraction was rapid. Having seen neither the 1956 or 1959 showcases of American abstraction at the Tate Gallery, he was effectively amongst the very first to apprehend large-scale British abstract painting as an indigenous product. It was similarly as a result of these peculiar circumstances that he was able to readily bypass the dual influences of European Tachisme and American Action Painting, tendencies that had taken even the most precocious talents of the mid to late fifties like Smith and Denny a number of years to digest.[10] Supplanting the expressive histrionics commonly associated with these styles was Moon's impression, relayed to Martin, of the 'professional' attitude radiating from this group of younger British painters. Having already arrived by his own account at 'a kind of very amateurish abstract expressionism,' his encounter with 'very large, very simple, so called in those days "hard-edged" paintings' was nothing less than what he 'had been waiting for.'[11]

Moon's eventual decision to leave his job and devote himself to painting full time came towards in 1961, following a brief period of enrollment as a student at the Central School. This second stint in higher education lasted only a single term and

---

[9] Coleman, 'Situation: An Exhibition of British Abstract Painting,' n.p.
[10] This is of course only one of several potential factors. For instance, Christopher Finch remembers the increasing availability of American art magazines from around 1960 onwards leading to younger artists becoming aware of trends manifesting on the other side of the Atlantic 'almost instantaneously,' quite different conditions to that of just several years previously. Christopher Finch, 'London Pop Recollected,' in *Pop Art: US/UK Connections, 1956-1966*, eds. David E. Brauer and Jim Edwards (Houston TX: Menil Collection, 2001), 26.
[11] Martin, 'Jeremy Moon, 29th October 1973, Interview with Barry Martin,' 4.

had much in common with King's short tenure as a St. Martin's Sculpture student. King had attended St. Martin's for an academic year in 1957, but had been given his own separate studio space.[12] There he made use of the school's resources as a means of private reflection, and did not participate in the evening workshop activities that were being delivered by Caro. Moon's relation to the Central School was similarly tangential, and his decision to spend so little time there came through the feeling that he had obtained all he could from it more quickly than the younger students with whom he was enrolled.

In his study of the developments of the arts in Britain during the 1960s Robert Hewison remarks that for a creative member of the middle class of this period, like Moon, art school education signified 'entry to bohemia'. Echoing McLuhan, Hewison also saw these students willing to make a 'more commercial assessment of their talents, to move from the ivory tower to the control tower of society.'[13] Hewison attributed this shift in priorities partly to a greater mixing of working class and middle class students within such institutions. Another factor contributing to these educational shifts can be drawn from Alex Seago's observations on the attitudes of ex-servicemen entering art schools from the 1950s onwards. Stressing the strong sense of independence they had established for themselves beforehand, Seago notes that these older students were less inclined to heed the prescribed opinions of their tutors. Instead they tended to see their time 'as an opportunity to improve their career chances and they took very little notice of members of staff who appeared to be impeding their goals.'[14]

Several months after leaving the Central School Moon was selected for the January 1962 *Young Contemporaries* showcase at the R.B.A. Galleries. This was the first time his work had been exhibited publicly, and he was represented by a painting entitled *Study for a Painting with Crosses*, and a sculpture called *Construction with Three Cubes* (both 1962) [Fig.49]. Having been held the previous year at the Whitechapel

---

[12] Robert Kudielka, *Phillip King* (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1981), 12.

[13] Robert Hewison, *Too Much: Art and Society in the Sixties, 1960 –75* (London: Methuen, 1986), 63.

[14] Seago, *Burning the Box of Beautiful Things*, 79.

Art Gallery the format had served as the springboard for a number of the RCA Pop painters, like Hockney, who was awarded the Junior Prize. An important intermediary between art schools and the commercial gallery circuit *Young Contemporaries* was first established in 1949 by Carel Weight. It operated as a forerunner to the ebullient celebration of youth encapsulated by the *New Generation* brand. Inclusion in these exhibitions had increasingly come to be seen as crucial stage in an artist's development, being presented as a barometer of experimental new attitudes infusing the London art scene. By 1962 the impact of the exhibition, selected by eminent critics and artists, lay in how it validated approaches still considered problematic within the academic system. [15] Plaudits were awarded to those like Hockney, Jones and Phillips, whose positions as students were often precarious. Less than two years after participating in *Young Contemporaries*, Moon held his first one-man exhibition at a commercial gallery, and obtained teaching posts at two of London's most highly regarded art schools. Considering the shortness of his own tenure within formal art education, such a fact is indicative of both the promotional effectiveness of these showcases, as well as the accelerated absorption of younger artists into the professional marketplace in the early part of the decade.

Displaying his own work at the RBA galleries on Suffolk Street, Moon would have been very conscious of the precedent set there by *Situation* just over a year before. It was also as a result of his affiliation with several of its artists that his next opportunity would emerge. In November 1962 Moon was contacted by Alex Gregory-Hood, one of the directors of the Rowan Gallery, to arrange a studio visit. This had come following a recommendation from Brian Young. [16] Young, a participant in the *Situation* exhibitions was amongst the first artists to show at the gallery, which had been opened by Gregory-Hood and Diana, 'Wonky' Kingsmill, in July that year.[17] Taking its name from Kingsmill's maiden surname, from its inception

---

[15] The Young Contemporaries judges in 1962 were Frank Auerbach, John Berger, Bernard Cohen, Henry Mundy, and Eduardo Paolozzi. For descriptions of Moon's entries see Royal Society of British Artists, *Young Contemporaries 1962*, Exhibition Catalogue (London, 1962), 13, 19.

[16] The exchange between Moon and Alex Gregory-Hood is documented in a series of letters held by the Moon estate.

[17] Coincidentally, following a protracted illness that rendered Rumney unable to paint, it was Brian Young who had helped him complete the highly reduced canvases he contributed to *Place* several years previously.

the gallery showed a consistently younger selection of artists than many of London's more venerable dealers. Although not assuming a dogmatic position to the issue of style, committed as it was to representing contemporary practitioners a large proportion of the work exhibited at the Rowan Gallery was abstract. Among the painters to show there who worked in this manner were Roger Cook, John Edwards, Paul Huxley, Mark Lancaster and Bridget Riley. The gallery also maintained strong ties to St. Martin's sculptors, giving early opportunities to King, Tucker and Witkin, as well as Garth Evans and Barry Flanagan. Unlike the Kasmin or Robert Fraser Galleries, who both imported substantial quantities of American art, the Rowan Gallery with only a few exceptions showed only British work and preferred rather to lobby internationally on its artists' behalf.[18]

Following a studio visit from Gregory-Hood and Kingsmill that took place in early 1963, a date in August was set for Moon's first exhibition. It was to be held jointly with another one-man presentation by David Taggart to take place on the upper floor of their gallery on Lowndes Street. This show encompassed paintings made in the interim of Gregory-Hood's offer, but also featured several others that Moon had completed since leaving the Central School. Following on from this initial presentation, Moon went on to become one of the mainstays of the Rowan Gallery programme, having four more solo exhibitions there before the end of the decade, an average of one every eighteen months. As much as he would continue to experiment with, and progressively challenge his working methods, many of the core concerns that would characterise his later practice were already fully in place at the time of this first show. His paintings were cleanly executed in a hard edge style, and very much corresponded with Coleman's description of canvases that are at once 'cartographically simple but perceptually complex.' Despite the apparent clarity of these paintings, there remained a degree to which they compositionally unsettled the stability otherwise implied by their handling. It was this elusive equality that Alan Bowness recognized in a review of the show for the *Observer* when he described each of the works on show

---

[18] The exceptions are so scarce as to able to be listed in their entirety here: Joe Goode exhibited at Rowan Gallery in 1967, Warhol in 1968 and Les Levine in 1969. See Alex Gregory Hood and Annely Juda, eds., *Twenty Five Years, Annely Juda Fine Art/ Juda Rowan Gallery*, (London: Annely Juda Gallery, 1985), 188.

as 'an original visual idea, a self-sufficient, inexplicable emblem.'[19]

Moon's affiliation with the Rowan Gallery also brought with it an increased amount of financial stability, as his official inclusion in its roster came with a contract that guaranteed a quarterly income against future sales of work. An arrangement also provided by the Kasmin Gallery amongst others, it was intended to allow an artist to remain continually productive, in exchange for the seller having the exclusive right to deal in their work.[20] One 1965 *Daily Mail* article, which included reference to Moon, went so far as to claim that this new form of retainer constituted one of the most important factors underwriting the recent success of British art. Departing from the 'gentleman's agreements' that had prevailed up until this point, it described these contractual bargains as being of significant benefit to the wellbeing of artists. 'Marketing is realistic' the article read, 'the artist must show promise, the gallery must show prospects.'[21] Representing a symbiotic partnership between artist and gallery not common until the postwar period, this kind of contract contributed significantly to the image of artistic production as a professional enterprise. For someone like Moon, who had abandoned the security of salaried working life in order to become a painter, this contract would have substantially bolstered his convictions.

Another factor contributing to the financial security of artists like Moon in the 1960s was the availability of part time teaching positions at art schools in and around London. Given that Britain had more art schools per capita than any other country in the world at the time there was an unprecedented need for individuals to staff these institutions.[22] For Moon particularly, whose own practical experience of arts education was limited to his brief spell at the Central School, the opportunity to instruct others would have functioned as another important validation of his newly gained credentials as a professional artist. The first of these appointments came in 1963, when Moon joined the Sculpture Department at St. Martin's. There he

---

[19] Alan Bowness, 'Problems of Abstract Painting,' *Observer*, 18th August (1963).
[20] This approach had been pioneered by the Marlborough Gallery.
[21] 'Newsight: Pop Art' *Daily Mail*, 26th February (1965).
[22] Dominic Sandbrook, *White Heat, A History of Britain in the Swinging Sixties, 1964–1970* (London: Abacus, 2009), 70.

benefited from Frank Martin's habit of employing practicing artists on fractional contracts of either one or two days a week. Moon's credentials as a sculptor relied largely on an Associated Electrical Industries Award for Sculpture he had received in 1962, his entry having been selected for the prize by King. In his early years working at St. Martin's Moon continued to produce a small number of three-dimensional pieces. A work like *Untitled* (1964) demonstrates a close affiliation with the formal explorations of the New Generation sculptors he was teaching alongside [Fig.50]. Although a more substantial and long-lasting outcome of this interest in three-dimensional forms can be seen in early experiments with the shaped canvas that ran alongside sculptures such as *Untitled*. As will be outlined in further detail, Moon's periodic return to the use of a shaped support to challenge and further catalyse his pictorial compositions constitutes an integral part of the way in which his painting practice evolved. It is notable that his first steps in this direction were taken while contributing to an educational debate around what was 'proper to sculpture.'[23]

Moon's second teaching position began in the autumn term of 1963 at the Painting Department at the Chelsea School of Art.[24] Coinciding with Moon's appointment was the publication of *Monad: A Magazine about Painting*, a student edited journal which ran largely in step with his own thinking about artistic practice.[25] In its short lifespan *Monad* drew on the support of several other artists exhibiting at the Rowan Gallery. Another factor contributing to the development of Moon's own practice can be found on *Monad's* back cover advertisement for Rowney Cryla Colour, a brand of paint that had been released by the British company in October 1963 [Fig.51]. Popularised by American paint manufacturers such as Leonard Bocour, Sam Golden and Henry Levinson from the mid 1950s onwards, faster drying water-based acrylic polymers contributed greatly to the ease with which a hard edged effect could

---

[23] A series of photographs, taken around this time, depict Moon teaching in a St. Martin's studio alongside Philip King and Peter Kardia. Bruce McLean is amongst the students who appears in these images.

[24] This invitation to teach had come from Lawrence Gowing, then principal at the school, on the recommendation of Bowness. Gowing, in a previous role in Newcastle, had appointed Hamilton and Pasmore to the staff there.

[25] The closeness of this relationship is confirmed by an inscription in the journal's editorial section, which reads 'I wish to thank the following: Jeremy Moon and John Earnest who had the idea for producing this magazine.' Tim May, ed., *Monad*, 2.

be produced, as well as offering British users some vicarious connection with those painters from the New York and Washington schools known to also favour the medium.[26] Given such incentives it is perhaps hardly surprising that early in 1964 Moon also made the transition from the use of oil paints to acrylics in his own work. *Eagle (2/64)* (1964) inaugurated this technical shift.[27]

### Amateurs in Art: *Situation* and the Establishment

In a letter dated the 23rd July 1963 to Beth Bryant, whom he was to marry several months later, Moon wrote of the newfound sense of identity provided both by teaching posts and gallery representation:

> After two years of very hard work I <u>may</u> be about to reap some success, and in any event am bound to be involved rather more in the professional painters business i.e. "Sendings in", "grants", shows etc. I am determined to think of the summer as only the end of an early phase. So long as I get settled in reasonable accommodation I should be able to get down to some real painting in the autumn.[28]

Such remarks were auspicious, as in the months leading up to Moon's first exhibition at the Rowan Gallery debates around the increasingly professionalised nature of painting were elsewhere becoming heated. In an open letter to the *Sunday Times* on the 9th June 1963, entitled 'Amateurs in Art', a group of younger British artists took issue with comments made by David Sylvester in the same publication a week previously. In his text 'Dark Sunlight,' an article on the current state of British painting, Sylvester had claimed that the centrality of Francis Bacon's importance lay in the way in which he had retained the identity of an amateur painter. Bacon, Sylvester said, 'isn't a pro, ready to have a go at what's asked of him, but a gentleman,

---

[26] From 1966 onwards those dissatisfied with Rowney Cryla could purchase its American counterpart Boccour Aquatec from a small shop associated with Harold Cohen and Gordon House in Islington. See Bulgin, *Situation and New Generation*, 308.
[27] Although there is some discrepancy in exhibition and catalogue captions, Rowan Gallery records suggest *Eagle* to be the first acrylic painting. Correspondence with Robert Moon, 29th March 2016.
[28] Jeremy Moon Archive, Correspondence File.

playing the game to divert or torment himself.'[29]

Taking exception to the idea that advanced British art was tied to an existing class system, one perpetuated by the figure of the amateur painter, 'Amateurs in Art' was a defence of professionalism in the face of Sylvester's accusations of its unpalatable complicity with the marketplace. Its authors wrote:

> A professional painter is one whose profession is painting: not art politics, not market manipulation, not commodity manufacture, but painting. The amateur, in art as in other aspects of our society, is characterised by his diminished commitment, and consequently by his diminished responsibility. In his article "Dark Sunlight", Mr. Sylvester confused the issue by setting the hypothetical purity of the amateur against the hypothetical nasty commercialism of the professional. Commercialism is no more the inevitable counterpart of professionalism in painting than in any other field...
> It is not those whose commitments are so small that they have nothing to lose who take risks in art, and make art great. It is how much is at stake, [those who] take the risks anyway– the professionals, not the amateurs.[30]

One unspoken subtext to this letter, given that seven of its twelve signatories had been involved in one or more of the *Situation* exhibitions, was the short shrift Sylvester had afforded their work previously.[31] In a review of the RBA exhibition, entitled 'A New Orthodoxy,' he had characterised these artist's efforts as misinterpreting the aims of large scale American abstract painting. 'New York has produced more good artists since the war' Sylvester argued 'because it has produced more artists who have acted on the consequences of the fact that art is no longer a profession.'[32] In distinguishing 'those who want to make art' from 'those who want to make something out of art' his critique aligned the failings of British abstraction with these artists' desire to be regarded as productive in the same sense as any other kind of worker.

---

[29] David Sylvester, 'Dark Sunlight,' *Sunday Times*, 2nd June (1963): 8.
[30] Ascott et al., 'Amateurs in Art' *Sunday Times*, 9th June (1963).
[31] The signatories of 'Amateurs in Art' were as follows: Roy Ascott, Peter Blake, Anthony Caro, Bernard Cohen, Harold Cohen, Robyn Denny, R.B. Kitaj, Richard Smith, William Turnbull, Brian Wall, Eduardo Paolozzi and Anthony Benjamin. All but three of these artists were at this time pursuing a direction in their practices that could be described as abstract. The three others –Blake, Kitaj and Paolozzi– could all be categorised as belonging to the ranks of British Pop Art, another tendency that embraced the notion of complicity with the marketplace for different, yet strongly interconnected reasons.
[32] David Sylvester, 'A New Orthodoxy,' *The New Statesman*, 10th September (1960): 337

Responding to this challenge 'Amateurs in Art' was couched in terms of 'rigor' and 'commitment,' and was deliberately phrased to avoid distinctions between representational and abstract art. Any authoritative claim for British art on an international stage was felt by its signatories to be dependent on fundamental changes to national conceptions of art as a vocational pursuit, a concern that superceded aesthetic differences. To those like Sylvester who found commercialism a troubling prospect the point was put that any identification predicated upon the virtue of one's class was just as distasteful. Amateur painting in this context was symbolic of more than a more than a diminished commitment on the part of its maker; it was reflective of a timid conservatism preserved within the British Establishment. As such, the main target of 'Amateurs in Art' was not so much artists like Bacon as those commentators, like Sylvester, who were seen as seeking to preserve the 'suffocating club atmosphere' in which these values were incubated.[33]

The rejection of the amateur, or more accurately the guise of the amateur that served antiquated, upper class notions surrounding the ignobility of needing to work, reflected a growing ideological objection to being governed by a sedentary British aristocracy. This linked the publication of 'Amateurs in Art' to a widespread interest in the notion of 'classlessness' that gripped Britain during the early part of the 1960s. Before pressing this line of enquiry any further it is crucial to stress that this rejection of establishment values did not necessarily herald any substantial democratisation, or broadening of the gender or cultural background of the practitioners operating within the British art scene. With only a few notable exceptions the field continued to comprise for the most part of white males drawn from the middle and upper middle classes. For example, the *New Generation* exhibitions, widely considered at the time to be one of the best indicators of emerging talent, exhibited thirty-four artists during its three-year lifespan. Only one of those chosen –Bridget Riley– was female, while ethnic diversity within the programme was so negligible as to be almost altogether absent. As Hewison surmised in his analysis of the phenomenon, classlessness 'was not a resolution of the problems of class, but an expression of the stress the previously

---

[33] Ascot et al., 'Amateurs in Art.'

rigid class structure was undergoing.'[34]

As Simon Faulkner has highlighted, the language used in 'Amateurs in Art' also bears considerable similarity to the rhetoric employed by the Labour Party leader Harold Wilson, who argued that archaic forms of class stratification stifled economic growth and were ultimately to the detriment of Britain's international standing. In a historic speech given to the Annual Labour Party Conference in Scarborough in October 1963, Wilson argued that Britain could only gain 'as much influence in the world' as it could 'earn' or 'deserve.' This Faulkner says provided artists with an important precedent:

> Given the public presence of such a powerful binary rhetoric produced as Labour prepared themselves for government between 1962 and 1964, it is not surprising that those who identified with its iconoclasm and its class allegiances, found it possible to appropriate this language for use in another fields. "Wilsonism" provided an ideological buttress and some of the ideological materials for the discourse of "professionalism" in the artistic field.[35]

Advocating that the economy be re-forged in the 'white heat' of technological and scientific development, Wilson's policies were intended to enlist a broader spectrum of middle class voters than the Labour movement had previously held access to. Such positivist sentiments hinged on similar criticisms to that levelled at Sylvester, with Wilson warning towards the conclusion of his speech: 'at a time when even the MCC [Marylebone Cricket Club] has abolished the distinction between amateurs and professionals, in science and industry we are content to remain a nation of Gentlemen in a world of Players.'[36]

Wilson's comments were made against the backdrop of a widespread international faith in scientific research and economic productivity. Speaking in 1958 the economist J.K. Galbraith asserted that this productivity was considered just as essential within liberal circles as it as within conservative ones, due to the greater

---

[34] Hewinson, *Too Much: Art and Society in the Sixties*, 73.
[35] Faulkner, *A Cultural Economy of British Art: 1958-1966*, 192.
[36] Harold Wilson, *Labour's Plans for Science*, (London: Victoria House 1963), 7.

financial security it was believed to afford individuals of all classes.[37] This observation can be seen to tally both with Wilson's position, as well as those British artists who equated professional activity with moral investiture. It was Galbraith's belief that conditions of wider and more evenly distributed affluence had given rise to what he termed a 'New Class.' Tracing its origins to the beginning of the 20th century and a relatively small group of artists and intellectuals, Galbraith presented this New Class as having expanded largely in relation to conditions of surplus production in countries like Britain and the United States. Deriving its appeal from a greater sense of economic security, for Galbraith these conditions signaled a significant shift in societal priorities: from an ideology predicated on the fulfilment of never satiated 'wants,' towards a moral assessment of an individual's reasonable 'needs.'[38]

Seen in conjunction with the notion of classlessness –a projected image of cultural meritocracy– Galbraith's definition of the New Class offers an explanation for the morality felt by those like Moon to be present in less economically rewarding, yet more intellectually stimulating professions like painting. No longer considered as abstention from the productive cycle of mainstream culture, the professional status sought by younger British artists provides a vital contextual point with which to consider Moon's attitude to artistic production. What remains to be more fully articulated however is the particular connection that was perceived to exist between such a professional persona and abstraction.

### White Heat/White Fire: Hard Edge and Field Painting

One factor associating such visions of professional meritocracy with abstract art was the genealogical evolution of British hard edge painting. A touring version of an exhibition originally held at the LA County Museum in the autumn of 1959 – facilitated by financial support from Stefan Munsing, the USIS cultural attaché– *West*

---

[37] It should be highlighted that Galbraith himself was not so enthused by the notion. Seen to inoculate the population against economic depressions like the one that had proved so damaging to America during the 1930s, his counter-argument was that unregulated production in turn left the economy subject both to the dangers of inflation and the rise of unchecked corporate monopolies.
[38] J. K. Galbraith, *The Affluent Society* (London: Pelican, 1958): 269-279.

*Coast Hard-Edge: Four Abstract Classicists* opened at the ICA in March 1960 [Fig.52].
It featured four painters working in and around the Los Angeles area: Karl Benjamin,
Lorser Feitelson, Frederick Hammersley and John McLaughlin. Originally called
*Four Abstract Classicists*, the subtitle *West Coast Hard-Edge* was added by Alloway.[39] It
derived from a section of Langsner's exhibition text in which he describes forms that
are 'finite, flat and rimmed by a hard, clean edge.'[40] Although Langsner refers to the
participating artists as classicists throughout his essay, it was Alloway's advocacy of
the term hard edge that led to its common usage amongst British painters. As Nigel
Whiteley observed 'for the ICA exhibition, Alloway elevated the phrase Langsner has
used conversationally and descriptively, into the title that gives currency to a new
tendency.'[41]

This new tendency would be soon evidenced in the work of those painters like
Denny, Stroud and Plumb, whose enquiries into planar colour-forms would debut
some months after the ICA exhibition as part of *Situation*. Moon's own move towards
simpler, more uniformly painted compositions also took place around this time. But
for those seeking to renovate British art the classical was an altogether unhelpful
category. In a review entitled 'Classicism or Hard-Edge?' Alloway worked to further
articulate the difference between Langsner's position and his own. Seeing the
emergence of hard edge paintings on both the East and West coasts of America as
indicative of a 'pendulum' swing away from Abstract Expressionism, Alloway's
uneasiness with the phrase Abstract Classicism related to its connotations outside of
America.[42] While carrying a certain novelty in California, he thought its signification
quite different in London, where 'the term has enough phenomena to cover already
without stretching it to cover painters whose art depends on visual impact and
ambiguity.'[43]

---

[39] See Jules Langsner, *Four Abstract Classicists* (Los Angeles County Museum, 1959).

[40] Jules Langsner, *West Coast Hard-Edge: Four Abstract Classicists* (London: Institute for
Contemporary Arts, 1960), n.p.

[41] Nigel Whiteley, *Art and Pluralism: Lawrence Alloway's Cultural Criticism* (Liverpool University
Press, 2012), 138.

[42] Equally influential on Alloway's thoughts around hard edge painting was the New York based
artist Ellsworth Kelly. Alloway had seen Kelly's 1958 exhibition at the Galerie Maeght in Paris. One
of Kelly's paintings, entitled *New York, NY* (1957) had also been exhibited in the US Embassy on
Grovesnor Square in 1958.

[43] Lawrence Alloway, 'Classicism or Hard-Edge?' *Art International*, Vol.4, No.2-3 (1960): 61.

Having evacuated any classical overtones the term hard edge painting was now free to serve an altogether different context from that for which it was originally intended. It provided a technical method with which more professional artistic identities could be fostered: the reduced evidence of the artist's hand affording a soberer manner of presenting oneself. Suppressing or foregoing altogether the production of 'autobiographical statements,' it is phrases such as 'efficiency' and 'economy' that instead predominate in both Alloway's descriptions of the tendency, as well as early reviews of Moon's paintings.

Equally open to professional connotations was the related term 'field.' This first appearing in relation to Newman's work as part of Greenberg's essay 'American-Type Painting.' It would later be expanded upon into 'colour-field painting' by others, while remaining more or less in keeping with Greenberg's initial description of 'surfaces which appear to be devoid of pictorial incident,' or marked by an 'all-over' method of composition. [44] By rejecting the diminutive conventions of easel painting, field painting demonstrated a greater commitment to reality by presenting itself as a 'unity as taken in at a single glance.'[45] Such a narrow description however did not prevent Alloway from regarding the phrase as signifying more than a formal commitment to large paintings sporting broad expanses of flat colour. For him the term also indicated the place a painting held within a wider semantic system: a discursive matrix capable of extreme adaptability. Speaking to Michael Auping in 1986, Alloway presented his definition:

> You can see from the way I've been using the term field that to me it is an image of an artificial infinity, for one thing. A field is non-hierarchical, for another. It assumes a worldview, and it has a content whereas Greenberg's notion didn't and neither did that of his followers.[46]

The field was intimately related to Alloway's model of a cultural continuum,

---

[44] Greenberg, *Art and Culture*, 208.
[45] Ibid. 226.
[46] 'Lawrence Alloway 'Field Notes: An Interview', in *Abstract Expressionism: The Critical Developments*, ed. Michael Auping (London: Thames and Hudson, 1987), 127.

one that horizontally encompassed all aspects of culture both high or low. This formed another method by which an advanced form of artistic production could be connected to the world at large. Assuming a 'non-hierarchical worldview' its significance was as much ideological as it was formal. Courtney Martin has observed that Alloway's definition bears considerable resemblance to that used by sociologists like Bourdieu, who classify the field as the continually changing conditions that make up the corpus of experience at any one time. '*Field*' she says 'described the interstitial relationship between the artist's knowledge and the transmission (as visibility) of that knowledge.'[47] Representing the interstitial meeting point of artworks and practitioners –a cultural field comprising of field painters and field paintings as it were– Alloway's use of the term symbolised painting's newfound and more open relationship with the world around it, an interpretation running directly counter to the function assigned to it by Modernist criticism.

Reflecting on the evolution of a hard edge tendency in his essay 'Cultural Imperialism? British Hard-Edge Painting in the 1960s,' Whiteley outlined what he regarded as two discrete phases. The first, running from the late 1950s until around 1961, he considered to be largely influenced by Alloway's culturally oriented outlook. This period comes to an end with Alloway's emigration to America. He described the subsequent phase as more aligned to a Greenbergian concept of self-reflexivity. This shift was so pronounced Whiteley stated that by the mid 1960s 'the discourse of Hard Edge was almost exclusively formalist,' and 'to succeed, a painter was best advised to downplay any more specifically cultural content.'[48] In Moon's own statements such cultural content is more or less absent. However, given his comments regarding the enhanced professionalism of the *Situation* painters, it is also clear that he and many of his peers considered the 'fields of possibility' presented by abstraction quite differently to a painter like Newman.

---

[47] Courtney Martin, 'Lawrence Alloway's Systems,' in Lucy Bradnock, Courtney Martin, and Rebecca Peabody eds., *Lawrence Alloway: Critic and Curator* (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2015), 97.

[48] Nigel Whiteley, 'Cultural Imperialism? British Hard-Edge Painting in the 1960s,' *Third Text*, Vol.22, Issue 2, March (2008): 224-225. In this text Whiteley identifies the 1965 John Moores Painting Prize, which featured Greenberg as chair of the judging panel, and included work by Moon alongside a number of other painters employing hard edge methods, as one of the clearest indicators of such a sea change in thinking.

In this regard it is apposite that two of the first paintings by Newman to enter British collections were titled *White Fire* (1954) and *White Fire III* (1964). Purchased in 1961 and 1964 respectively by the industrialist E.J., or Ted, Power, who over his lifetime built a substantial art collection using the fortune he had established from co-founding the Murphy Radio Company, these paintings assumed a specific cultural value in a British context.[49] Advised by prominent supporters of American abstraction like David Gibbs, Leslie Waddington, as well as Alloway, Power's pioneering interest in this area was complemented by an appetite for collecting artworks produced closer to home. Following *Situation*, he would purchase works from a number of its participants and is regarded as one of the most vital interlocutors between English and American art at the time. Later in 1964, the same year as he traveled to New York and persuaded Newman to let him buy *White Fire III*, Power also purchased four paintings by Moon.[50] By this time Power's collection featured significant examples of work by the majority of the American abstractionists featured in 'Modern American Painting.' Accordingly, such endorsement represents an important stage in Moon's early career, as it contextualised his work alongside many of his largest influences, both British and American.

According to the narrative outlined in Wilson's 'White Heat' speech Britain's future fortunes on the world stage rested in whether it would embrace a technocratic spirit prevailing elsewhere. To Power, a successful member of such a technocracy, collecting abstract art was another facet of the modernising principles that he had pursued at Murphy Radio. As Ian McIntyre has suggested 'Power's long experience in the technically innovative world of radio, radar and television, meant that he was unusually receptive to the concept of non-figurative painting and that he responded intellectually to the work of both European and American artists who were innovators

---

[49] These paintings were respectively the third and fifth works by Newman to belong to British owners. Power had purchased *By Twos* (1949) and *Eve* (1950) in 1959, while his son Alan, also a collector and an important early supporter of British artists like Smith and Moon, had purchased *Uriel* (1955) earlier in 1964. For further details of Power's life as a collector see Jennifer Mundy, ed., *From Brancusi to Beuys: Works from the Ted Power Collection* (London: Tate Publishing, 1996).
[50] See Ian McIntyre, *Judgment by Eye: The Art Collecting Life of E.J. Power*, Masters Thesis (Norwich: University of East Anglia, 2008), 84, 101. Only two of these four paintings are named by McIntyre's account of Power's purchases: *La Danse* and *Naxos* (both 1964).

at the time.'[51] It is along similar lines that the impact of a painter like Newman upon British artists can perhaps be best understood. Just as the 'white heat' of technological advancement was presented as imperative to the future economic success of the country, British painting looked to assert its standing internationally by re-forging itself in the 'white fire' of large scale, hard edged abstraction.

Newman's titles are replete with metaphysical allusions, but as Thomas Crow has described, for those in the London art scene who would encounter *White Fire III* and others like it installed in Power's Grovesnor Square flat, their effect was as much a technical one.[52] Many of these people, seeing paintings of such size installed in a domestic context for the first time, were reminded of other 'modes of attention':

> In that setting, the most striking impression made on young artists was the fact that a single painting could occupy the entire wall from floor to ceiling. For them, the sheer physical impact of the canvases invited comparisons with the cinema screen.[53]

The perceived superiority of these artists' work lay in how it challenged the physical scale of earlier abstract painting. Quite apart from the subject matter an artist like Newman saw his own work as addressing, his paintings were largely received in Britain as a form of technical innovation.

To some extent this interpretation of Newman's paintings could be seen to align itself more closely with the first phase of British hard edge painting described by Whiteley, one that was more indebted to the inclusive theories of Alloway. There is however, also a degree to which it articulates a technocratic mindset that Caroline Jones has identified as central to Greenberg's aesthetic regime: the critical model that Whiteley describes as dominating discourse on the subject from 1961 onwards.[54] Jones, reflecting on this regime, has pointed to the 'bureaucratic' principles necessary

---

[51] Ibid., 90.
[52] Thomas Hess asserted that the title *White Fire* relates directly to Kaballist texts, specifically a section in the Talmud. In *Barnett Newman* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1971), 82.
[53] Crow 'London Calling,' 83. In this article Power's residence is mistakenly given as being in Hannover Square.
[54] Incidentally, on display at Greenberg's Central Park West apartment during the 1960s was his own Newman painting: *The Promise* (1949). It was presented as a wedding gift by the artist in 1960.

to preserve Greenberg's exclusive vision of abstract painting. These principles she has argued are themselves embedded within a broader, 'sensorial' awareness of technology and its role within postwar society. Furthermore, she notes that it was by employing 'modernism and the protocols of eyesight alone' that Greenberg was himself 'organised and hierarchised into a confident professional.'[55]

Greenberg's published writing on Newman makes little or no reference to the subject matter alluded to by the artist's titles. Instead it focuses on the effect the paintings have as self-referential visual entities.[56] It is this 'tuning out' of extraneous qualities that Jones links to concepts of high fidelity, or 'hi-fi', pursued in the field of acoustic technology.[57] Despite both being anti-popular in their nature, these dual quests for 'genre purity' are presented as related by a common desire to 'concentrate the message.' Jones' reading seems especially pertinent when considering the example of a Newman painting hanging in the home of a prominent British audio engineer and industrialist, and the subsequent effect this had on younger British painters who saw it there. Following Jones' logic it is not necessary to consider Greenberg's influence and the cultivation of a professional self-image as mutually exclusive categories. Seen from this angle, the artists' response described by Crow displays more of a concern with technological optimisation than it does with mass cultural consumption. While refraining from invoking an Alloway-esque topicality in their paintings, painters employing hard edge methods, like Moon, remained affiliated to a techno-centric vision of society advocated by those like Wilson. They did so by framing their output as an increasingly specialised mode of visual address.

---

[55] Caroline Jones, *Eyesight Alone: Clement Greenberg and the Bureaucratization of the Senses* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 389.
[56] In addition to 'American-Type Painting' see Clement Greenberg, 'An Introduction to an Exhibition of Barnett Newman,' in *The Collected Essays and Criticism, Volume 4*, 54-55.
[57] In this regard Jones has stated: 'My argument is that acoustic modernism's dedicated muting of reverb and aesthetic of signal amplification constituted a subject channelled for hearing, just as the compressed sense data of field paintings constituted a subject channelled for vision. These are not causally related, but parallel results of the modernist imperative to address and purify sensory input in different domains.' Jones, *Eyesight Alone*, 407.

**Prodigal Images: Paintings, 1964-1965**

In 1965 Moon participated in a North American exhibition presenting recent artistic trends emerging in London. Beginning in February, *London: The New Scene* was toured extensively, moving from its starting point in Minneapolis to museums in Washington, Boston, Seattle, Vancouver, Toronto and Ottawa. This was one of many occasions Moon's work would be featured in an exported showcase of this type during the 1960s.[58] In the accompanying catalogue essay for *The New Scene*, his paintings were grouped by Martin Friedman along with Denny and Riley's in a subsection titled: 'The Formalist Philosophy.' Locating his practice somewhere between Denny's restrained architectonics and Riley's disorientating assaults on the eye, Moon was described as espousing both a 'classical' attitude, as well as an 'interest in optical phenomena.' Moon's primary contribution though, was seen to lie in how inventive each of his pictorial solutions seemed when compared with the one that had gone before. In his text Friedman pointed in particular to the way in which 'Moon views his paintings cumulatively, his latest picture often becoming the jumping off point for the next.'[59]

An installation photograph of Moon's paintings installed on the balcony of the Walker Art Gallery during the exhibition demonstrates the range of solutions he was willing to display in close proximity to one another [Fig.53]. While linked by a certain uniformity of scale and technical factors the four works pictured −*Oriole*, *Eclipse* (both 1962), *Mandarin* and *Ariadne* (*7/64* and *9/64*, both 1964)− appear as a disparate group. They are held together less by likeness than a form of cumulative tension. Bowness had previously echoed this opinion, writing that Moon 'is a prodigal with his images: instead of painting in series as most artists would, he prefers to make one definitive statement of each motif.'[60] Speaking to Stuart Penrose around this time Moon himself

---

[58] Previously Moon's paintings had been included in the exhibition *Contemporary British Painting and Sculpture* at the Albright Knox Gallery in Buffalo. Other museum exhibitions of British Art in which he participated include *Op and Pop* (1963) *British Painting*, *British Kunst Heute* (both 1968) and Marks *on a Canvas* (1969).

[59] Martin Friedman, 'The Formalist Philosophy', in *London: The New Scene*, ed. Alan Bowness Minneapolis: Walker Art Centre, 1965), 47.

[60] Bowness, 'Problems of Abstract Painting.' Bowness was also one of the main organisers of *The New Scene*.

reaffirmed this interpretation, describing his point of departure for a new painting as 'a combination of previous work, an intuitive idea and trial and error.'[61] The credit this early phase of Moon's career garnered in the eyes of commentators like Friedman and Bowness relied on the agility with which he was able to continually adapt a pictorial motif, in such a way as to dissuade the impression of a systematic approach. Moon, preferring intuitive meandering to the programmatic depletion of a motif can be regarded as sharing much in common with the New Generation sculptors he taught alongside, who likewise privileged compositional effects they perceived to be specific to individual artworks.

Whether or not Moon's antipathy to seriality can be identified as central to understanding the development of his practice, what is equally necessary to identify is how a meandering attitude towards compositions sat in relation to the image of the professional. The attempt to make each painting an original visual idea, one self-sufficient from its counterparts, appears to contradict the standardised uniformity associated with industrial methods. These are methods to which the identity of the professional is closely aligned in mainstream society. As such, Moon's professionalism –embodied in his use of hard edge techniques and large pictorial fields– is perhaps better understood as supplying a stable framework within which a more intuitive enquiry could then be conducted. Counterpoised against the reductive economy otherwise visible in his compositions, such intuitive decisions suggest that an image of professionalism was used to curtail rather than eliminate aspects of pictorial indeterminacy. As Moon outlined in early unpublished notes on the consistency of an artistic 'brand,' while any given 'problem' had to be approached methodically, it was ultimately the extent to which a painting broke with its predecessors that guaranteed its success:

> I feel that at present each painting is a totally new experience with totally new problems. All ideas or developments which seem suspect (intuitive), or are less than 100% convincing intellectually I reject. To paint a picture like the last, only a bit different, seems a waste of time. Each picture must say something new and

---

[61] Stuart Penrose, 'Profile: Jeremy Moon,' *Arts Review*, 11th May (1965).

extend beyond what the previous one achieved.[62]

Another aspect of Moon's practice that merits consideration along similar lines is his use of the shaped canvas. One of the first British artists to seriously explore eccentrically shaped supports his enquiry did not lag far behind American developments either. Moon's experiments matched Noland's adoption of a diamond format in 1964, as well as the earliest enquiries by among others Ronald Davis, Thomas Downing, Charles Hinman, Neil Williams, Sven Lukin and Robert Mangold. Presented as a formal paradigm the shaped canvas, like the use of clearly defined, hard edged shapes, signified in turn a greater professional investment, in that it appeared to be a technological advancement like those being made in other fields. Bearing comparisons with scientific developments in streamlining and supersonic speed, the sense of optimistic modernity these works projected allowed a select group of early adopters to vicariously identify with progressive forces sweeping the industrial complex at large. In 1967 Lippard wrote that the shaped canvas suggested 'speed, streamlined stylization,' and was 'perhaps traceable to Pop Art's acceptance and celebration of newness and industrial élan.'[63] Looking beyond the fact that these stretchers were handmade, and for the most part crudely constructed, they conferred some of the cutting edge mystique emanating from the field of aeronautical research.[64] Quite unlike Richard Smith, who saw shaping as analogous to the aggressive projection of advertising culture into everyday life, what modifications to the conventional canvas stretcher offered Moon was a steadfastly formal means with which to further press a number of pictorial disturbances he had already developed in rectangular canvases of the previous two years. For him the ability to question not only the pictorial elements within a picture, but also the determining effect the framing edge had upon those elements, was simply another step in his work's natural development.

---

[62] Jeremy Moon, 'Branded Imagery,' unpublished text written on the 30th March, 1962. Jeremy Moon Archive.

[63] Lucy Lippard, 'Perverse Perspectives,' in *Changing: Essays in Art Criticism* (New York: Dutton and Company, 1971), 172.

[64] Reflecting on the development of the shaped canvas Frances Colpitt has also noted its appropriateness in an 'optimistic, space age decade.' Frances Colpitt, 'The Shape of Painting in the Sixties,' *Art Journal* Vol.50, No.1, Spring (1991): 52.

Working initially on a group of triangular canvases Moon had by the end of 1964 completed two paintings on castle-edged diamond forms: entitled *Concord* and *Orange Queen* (*19/64* and *20/64*, both 1964).[65] In both these works the physical eccentricity of the canvas collides awkwardly with a dispersion of ellipses lying on top of a flat field of colour. Cut off upon reaching the edges in *Orange Queen,* the lilac ellipses suggest the cropping of a pictorial field established prior to the shape [Fig.54].[66] The impression of a physical shape excised from an existing field is made more complex in *Concord*, a reprise of the same format constructed from five joined canvas panels [Fig.55]. Straddling these internal panel divisions, as well as departing from the upper exterior edge of the canvas frame, again depicted and literal shape have only a limited bearing upon one another. As one observer put it, this feeling of dislocation was so palpable that 'these pictures seem to belong to the canvas no more than a film belongs to the screen on which it is projected.'[67]

This continual to and fro between emphasising painting's characteristics as a physical object, and alternatively as an optical field, was a quality Moon looked to reintegrate into a number of rectangular canvases that immediately succeed *Orange Queen* and *Concord*. This is most apparent in a group of square paintings made the following year, in which small circular forms are positioned around the picture's edge. In *Hoop La* (*17/65*, 1965), one of the most audacious of these arrangements, an arc traced by five discs rises so far as to clear the upper limits of the image [Fig.56]. As Tom Lubbock has noted, their placement deliberately frustrates any clear interpretation of Moon's compositional priorities:

> What motivates the placing of the five blue discs – the arc or the frame? They might be set at evenly intervals around their arc, and randomly related to the frame. Or they might all be neatly related to the frame, with no arc formation at all. As it is, they're a bit of both. Each way they raise expectations of more regularity, each way fail.[68]

---

[65] These two paintings were preceded by a related, diamond shaped canvas called *Spring Voyage* (*18/64*, 1964).

[66] Remnants of a working collage for the painting would seem to reinforce this interpretation of cropping. Jeremy Moon Archive: Drawings Box 4.

[67] Edwin Mullins, 'Age of Craftsmen,' *Daily Telegraph*, 6th June (1965).

[68] Tom Lubbock, 'Great Works: Hoop-La (1965) by Jeremy Moon,' *The Independent*, 3rd July (2009).

The viewer is forced to oscillate between reading the disc-like forms as illusionistically frozen in movement and having been dropped onto a horizontal surface in a haphazard fashion. What *Hoop La* continues to exploit is an aspect of pictorial brinkmanship first visible in a work of 1962 like *Oriole*, and subsequently carried on into the first shaped canvases. Courting a residual sense of illusionism *Oriole* consists of four white bands capped with black circles, which enter the yellow canvas field from each of its corners. These four elements present a conundrum similar to that posed by *Hoop La*: whether they should be apprehended as tubular or flattened forms. Moon, by carefully denying any definitive resolution, compels us to consider both possibilities.

The paintings Moon made between 1962 and 1965 prompt the question of whether a pictorial element was free floating, or if it was tethered to one or more of the physical boundaries of the canvas edge. He would continue to probe the degree to which he could avoid settling for one or the other of these interpretations with growing ingenuity. At points when this enquiry was beginning to falter using a rectangular format he would intermittently return to the use of shaped supports. Assessing Moon's oeuvre retrospectively, his cyclical adoption of eccentrically shaped canvases appears to have functioned as a form of catalyst. They acted as a means of reminding the viewer that the edge of the picture frame, rectangular or otherwise, played an active role in determining the arrangement of the compositional imagery within it.

## Cottage Industries: Moon's Studios, 1963-1967

Moon's own deepening involvement in the 'professional painter's business' closely coincided with his marriage, and departure from a studio on Chepstow Road, in Notting Hill, where he had lived and worked for several years. Moving to 150b King Henry's Road in Swiss Cottage he established a new working space there in the front room of the flat. Correspondingly, 1964 was marked by a period of substantially increased productivity. Sixteen paintings were completed, as opposed to two the

previous year. Also evident in these works was a marked increase in scale. Whereas until this point Moon had made very little that would have met the entry requirements of *Situation* –that a painting measure in excess of thirty feet square– by contrast all but one work he produced in 1964 would have qualified.[69]

Among the most adventurous of these was *Testament* (*13/64*, 1964), an eighteen foot long painting comprised of four separate canvas panels [Fig.57]. Bearing a resemblance to Ellsworth Kelly's multi-panel works of the early 1950s, as well as several modular paintings Turnbull made between 1958 and 1962, *Testament* was one of several works capable of being dismantled into smaller components.[70] While such an approach was employed to consciously test the relation between a pictorial composition and the physical object on which it sat, it was not without its practical benefits. *Testament* was in fact too large to have been fully constructed *in situ* due to the spatial constraints of the studio. In struggling to find room to match his ambitions, Moon's circumstances paralleled those London based painters with whom he most closely identified himself. Speaking on the subject Mellor noted that 'working space was co-terminus with living space in the period immediately before the annexing of larger post-industrial spaces for separate studio use.'[71] Coincidentally, one of the outcomes of the initial *Situation* exhibition was the formation of a loose community of artists around 'Situation Square,' a group of townhouses on Camden Square in North London. This arrangement had come about as a result of the negotiations conducted by Turnbull and the solicitor Tony Fawkes.[72] Alongside Turnbull, those resident in Camden Square from 1961 onwards included Bernard Cohen, Tess Jaray, Peter Stroud and Marc Vaux.

The spatial limitations presented by such a domestic studio would be tested further still by Moon in *Night Time* and *Carousel* (*2/66* and *3/66*, both 1966), two of the final paintings that he produced on King Henry's Road [Fig.58]. Both measuring

---

[69] This smaller work is entitled *Madame Bovary (4/64)* (1964).
[70] These multi-panel paintings were the subject of a short text by Turnbull. See William Turnbull, 'The Joining Edge,' *Gazette*, No.1 (1961): n.p.
[71] Mellor, *The Sixties Art Scene in London*, 82.
[72] Ibid.

15 feet and nine inches long neither could hang on any of the studio's walls. Instead they had to be painted while propped diagonally across the room. As a letter from Moon to the Rowan Gallery, regarding the inclusion of *Nighttime* in a 1966 exhibition, this painting presented considerable logistical problems, requiring the help of another individual to disassemble for transport.[73] Space was one of the major factors Laing had posited as contributing to the inferior status of British art. It was also a dissatisfaction with these conditions that had driven Richard Smith, arriving back from New York in 1961, to trade the 'Notting Hill ambiance' of his previous life for a studio in the east end.[74] Smith and Laing would be among the first to seek out industrial spaces analogous to those occupied by artists in Manhattan. But at a time immediately preceding the widespread movement of London-based artists into larger studio complexes established in former warehouses and factories –the opening of Stockwell Depot in 1967 and Space Studios at St Katherine's Docks in 1968 being two of the earliest developments of this kind– such arrangements remained largely improvisational, and for the most part housebound.[75]

A desire for more space in which to work was one of the major factors that precipitated Moon's decision to relocate his young family in 1966 to a house in Kingston Upon Thames, a suburb of London in Surrey. Built in 1928 this pebbledash semi-detached house faced a Mock Tudor estate constructed several years later for workers of the Hawker Siddley Aircraft factory. He was not the first painter to move to the area, having been preceded in 1964 by John Hoyland, who also taught at Chelsea. Throughout 1964 Hoyland had been building a dedicated studio space in the back garden of his property on 101 Shortlands Road. Upon arrival, just streets away on 104 Latchmere Road, Moon embarked upon a similar project. It was completed towards the end of 1966. A freestanding breezeblock structure with a corrugated fibreglass roof, measuring twenty feet by thirty feet, with its pitched roof rising to an apex of twelve feet, this occupied the entire width of the garden plot upon

---

[73] Letter from Moon to the Rowan Gallery, June 1966. Jeremy Moon Estate, Correspondence File.
[74] Smith quoted in Beatty and Lorin Trower, *Richard Smith: The Green Gallery Years, 1960-1965*, 18.
[75] For an account of the initial use of London's industrial spaces for studio complexes see Sam Cornish, *Stockwell Depot: 1967-1975* (London: Ridinghouse, 2015); Peter Sedgley, *Directory of Artists: 1975 SPACE Open Studios* (London: SPACE Studios, 1975).

which it was built [Fig.59&60]. This imposingly stark form would not be rendered in pebbledash until several years after it was constructed, and sat in marked contrast to the neighbourhood's genteel atmosphere. Describing its pragmatic function to Kingsmill in October of that year, Moon wrote:

> My new studio is now finished and I hope to start work again immediately. It is <u>not</u> a sophisticated building – but it is large and, I hope, weather proof![76]

Moon's example was followed by Bernard Cohen and John Edwards, who would move there soon afterwards.[77] Cohen recalls that within the small community of painters gathered in Kingston, this 'was a time of great productivity… days of confidence and a feeling of certainty that what we were doing mattered.'[78] Much of this fresh confidence rested on the scale of work these new studios allowed their occupants to produce. The paintings Hoyland completed during his first two years in Kingston demonstrate a shift in size and prodigiously expanded output. Many of these went on show at the Whitechapel Gallery in April 1967. This survey of wall-like paintings colonised the space so entirely as to be considered by many as an environmental spectacle.[79] Similarly, Cohen, although having consistently worked on large paintings since 1959, likewise used this opportunity to upscale, producing a number of works in the late 1960s that measured as long as thirty feet. These enormous, pale canvases, influenced by the spatial characteristics of adobe plazas he had encountered on residency in New Mexico, were, like Hoyland's, architectonic in their address.[80]

Moon's own use of his new studio space began in earnest in 1967 with his most sustained enquiry of a single format to date, a large series of 'Y-shaped' canvases that

---

[76] Letter from Jeremy Moon to Diana Kingsmill, dated 31st October 1966. Jeremy Moon Estate, Correspondence File.
[77] Cohen moved to Fernhill Gardens. Following Hoyland's departure for the United States the painter Basil Beattie rented the studio on Shortlands Road. Email correspondence with Jeremy Hoyland, 29th April 2015.
[78] Marco Livingston, *Jeremy Moon, A Retrospective* (London: Hard Work, 2001), n.p.
[79] So numerous were Hoyland recent paintings that halfway through its scheduled run the gallery spaces had to be rehung to accommodate a second display of works. See Bryan Robertson, *John Hoyland: Paintings 1960-1967*. (London: Whitechapel Gallery, 1967).
[80] Richard Morphet, *Bernard Cohen: Paintings and Drawings 1959-71* (London: Arts Council, 1972), 30.

remain amongst his largest and most singular groups of work.[81] Consisting of three square 'limbs' extending from a central triangle the earliest of these paintings continued earlier experiments with the appearance of centripetal movement. Whereas this movement is visible as a pictorial concern in pieces such as *Hoop La*, in the Y-shaped paintings it is transferred to the physical shape. In the earliest of these works, such as *Origami* (*5/67*, 1967), a separate colour is assigned to each of these symmetrically arrayed limbs. Painted in red, orange and yellow respectively, *Origami* renders the question of its correct orientation a vexed and ultimately subjective one [Fig.61]. This impression of rotation was literally enacted on a related work, entitled *Union* (*1/67*, 1967), which featured in the title credits for a BBC documentary on British art in 1969. There, a still photograph of the painting was animated to show it pin-wheeling around its central axis.[82]

After producing five paintings in this format, Moon made the decision to greatly shorten the length of each of the square limbs. The resulting silhouette, an equilateral triangle with shallow rectangles appended to each of its edges, he considered to still derive from the logic of prior rectangular works. Speaking about the series in a *Studio International* article, which accompanied his inclusion in the Paris Biennale des Jeunes that year, he stated:

> The shapes I'm using now –although they might seem strange at first– are just extensions of the square. The cut down version of the three joined squares is the best shape I've worked with yet. If you could turn a square inside out and still have something to paint on, I feel it might look like this.[83]

With the need to maintain a careful reciprocity between shape and pictorial field seemingly satisfied by the truncated Y format, Moon continued to employ it for the remainder of the year. His main concern was to maintain a dynamic relationship between the boundary edge and composition, as he felt that 'if the outside shape is too complete in itself it somehow closes off the central arena of the painting, it's no

---

[81] Sixteen of these paintings remain extant, along with one small maquette.
[82] See, *The Visual Scene: Playing it Cool*, narrated by Paul Overy (London: BBC, 1969), Televised Documentary.
[83] Jeremy Moon, 'British Artists at the Biennale des Jeunes,' *Studio International*, September (1967): 86.

longer painting for me and I'm no longer interested or satisfied.'[84]

Beginning with *Moth* (*7/67*, 1967) these canvases were initially painted to emphasise the bilateral symmetry of the support. But as work on the group progressed this centrality would be gradually destabilised. In *Blue Rose* (*12/67*, 1967), the twelfth painting to be made that year, three colours are employed in a repeating pattern that moves the eye from left to right across the surface [Fig.62]. Describing the work Lynton stressed how:

> *Blue Rose* has its stripes placed asymmetrically within the symmetrical silhouette: now none of them repeats the inverted Y of the total shape so that, in addition to the tension created by the asymmetry, there is a conflict between stripes and field, as a result of which we become far more conscious of the 120° corners.[85]

This pictorial opposition to the logic of the framing edge would reach its apogee that year with *Signals* (*19/67*, 1967), in which bands of differing widths actively dislocate the symmetry of the shape, further sign of the 'tensions' and 'conflicts' that these works sought to retain as active components [Fig.63]. Nor was the format of these works completely standardised either. Even after arriving at the truncated Y as a silhouette Moon would amend its overall scale four times, both increasing and decreasing it to explore the number of coloured bands that each canvas could accommodate. As such, still present in what could be considered the artist's most single-minded and serially determined interrogation of a single format is a certain restlessness, or desire to undermine systematic thinking.

The symbolic home of the middle classes in postwar Britain, suburbia had developed in response to the earlier concept of the garden city, and the compromise this had attempted to affect between urban and rural environments. What this new suburban arrangement also blurred was a clearer division between those British artists who had previously elected to produce artwork in either an urban or rural context. In the context of abstract painting this separation had perhaps been best exemplified by

---

[84] Ibid.
[85] Norbert Lynton, *Jeremy Moon: Paintings and Drawings 1962-1973* (London: Arts Council, 1976), 17.

the rivalry that had developed between artists based in St. Ives, like Heron, Peter Lanyon and William Scott, and those Londoners like Alloway, Denny and Smith. In his study of the suburban phenomenon, *The Castles on the Ground: The Anatomy of Suburbia*, J.M. Richards argued that a dispersal of the general population outwards from the inner city was in turn reconfiguring class divisions. Such factors he argued had contributed to the growth of a distributive class for whom the binary opposition of city and countryside was altogether less distinct.[86] Apart from an agrarian working class, the countryside had prior to this been the domain of those individuals who did not have pursue to financial recompense with any great urgency, an upper class whose leisure time was made all the more conspicuous by their regular absence from the productive life of the city. For workers, drawn to urban centres in search of paid labour, proximity to the city was equated with financial security. What suburban housing developments provided however were conditions in which an individual could rely on such pecuniary support while being insulated from the lower living standards it provided. It was these newly created conditions that the American cultural theorist William H. Whyte argued in his book *The Organization Man*, first published in Britain in 1960, made suburbia 'the ultimate symbol' of the interchangeable classlessness sought by organised corporate society. 'It is classless' Whyte observed, 'or at least its people want it to be.'[87]

Granting residents a more agreeable environment to spend their leisure time, while still retaining economic ties to the city, the attraction of suburbia for a growing numbers of British citizens was the peaceful respite it afforded. The contradiction inherent in the large scale suburban abstraction Moon and his colleagues were producing rested in the way it courted associations with the industrial-scale of American painting, despite being stationed deep within such residential territory. While the loft or cold water walk up so pivotal to the marketed image of American abstraction had emerged in relation to the retraction of small scale industrial interests from lower Manhattan from the 1930s onwards, prevailing socio-economic

---

[86] J. M. Richards, *The Castles on the Ground: The Anatomy of Suburbia* (London: Architectural Press, 1946).
[87] William H. Whyte, *The Organization Man* (London: Pelican, 1963), 275.

conditions in Britain were altogether different.[88] If New Yorkers could draw upon the previous use of the loft space as a site of labour to signify their own productive engagement with advanced artistic practice, the problem facing painters working in Kingston Upon Thames was that their location was linked primarily to an image of consumption and leisure. Looking for a symbol to epitomise British national identity in 1971, the social historian Anthony Sampson settled on the potting shed, an archetypal form whose very nature spoke of the amateur enthusiast.[89] Working as he did in what could be interpreted as a dramatically enlarged version of this kind of structure, a complex and not altogether resolvable relationship can be identified in Moon's practice. This is formed between what he considered to be a professional means of making his work –large scale, hard edge painting– and the non-professional site in which that activity occurred.

Equally incongruous to the forward-looking aesthetic embodied by Moon's paintings was the nostalgic vernacular in which the majority of British suburbia was constructed. The continued proliferation of housing projects in 'spec-builder's Tudor' was especially objectionable to an IG member like Banham, who went so far as to denounce Richards' defence of the suburbs as 'a blank betrayal of everything that modern architecture was supposed to stand for.'[90] Banham's principal complaint was that despite being of sufficient means to afford a more progressive aesthetic outlook, the average suburban dweller instead chose to emulate an archaic class order by appropriating its architectural symbols. Given that most modernist architects saw suburbia as a repository for middlebrow pastiche, it is even more surprising that some of the most ambitious British painting being made during the mid 1960s was fostered in its midst.

---

[88] The rise of artist's loft studios had resulted from a combination of the failing fortunes of the textiles industry, and their relation to light industrial zoning laws in Lower Manhattan. For a detailed account of the historical development of New York loft culture see Aaron Shkuda, *Lofts of Soho: Gentrification, Art and Industry in New York, 1950*-1980 (London: University of Chicago Press, 2016); Sharon Zukin, *Loft Living: Culture and Capital in Urban Change* (London: Radius, 1988); Richard Kostelenetz, *Soho: The Rise and Fall of an Artists' Colony* (New York: Routledge, 2003).
[89] Anthony Sampson, *The New Anatomy of Britain* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1971), 427.
[90] Reyner Banham, *The New Brutalism: Ethic or Aesthetic?* (London: Architectural Press, 1966), 13.

**The Leisure Class: Workmanship and Dual Titling**

When considering the question of the suburban site and its potential influence on the development of Moon's practice, it is crucial to stress that this is not a matter of searching for representational prompts in the work. Just as mass-cultural affiliations were implicit in Richard Smith's model of abstraction, such connections ran counter to Moon's non-objective programme of enquiry. His attitude was more in keeping with his teaching colleagues in the St. Martin's Sculpture Department, who also saw their practices as contributing to an exclusive discourse. Nonetheless, what the conflict between a professionalised vocabulary of hard edge painting and the amateur connotations of the garden studio does point towards is a larger ideological contradiction present in the artworks themselves. This is a contradiction that exists between the labour required to produce them, and the leisure time required for their apprehension.

Unlike the American artists to whom his work was most often compared by British critics –the majority of whom had a comparatively uncomplicated relationship to the question of their own productivity– Moon used a number of techniques to maintain a separation between the professional capacity in which he produced his paintings, and the disinterested conditions in which they were intended to be received. The dual titling of artworks, and drawings made both before and after execution of a painting were two of the ways in which such maintenance was performed. This also extended to the very method by which paint was applied to his canvases. At several points in his career exhibitions of Moon's work at the Rowan Gallery were scheduled to coincide with solo presentations of paintings by Americans like Noland and Olitski. It is by considering these intersecting paths that a number of technical, as well as ideological factors can be most identified to distinguish them. Perceived national traits often powered comparisons at the time. For example, in 1965 Lynton preferred the 'chaste compilations' that stocked Moon's exhibition at the Rowan to the 'lusher,' more 'voluptuous' efforts of Olitski on show at Kasmin. [91]  Elsewhere, British reviewers, trying to account for the same disparity often obliquely attributed a national

---

[91] Norbert Lynton, 'London Galleries,' *Guardian*, 15th June (1965).

signification to Moon's restraint. These referred to how 'tight-lipped' the paintings were, with critic one going so far as to attribute to them an intellectualism resulting from an earlier education at Oxbridge.[92]

Moon's differences with his American counterparts can be more concretely summarised as deriving from the way in which he considered completed work less a sign of his spontaneous engagement with a visual idea, than as manifest evidence of his labour. For him the real value of these paintings lay beyond an initial stage of ideation. It resided instead in the degree to which they were able to surpass what was originally expected of them. In 1964 he outlined this position in a statement printed in *Monad*:

> I usually have a clear idea of when I start a painting of how I want a painting to look when it's finished. But once I start work, the more a painting develops, the more I become aware of the difference between what I planned to do and what I have actually done. The process of finishing the picture therefore is to a certain extent a question of coming to terms with what I've actually done and relinquishing the original conception. The final stage –getting the picture to look how I want it to– always goes on longer than I expect. I just keep looking at it and working on it week by week until I have taken it as far as I can –which is sometimes too far– then it's finished.[93]

Despite their apparent simplicity Moon only considered his paintings to be finished following a rigorous process of refinement. This was a process in which the original image was repeatedly overwritten with successive layers of paint, in an attempt to rid the completed work of any suggestion of arbitrariness. The autonomy of the work as a completed object depended on the degree to which it relinquished its 'original conception.' This in turn was related to the physical separation of paint from its underlying ground, and the significant time and effort Moon expended building up layers of closely related colour in his canvases. What his willingness to take a painting 'too far' contrasted with most markedly with was the so-called 'one shot' method so central to the critical account of 1960s American abstraction.

---

[92] See Guy Brett, 'London Galleries,' *Guardian*, 2nd September (1963); Paul Overy, 'Premature Exposure,' *The Listener*, 21st July (1966); Marina Vaizey, 'Rowan Gallery: Jeremy Moon,' *The Financial Times*, 29th January (1974).

[93] May, *Monad, a Magazine about Painting*, 8.

Speaking about Moon's working process in the period immediately after his relocation to Kingston Upon Thames, Harrison noted a general unwillingness to establish a work's outcome in a single sitting, and of the habit Moon had of returning to a painting over a number of weeks to make alterations. Referring to one painting, *18/67*, later re-titled *Joyride*, Harrison recalled:

> I first saw this canvas at an earlier stage. Each of the colours had been laid in with one coat of paint and the painting looked finished –highly seductive, full of life, the paint hardly more than staining the very attractive surface which cotton duck presents to the eye. Jeremy Moon himself seemed very suspicious of the paint and the speed at which it seemed to have reached a satisfactory state, accustomed to seeing his paintings emerge as the end product of a tense and exacting period of concentration and redefinition.[94]

Returning to the studio some time later Harrison found that the painting had been worked on several times, and that 'it had changed totally; not in colour but in intensity and in its implications.' Standing 'further off' the surface he speculated that such a gradual process of solidification would have proved unsatisfactory to a painter like Noland, for whom such revisions would have constituted nothing less than 'a breach of faith.'[95] The colour, which Moon typically built up with repeated coatings and adjustments, draws its intensity from the cumulative refraction of a number of pigment layers, as opposed to the pre-existing lightness of the canvas ground. This is quite different from the sense of spontaneous immediacy and apparent ease that was instrumental to Noland's one-shot method.

This distinction is important in more than just formal terms, as it also highlights a significant ideological difference between what either Noland or Moon considered their working methods as embodying. In his 1899 study *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions* Thorsten Veblen suggested a hierarchical separation between a type of labour that was celebrated as a form of 'exploit' –originating in primitive societies in activities such as war-making and hunting– and a lower level of menial task that was representative in turn of an individual's subordinate status within

---

[94] Harrison, 'Jeremy Moon's Recent Paintings,' 136.
[95] Ibid., 138.

the social group.[96] Veblen, detailing the evolution of such values in relation to industrialization, goes on to outline another intermediary term: 'workmanship.' The concept of workmanship is used to account for a kind of menial action from which a degree of emulative value can be obtained. Acting as a counter balance to the demonstrations of conspicuous waste enshrined in purposeless leisure, it is workmanship Veblen argued that 'begins to aggressively shape men's views of what is meritorious' by presenting manual investiture as a moral virtue.[97]

It is by comparing the concept of exploit with that of workmanship that Moon's engagement with painterly processes can be best demonstrated to deviate from the ideological foundations of a one-shot approach. The workmanlike satisfaction he derived from his methods lay in how the incremental establishment of a series of colour values pushed back against the arbitrariness of their initial combination. By comparison, Noland's methods presented painting as a kind of instinctively pure activity: a demonstration of unrestrained exploit. Inextricable from the process of stain painting Noland employed during the 1960s is the woven cotton duck surface into which the pigment sinks when applied, a 'tooth' which is visibly retained to reinforce the leanness of the physical gesture. Predicated on the sheer efficacy with which an image can be arrived at, staining foregrounds a sense of effortlessness and speed. Labour is effectively absorbed into the raw canvas weave, leaving only its sensual effect. Such bravado is altogether lacking in Moon's explorations of colour, which crystallised into definitive statements decidedly rather than fortuitously. The amount of manual labour invested had an important determining effect on whether he considered a painting finished. In essence the original conception needed to be 'worked out' of a painting.

Such a comparison also extends to the number of paintings it was actually possible to complete using either approach. Moffett, remarking on Noland's prolific output, attributed this to his 'very untraditional attitudes about making abstract art,'

---

[96] Thorsten Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class, An Economic Study of Institutions* (New York: Dover Publications, 1994) 8.
[97] Ibid., 44.

and his abandonment of 'masterpieces' in pursuit of a serialised 'momentum.'[98] This celebration of productive potency, to say nothing of the endless market desire that it presumed, was encapsulated in the way one-shot painting attempted to short-circuit the separation between the conception of a work and its subsequent enaction. Following on from the encounter described by Harrison, Moon would continue to experiment with the viability of completing a painting in a single sitting.[99] In any case, his suspicions about embracing such productive speed demonstrate a continued engagement with his works in terms of their qualitative properties, as opposed to a more quantitative assessment of output. Even in the Y-shaped canvases of 1967 –the group that presents perhaps the strongest parallels between Moon's practice and the concerns driving American abstraction at the time– what is most notable is the way in which amendments were employed to dispel connotations of leisurely ease.

In differentiating Moon's attitude from that of the Americans, Harrison pointed instead to an older European tradition represented by Matisse. This was an affinity that the Moon had himself claimed on a number of occasions. Given his avowed fascination unadulterated colour it is hardly surprising that Moon regarded Matisse as an influence. But what this comparison also affords is another method of interpreting the neurotic delineation Moon looked to maintain between his own experience of making a painting, and the relationship a viewer subsequently had to it. As an addendum to his well-known call for 'an art of balance, purity and serenity,' one which functioned as 'a soothing, calming influence on the mind, something like a good armchair that provides relaxation from fatigue,' Matisse offered the following, less quoted qualification:

> I want to reach that state of condensation of which makes a painting. I might be satisfied with a work done at a single sitting, but I would soon tire of it; therefore, I prefer to work it so that later I may recognise it as representative of my state of mind.[100]

---

[98] Moffett, *Kenneth Noland*, 72.

[99] According to Harrison, one of these works was ultimately deemed completed after the application of a single layer of yellow paint to raw canvas. Although he does not name the painting this is likely to be either *Moth* or *Yellow Flight* (*7/67* and *14/67*, both 1967). See Harrison, 'Jeremy Moon's Recent Paintings,' 138.

[100] Henri Matisse, 'Notes of a Painter,' in *Matisse on Art*, ed. Jack Flam (London: Phaidon, 1973), 36.

Matisse's comments about the 'condensation' of effort raises the question of whether artists themselves can be as enamored with the sensual immediacy of their own completed work as any other prospective viewer. This conundrum, epitomised by the simple élan of Matisse's gestures, is how to locate such rigor in a painting if it seemingly resides outside its immediate effect. Comparing a good painting to a good armchair was for Matisse a way of defending works that were considered by his detractors as naively executed: a sign to them of insufficient labour. Making the opposing claim that an artist labours in concealment so that the viewer does not need to, a rift is effectively created between the two roles. And it is a similar problem that presents itself when faced with one of Moon's simple, exuberantly coloured paintings: in what way it is possible to differentiate the labour that validated the work for Moon as a professional endeavor from the sensual immediacy it offers to any other viewer?

The division Moon sought to make between the labour invested in a painting's production and the leisure implicit in its reception is evident in his suspicions about a one-shot approach to paint application. It was also rendered explicit by the practice of double titling artworks he would employ from 1964 onwards. This was a shift that closely coincided with the beginnings of his professional involvement with the Rowan Gallery, and use of acrylic paint. From *1/64* onwards, also titled *La Danse* in imitation of seminal Matisse's painting of the same name, all of Moon's artworks were given a numerical title that referred to the order and year in which they were begun.[101] Starting out as a private method of organisation, and remaining uniformly concealed beneath text-based titles during the mid 60s, towards the end of the decade these numerical titles would play an increasingly operative part of his paintings' outward identity. Close examination reveals the assignation of a text-based title happened retrospectively to a work's completion. On certain occasions paintings receiving a text-based title only after they had already been exhibited. One such example is *20/68*, later re-titled as *Battenburg* (1968), which featured on the invitation card for Moon's 1969

---

[101] Due to the numerous numerical gaps evident in the sequence of extant paintings, it is much more likely that Moon assigned this value to every painting that he initiated, as opposed to every painting he deemed complete.

exhibition at the Rowan Gallery.[102]

Prior to 1964 all exhibited paintings bore a text-based title, and all un-exhibited or incomplete works remained simply 'untitled.' A number of lists detailing potential names, undated but probably from 1963 due to the paintings to which they relate, demonstrate how this process was conducted. One such document explores a number of musical phrases: adagio, anthem, ballad, chant, elegy, hymn, madrigal, etc. Elsewhere a number of heraldic terms were extemporised upon: such as crest, device, emblem and standard. Another details a number of fictitious creatures: including the chimera, dragon and gorgon. The titles from these lists that were ultimately allocated to paintings –*Eagle*, *Spectre*, *Garland*, cipher (amended to *Cypher*) and signal (*Signals* appears five years later)– are less connected thematically than by their ambiguity. Whether audial, chivalric or mythological, what these lists show is Moon preemptively testing the metaphorical suitability of each prospective word.

Examining abstraction and its relation to the 'titular surplus' present in such metaphorical strategies of naming, John Welchman noted how this practice had developed in parallel with what he calls the 'zero economy': a counter-tendency represented by the 'untitled' artwork and other more objective terminology acting to restrict connotative associations. The situation Welchman identifies as coming to a head in postwar abstract art is one where a self-sufficient pictorialism clashes with a continued desire to provide the viewer with emotive prompts supplementary to the work itself. 'We are left with the paradox' he suggested 'that the high point of formalist compositional reduction is marked by a recrudescence of what appears to be counter-formalist compositional connotation.'[103] In such circumstances metaphorical titles occupied a vacuum left by the absence of representational content in abstract artworks.

Within Moon's tactic of double-titling it is possible to see the opposing

---

[102] Confusingly, a reproduction of the same painting appears captioned as *No.19, 1968* in the April 1969 issue of *Studio International*. Two related paintings, dubbed *Battenburg 1* and *Battenburg 2*, were completed but Moon's records show these to have been numerically titled *20/67* and *21/67* respectively.

[103] John Welchman, *Invisible Colours: A Visual History of Titles* (London: Yale University Press, 1997), 296.

strategies of 'textual minimization' and 'connotative fullness' Welchman's describes being employed simultaneously. Here the numerical and text-based title each performs a specific function, the first relating to Moon's professional self-image, and the second to the disinterested engagement with artwork expected from other viewers. If numerical titling provided a neutral means through which labour could be cumulatively demonstrated, more evocative titles were intended to accompany the work's subsequent circulation as symbols of leisure. Likewise, a numerical title can be said to function administratively, and to point towards the macro-structure of artistic practice as a whole; a text-based title carries with it a sensual reading, one that points in turn to a micro-structure contained within single pieces.

Among Moon's peers the use of factually descriptive titles was not uncommon. It is evident in the works of sculptors like Bolus and Scott, as well as painters like Hoyland, Huxley and Turnbull. Despite being symptomatic of a general desire to suppress metaphorical associations, considerable variation remains even within such a limited sample. Titles situating an artwork chronologically ranged from the poetic temporality embodied by a sculpture like Scott's *January the First* (1964), to the precise dating system Hoyland would consistently use from his participation in *New London Situation* onwards: evident in paintings such as *20.3.1961* (1961).[104] Numerical sequencing is the guiding principle behind a work by Bolus like *5th Sculpture* (1966), or Huxley's *Untitled No.21* (1962).[105] Perhaps the closest comparison that can be drawn with Moon's method of numbering though is the practically identical method Turnbull employed to name paintings from 1958 onwards, which also connected a work sequentially to the year in which it was completed, for example *6-1958* (1958).

While it was not at all uncommon for any of these artists to vacillate between the use of taxonomic and evocative modes of titling, Moon is unusual in his single-minded attempt to retain both as joint categories. The ambiguous lyricism that he

---

[104] The paintings Hoyland would show in the first RBA iteration of the exhibition were themselves titled *Situation*. Later dates indicated the day of completion. See Robertson, *John Hoyland: Paintings 1960-1967*, 9.

[105] Unlike Moon, who reset his numerical counter every January, Huxley's numbering technique did not separate the works by years.

sought in his text-based titles speaks of an altogether different form of engagement with his paintings than that indicated by a process of numbering. What underpins the attribution of a text-based name to a work is the central theme of leisure, a category of experience in which the appreciation of artwork was itself included. A selection of titles from 1964 alone exposes the array of topics this extended to, including literature –*Ariadne*, *Madam Bovary*, *Zarathustra*– travel and foreign places–*Indian Journey*, *Naxos*, *Spring Voyage*–, an abiding interest in the ballet such as *Petrouchka*. In each of these instances what is being alluded to is an activity or sensation that takes place outwith the productive cycle of working life. What such titles worked to emphasise was their status as focal points of disinterested pleasure, belonging as they did to the same domain of non-productive experience in which the completed paintings themselves circulated.

When considering how these two categories are bound together in Moon's paintings it is important to acknowledge how such significations of leisure were applied on top of an administrative matrix represented by numerical titling, and not *vice versa*. All of his paintings from 1964 onwards bear a numerical title, while not all have a text-based one. The former speaks to the professional task of making paintings, and the latter the more evocative titles are reserved for a subsequent audience. Making use of both a tradition of metaphorical titling, and a newer tendency that invoked the zero economy as a means to foreground an artwork's objective factuality, what Moon's process of naming reflects is the ongoing mixing of these ideologies in his own artistic practice.

## Serious Play: Drawings

These kinds of parallel, partially inter-leaving ideologies reflect an ongoing tension evident in Moon's combined use of formal severity and perceptual play. Nowhere is this perhaps more evident than in the way his drawing practice related to his paintings. While certain periods of Moon's career are marked by larger or smaller amounts of completed paintings, he consistently produced voluminous quantities of

working drawings throughout. These drawings can be roughly divided into two groups: linear studies made with either a pencil or fountain pen, and coloured studies produced using pastel or painted collage [Fig.64]. Analogous with what he elsewhere termed an 'original conception,' one that needed to be relinquished in order to complete a successful painting, these drawings were a 'compulsive' activity that in all but a few instances he saw as 'having no interest or value to anyone but myself.'[106] The purpose of this spontaneous activity was to openly explore as many potential outcomes for a painting as possible. Moon regarded their use as limited, saying:

> The main object here is to be able to see the idea as a visual image and have it around the studio for a few days to get used to it and to make sure that I want to go ahead with it. I also use these drawings to help me establish what size and shape the canvas should be. Once I start a picture, the problems are not ones a small drawing can help with, and it is then of little relevance.[107]

The function of the preparatory sketches was to give provisional forms to ideas, allowing a select number of them to percolate into his thinking around an upcoming painting.

Crucially, at the drawing stage imagination was given free rein. In contrast to the manifest labour visible in the repeated application of paint layers to canvas, these preparatory studies privilege play as their main priority. Play as an operative principle was widely discussed amongst British artists working in the late 1950s and early 1960s. It had frequently been couched in relation to Johan Huizinga's *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture*, first published in English in 1949.[108] Huizinga, despite claiming that a human need for play performs a crucial role in the overall formation of culture, saw one fundamental limitation hindering its direct application in the visual arts. Unlike the field of music, where he considered play clearly evident, he felt that a barrier between genuine play and physical artworks arose from their foundations in a material enquiry:

> However much the plastic artist may be possessed by his creative impulse he has

[106] May, *Monad, A Magazine About Painting*, 32. This text uses the term 'convulsive,' but is most probably a typographic error. Correspondence with Robert Moon, 14th July, 2016.
[107] Penrose, 'Profile: Jeremy Moon.'
[108] Huizinga's text is for example referred to by Alloway in his text for *This is Tomorrow*.

to work like a craftsman, serious and intent, always correcting himself. His inspiration may be free and vehement when he "conceives," but in its execution it is always subjected to the skill and proficiency of the forming hand.[109]

One aspect of artistic production that Huizinga did concede as embodying a play-function, if only of a lower order, was the doodled drawing. 'Heedlessly, barely conscious of what we are doing' he said 'we play with lines and planes, curves and masses, and from this abstracted doodling emerge fantastic arabesques, strange animal or human forms.'[110] Just as the act of sketching performed a generative but ultimately limited function for Moon, Huizinga's description of instinctive 'drives' linked drawing to play through a lack of pre-determined thought.

Huizinga's formulation of the play-concept was rooted in the degree of uncertainty attendant to it. This was something that an artist's technical proficiency worked to counteract. It was uncertainty that prevented a player from fully apprehending the outcome of a particular activity, a factor that in turn renders play a counter-productive force. Not containing any functional purpose, play is rather an activity that takes place 'outside the sphere of necessity or material utility.'[111] This is also what bonds Huizinga's play-concept to leisure, as this too represents a break in purposeful activity.

The necessity of moving beyond an original conception, as well as the counter-productive play-concept that it embodied, was for Moon inextricable from the moral purpose he envisaged for his paintings. This image of productivity was closely linked to his status as a professional painter, and the way in which a painting was taken from a point of playful ideation to one of formalised completion. In one sense these processes served to overwrite a more impulsive exploration evident at an earlier drawing stage, but this interpretation cannot account for the kinds of residual play evident in his finished work. What the compositional peculiarities of a painting like *Hoop La* expose is the limitation of considering work and play as merely constituting

---

[109] Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955), 166.
[110] Ibid., 168.
[111] Ibid., 132.

opposing categories. Equivalent to Moon's suspicions around the apparent ease of a one-shot method of painting, or the leisure implicit in evocative titles, the spontaneous play associated with drawing was something that needed not to be concealed or eradicated, but rather productively transformed.

Moon's drawing was not limited to preparatory work, but also extended to a document in which he commemorated the completion of each painting [Fig.65]. From around 1963 onwards he kept a visual record of finished work as a separate folio of drawings. While as early as this point he had exhibited and made available for sale pastel sketches, this collection was never presented publicly. It sits distinctly apart from the substantial number of working drawings he was accustomed to making prior to embarking upon a primary work. Presenting completed paintings as a tiled series of thumbnails arranged in order of their completion, this folio forms a comprehensive index of his practice, and traces the evolution of certain pictorial themes, the dimensions of works, as well as his periodic resumption and abandonment of his use of shaped supports. One practical consideration for maintaining this record was the scarce availability of colour reproductions at the time, a serious impediment for an artist whose paintings relied heavily on their chromatic effect.[112]

What this folio also details though are a number of other factors external to the paintings themselves, including their exhibition history, changes in location and ownership. On certain occasions works considered complete were later deemed to be failures and destroyed. This process is also documented. An orange and blue diamond-shaped painting from 1964 entitled *Mirage* (*8/64*) is one such example. Shown as being recalled from the Rowan Gallery to the studio it is then crossed off with two diagonal pencil lines. This was an act that served to erase it from the canon of completed work while maintaining a record of its appearance for future reference. Elsewhere on the same sheet successful sales, like that of *Mandarin (7/64)* to the Walker Arts Centre, are indicated by the addition of a universal symbol: the red dot. Several later pages go as far as to feature the current price of a work and any changes

---

[112] Photographic reproductions of Moon's work commissioned by the Rowan Gallery, now held by the Estate of Jeremy Moon, are predominantly black and white images.

to this amount.

Repeatedly added to and amended, this folio functioned for Moon as a palimpsest, not just for the ongoing development of his pictorial enquiries, but also the subsequent trajectories his paintings took upon being released from the studio. Whether or not Moon deemed his folio of retrospective drawings to be artwork, it can nonetheless be regarded as a document that attempts to make sense of the intuitive decisions that drove the formal development of his painting, at the same time as its future reception by the general public. Tracking the accumulation and movement of his artworks within the commercial system, and at a point subsequent to any great control Moon was able to exercise over their fate himself, each work is treated as still being 'in play' on a number of levels.

Another sense of the professional field in which Moon played can be found in the numerous sketches he was accustomed to making on found material. Drawing upon whatever was available to hand a portion of these included exhibition invitations, as well as gallery correspondence. One series of thumbnail drawings was made directly on a cover letter for a cheque sent to him by Kingsmill. A large portion of the invitations that were drawn on in this manner relate to personal acquaintances, often either fellow staff or former students. Cards promoting early Rowan Gallery exhibitions by Witkin and Tucker, a later presentation there by Michael Craig Martin, as well as shows at the Kasmin, Axiom and Grabowski galleries, all give some impression of the cultural terrain of the period [Fig.66]. An embellished page from *Silans*, the magazine Barry Flanagan edited whilst at St. Martin's between 1964 and 1965, is another reminder of the contextual links between Moon and the generation of individuals to were to achieve recognition towards the end of the decade.[113] What such documents also afford is a glimpse of Moon's other activities and interests. Such scrap drawing material includes an invitation to a public talk by a Russian diplomat, organised by the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, and a copy of Alexander

---

[113] Hemsworth, Hilliard, and McLean were amongst the St. Martin's students to have been directly taught by Moon. See Barry Flanagan, *Silans*, ed. Jo Melvin (London: Lethaby Press, 2011).

Trocchi's counter-cultural publication the *Project Sigma Newsletter*.[114]

It is at each of these overlapping points that the ideological co-existence of work and play in Moon's paintings becomes even more apparent. Speaking more recently on the difficulties of locating his practice, and of the delineation current thinking tends to draw between the solemn and the trivial, Matthew Collings remarked that it was 'a relief to see Moon coming down so firmly on the side of the serious and the playful.'[115] This is an observation that bears significant similarities to Huizinga's opinion that a binary opposition of seriousness and play was insufficient to account for the myriad ways in which the play-concept underwrote culture as a whole. In a statement that could well be argued to encapsulate Moon's attitude he explained his reasoning:

> Play is a thing by itself. The play-concept as such is of a higher order than seriousness. For seriousness seeks to exclude play, whereas play can very well include seriousness.[116]

## Cheerful Schizophrenia: Grid Paintings, 1968

Another important element to consider when tracing the kinds of serious play that Moon was engaged is a compositional device he adopted wholeheartedly in the wake of the Y-shaped canvases of 1967: the grid. Employed from the beginning of 1968 until the closing months of the decade, a gridded framework was the exclusive means by which a tension between pictorial field and framing edge was maintained.[117] Although Moon's decision to proceed in this manner represented a distinct break with issues that had concerned him in the previous year, experiments with the grid can be traced back to the beginnings of his work as a mature artist. *Trellis* (1962) contains

---

[114] Alexander Trocchi was a lecturer in the Sculpture Department at St. Martin's between 1964 and 1966. Trocchi's records show Moon to have been on the mailing list for the newsletter. I am indebted to Andrew Wilson for sharing his research with me on the subject.

[115] Matthew Collings, 'Right Wrong Moves, A Transcript of a Public Talk About Jeremy Moon' in *Jeremy Moon: 1969 Grid Paintings* (London: Rocket Gallery, 2006), n.p.

[116] Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture*, 45.

[117] *17/69*, the first of a number of paintings populated by triangular elements, initially in a regular pattern and then in increasing free arrangements, was completed in October 1969.

much of the determining logic of these later works [Fig.67], being composed of a white lattice on a yellow ground, with black circles placed at its connecting points.[118] Elsewhere an earlier painting made on the same canvas as *Parade* (1962) bears significant similarities to those finished in the autumn of 1968.[119]

Initially Moon's exploration of the grid proceeded jointly along two, inter-related but separate lines. One involved the use of an eccentric support that extended the logic of the Y-Shaped paintings. In *Crusader* (*6/68*, 1968), and four other works made using the same format, two gridded fields are pressed into one another along a 120° angle like that used to determine the radial displacement of limbs in the canvases of the year before [Fig.68].[120] But, whereas the painted bands on the Y-Shaped canvases mimicked the outer edge, what the composition of *Crusader* emphasises is a central, illusionistic fault line where two gridded fields intersect. Moon's second solution was to re-adopt a rectangular format in order to explore the grid as a more static form. For the most part these paintings remained only numerically titled and present themselves as impassive, factual compositions.[121] While *Crusader* presented the melding together of two fields, these numbered paintings focused their attention on the intervening squares gridded lines create. In a work like *10/68* (1968), each of these squares was intuitively assigned an individual colour [Fig.69]. These squares project and recede in differing amounts, while at the same time being held in a unified suspension by the painting's golden yellow grid lines. Moon deemed the strategy especially fruitful, and returned to it repeatedly over the next two years. Over a dozen related canvases were produced. Additionally, a number of rectangular canvases

[118] Additionally, writing about the emergence of the paintings of 1968 onwards Martin noted that an underlying grid had always been employed in drawings to determine the placement of ellipses and other pictorial elements, only to be omitted from the final image. 'Over the years the grid began to surface and became itself the motif for much work.' Barry Martin, 'Jeremy Moon Retrospective, Serpentine Gallery,' *Studio International*, May/June (1976): 300.

[119] This earlier composition is visible due to deterioration of *Parade*, the result of it having been poorly stored. *Parade* was purchased by Kasmin from Moon's first one man show at the Rowan Gallery, but later returned. Correspondence between the gallery and artist from early 1964 indicates that this painting had become damaged while in the Rowan Gallery stores. Jeremy Moon Estate, Correspondence File.

[120] The other works in this group are, in order of completion: *7/68*, *Battenburg 1* and *Battenburg 2* (*20/68 and 21/68*), *Low Country* (number unknown) and *Golden Section* (*23/*68).

[121] The single exception from this first year of production is *Caravan (15/68* 1968), although by 1970 Moon was increasingly assigning evocative titles to rectangular gridded works such as *Ice Palace* (*14/70*).

bisected by two opposing grids, such as *Caravan II* (*15/68*, 1968), serve to partially bridge the gap between these two solutions [Fig.70].

The development of these strategies run concurrently in the opening months of 1968. Their later evolution however, show Moon once more becoming less reliant on the dynamism of the shaped support, and his attention returning again to the possibilities offered by rectangular compositions.[122] Despite this shift in focus these paintings maintained a strong connection to international developments. If the use of the shaped canvas had aligned his work with that of certain practitioners operating in the United States, Moon's adoption of the grid again links his interests with the objective precepts central to the emergence of Minimalist art. Specifically for those painters involved with that discourse –a conversation that in its earlier stages that had revolved largely around the abandonment of the painted surface for more sculptural or materially obdurate solutions– the grid presented an important method with which to assert an analogous neutrality to artworks produced in three dimensions. Dividing a surface into equally portioned areas this too suppressed relational values. As Alloway recognised, the grid presented itself less as a form of 'underlying composition' than as a 'factual display.'[123]

Schematic in its appearance, the sheer impassiveness of the grid seems diametrically opposed to the concept of play. What a more detailed interrogation of Moon's surfaces uncovers though is a number of discrepancies that render these works far from systematic. This is most evident when examining the points at which a lattice terminates against the edge of a canvas like *12/68* (1968). Here the central apex of each of its pink diamonds connect with the canvas on the right hand side, and also appear evenly spaced between the top and bottom of the picture [Fig.71]. What disturbs the grid's central placement on the canvas however is the way these forms intersect with the left hand side of the picture. Consequently, the composition does

---

[122] Although it falls outside of the time period covered by this text, Moon's interest in the shaped canvas would return with a vengeance in 1972, and would go on to form the central focus of the final body of paintings he would produce.

[123] Alloway, *Systemic Painting*, n.p. See also John Elderfield, 'Grids,' *Artforum*, Vol.10, No.9, May (1972): 52-59.

not sit in exact correspondence with the stretcher onto which it is mapped. Instead it appears as if it has been retrospectively cropped in a manner not unlike *Orange Queen* or *Concord*. Such casualness subtly destablises the systematic meaning typically associated with the grid. Moon himself found the assumptions of programmatic thinking behind these paintings aggravating, and went so far as to claim his use of the device was in fact 'not a system' at all. 'For me,' he said, 'a particular grid in a particular painting is not "a grid" in the sense that everyone *knows*, but is a system of vertical and horizontals which represent a particular thrust carrying a particular colour and a particular feeling.'[124]

It was the particularities of how these coloured horizontal and vertical elements crossed one another that determined the 'thrust,' and consequently the 'feeling' contained within each individual painting. Perhaps it was wishful thinking on Moon's part to hope that works of such compositional uniformity could be interpreted as a series of separate endeavours, but as Rosalind Krauss pointed out in her seminal text on the topic it was this very same sense of duality that was key to understanding the grid's paradigmatic effect. For Krauss the grid operated both as the ultimate expression of an artwork's autonomy from the world around it, and equally as a site of secular repression. Announcing 'modern art's will to silence, its hostility to literature, to narrative, to discourse,' while simultaneously allowing older symbolic and spiritual conceptions to persist in 'para-logical suspension' alongside such a claim for autonomy, this contradiction imbued the grid with what she called 'mythic' attributes.[125] Myth functioned for Krauss as a way of repressing one method of interpreting the artwork and its place in the world underneath another. This is a point of some significance when considering the contradiction of Moon's using of the grid to convey 'particular feelings' to a viewer.

What Krauss' observation allows us to interpret is how the professional nature of Moon's grid paintings relate to a second repressed characteristic: the figure of play and the broader conditions of leisure to which it speaks. Huizinga's concept of serious

---

[124] Martin, 'Jeremy Moon, 29th October 1973, Interview with Barry Martin,' 8.
[125] Rosalind Krauss, 'Grids,' *October*, Summer (1979): 50, 55.

play is not dissimilar in this regard, as it too tries to articulate how one category of experience is sublimated within another. But to fully apprehend the point at which these two definitions come to overlap in Moon's work, it is necessary to introduce another element. This was an issue that had, like the spiritual overtones Krauss makes repeated reference to in her text, threatened abstract art since its inception: its indebtedness to decoration and ornamental patterning.

Reservations about the decorative connotations of abstraction date back to its origins, with a pioneer like Kandinsky warning that if we 'devote ourselves purely to combination of pure colour and abstract form, we shall produce works which are mere decoration, which are suited to neckties or carpets.'[126] Kandinsky saw this comparison being at its closest in the use of repeated patterns: a method of arrangement that prevented the viewer from gauging the 'inner harmony' of a form.[127] Later, in the postwar period, the 'decorative' was used selectively by Greenberg both as a means of praise and denigration.[128] The particular position the term occupied within a formalist vision of painting was that while an all-over method of pictorial composition furthered the appearance of self-reflexive autonomy, it also rendered a critical separation from the decorative arts increasingly necessary. In a turn of phrase similar to his rival Rosenberg's definition of apocalyptic wallpaper Greenberg observed how the all-over picture, even when successful, 'comes very close to decoration -to the kind seen in wallpaper patterns that can be repeated indefinitely.'[129]

Surreptitiously the grid is capable of assuming either the appearance of administrative authority or decorative patterning with equal ease. In Moon's case we can regard his paintings as occupying both categories co-extensively. Lacking the de-saturated palette employed in gridded compositions produced during the 1960s by American painters like Will Insley, Agnes Martin or Robert Ryman, the sensual use of colour of a work like *12/68* is less equipped to protect itself from accusations of

---

[126] Wassily Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, (New York: Dover Publications, 1977) 98.
[127] Ibid., 99.
[128] The topic of Greenberg's engagement with the term 'decorative' is extensively detailed in Elissa Auther, 'The Decorative, Abstraction and the Hierarchy of Art and Craft in the Art Criticism of Clement Greenberg,' *Oxford Art Journal*, Vol.27, No.3, (2004): 341-364.
[129] Clement Greenberg, 'The Crisis of the Easel Picture,' in *Art and Culture,* 155.

decorative hedonism. Decoration, like play, belongs to the realm of leisure. This was because it was regarded from the advent of the modernist project onwards as a form of unnecessary embellishment: a surface effect appended to a functional inner core. For early critics like Adolf Loos, ornament embodied the residual vestiges of 'amoral' drives, a 'wasteful' aesthetic directly opposed to the progressive forces shaping industrialized society.[130]

Affiliated primarily with design, decoration was linked with the mass-produced commodity, but it also carried with it other, loaded, connotations. A blurred boundary between artwork and the field of design could after all be argued to be highly visible elsewhere in 1960s abstraction. The systemic painting methods outlined by Alloway, or the delegated fabrication employed by many Minimalist artists both suggest such a proximity. Tellingly, what a repeated patterning points towards, which these other examples do not, is the personal or domestic sphere in which decorative objects typically appear. This point could furthermore be opened out to explore the gendered significations decoration was perceived to represent: the femininity associated with textiles, a housewife's role as consumer, and so on.[131] Working in his garden studio, situated a matter of feet from such a domestic context, such connotations present substantial impediments to the image of authoritative professionalism that Moon wished to project.

In spite of this, these paintings resist domestication using a number of formal strategies. As has already been outlined in relation to paintings such as *Night Time* and *Carousel* this was achieved in part by the sheer scale of the work. Despite producing a range of smaller paintings during his time working at Latchmere Road, including several that were brought inside to hang, Moon consistently worked on canvases of a size that simply could not be accommodated in the house in which he

---

[130] Adolf Loos, 'Ornament and Crime', in Bernie Miller and Melony Ward, eds., *Crime and Ornament, The Arts and Popular Culture in the Shadow of Adolf Loos* (Toronto: YYZ Books, 2002) 29.

[131] In a sense the issue that is being discussed here prefigures a debate that would be granted an explicit voice by the so-called 'Pattern and Decoration Movement' of the mid to late 1970s. There the gendered connotations of ornament would be taken up by painters as a method of challenging the patriarchal attitudes driving Modernist art. See Anne Swartz, ed., *Pattern and Decoration: An Ideal Vision in American Art 1975-1985* (New York: Hudson River Museum, 2007).

lived. Just as a desire to work at a larger scale had placed the residents of Situation Square at odds with their surroundings, here the distinction between what could actually fit within Moon's studio and his home also served to demarcate the otherwise permeable boundary between the two. An accompanying purpose can be attributed to the way in which many of the gridded works imperfectly map the surface onto which they were placed. This preoccupation with de-centred compositions, the asymmetrical projection and recession of individual colours, and the awkwardly intersection of patterns all disturbed the homogeneity of the grid. Once alerted to these factors it becomes difficult to regard the composition as static. Such disturbances in fact constitute the primary 'content' of these paintings, challenging as they do the stability of the grid as an *a priori* concept. Paradoxically, in these circumstances this *a priori* concept could be interpreted to represent either the administrative impulses powering Minimalist and systemic tendencies, or the superficial nature of the decorative pattern.

Following Krauss' logic, Moon's grid paintings can be termed neurotic in that they present an image of overt professionalism overlaid directly on top of a repressed image of domesticated leisure. The artist's own preference to regard each individual painting as 'thrusting' in a particular direction privileges subjective 'feeling' over the objectivity suggested by the grid as a system. At the same time though, overtly decorative associations had to be suppressed through the use of scale and other compositional disturbances. When collating the varying, often conflicting, factors that contribute to the production of these paintings, what becomes most apparent is that no one interpretation of the grid's signification seems sufficient. This was a factor Krauss tacitly acknowledged when she said that 'because of its bivalent structure (and history) the grid is fully, even cheerfully, schizophrenic.'[132]

## Conclusion

Writing in the catalogue essay for Moon's retrospective exhibition in 1976, Lynton outlined what he regarded as a fundamental misunderstanding of the work up

---

[132] Krauss, 'Grids,' 60.

until that point. Taking issue with the matter-of-fact descriptions that typically accompanied the paintings he observed how they 'start hares' many critics were unwilling to follow, ones that he concluded 'run circles around what has been called an art of pure visibility.'[133] This point was expanded upon in an *Art International* article also dedicated to this exhibition at the Serpentine Gallery. There Lynton mused that the rhetoric that Moon was accustomed to couching his paintings using masked a deeper meaning. It was these masked properties that he concluded as constituting the work's real quality:

> More than any other painter, Moon had given me the impression he knew what he was doing. His critical intelligence plus his steady professional competence misled me…
> Seeing only the selected end-product we talked of it in the wrong terms, and so did he.[134]

Confronted with Moon's preparatory drawings when preparing for the exhibition Lynton found himself compelled to reassess the studious attitude he had previously understood as having informed the paintings.[135] As a result, both of these texts focused on interrogating the methods by which Moon's non-objective interests could be respected, while at the same time not obscuring the '*ad hoc*' or 'off-beat' nature of many of his decisions. More privately, it would appear Moon was inclined to agree with this interpretation. Writing to his sister in law in 1972 he said:

> My temperamental need for order and discipline and visual clarity always clashes with my desire to work spontaneously and more sensuously, but it is necessary to know oneself in art, and I think my best work so far has come out of just this contradiction.[136]

In Lynton's opinion, Moon's demeanour does not sufficiently account for what his paintings do. 'Obviously we must accept that he meant what he said', he noted 'but we need not take it as the whole truth.'[137] Restricted by what he admits is his own

---

[133] Lynton, *Jeremy Moon, Paintings and Drawings 1962-1973*, 6.

[134] Norbert Lynton, 'Jeremy Moon,' *Art International*, Vol.20, No.7-8, (1976): 41.

[135] As Director of Exhibitions at the Arts Council Gallery for a large part of the 1970s Lynton organised the retrospective.

[136] Letter to Jenny Bryant, October 1972. Jeremy Moon Archive, Correspondence File.

[137] Lynton, *Jeremy Moon, Paintings and Drawings 1962-1973*, 8-9.

'formalist' examination, what Lynton was unable to articulate was how the exclusionary rhetoric accompanying abstract art had itself evolved in conjunction with other sociological factors. Within the artistic community to which Moon belonged what such suppressive statements served to indicate was a greater degree of professional engagement with one's own practice. The connection between abstraction's lack of representational subject matter and an image of classlessness lay in its effacement of a previous order, and its practitioner's affiliation with the technocratic principles structuring a modernist worldview. Superceding other more expressionist styles of abstraction in Britain, hard edge painting challenged the biographical associations gestural mark-making was seen to signify. By limiting personal biography in this way, hard-edge painters were able to fashion more professional personas for themselves. Considering his previous life 'on the executive side of the advertising industry' such strategies take on a particular resonance when considering the early development of Moon's pictorial vocabulary.

As Hewison and others have highlighted, such conceptions of classless modernity in Britain were somewhat illusory. The gallery system and the network of patronage that sustained it retained close ties to the aristocracy, with dealers like Kingsmill and Gregory Hood still being drawn from the upper echelons of society. With his Oxbridge degree Moon has little claim to working class credentials either. Classlessness can instead be better identified as a consensual desire across a range of social strata to set aside tradition in order to achieve international relevance. This was a sentiment that Wilson had emphasised when he accused the Conservative government of a contentedness 'to remain a nation of Gentlemen in a world of Players.' What formal contracts between the artist and gallery provided was a practical method by which this modern worldview could be demonstrated. The same applies to the availability of part-time teaching positions at schools like St. Martin's and Chelsea, and the greater interaction between the professional and educational fields attempted by journals such as *Monad*, *Ark* and *First*. In addition, advancements such as the shaped canvas support and acrylic paint contributed to the technocratic mystique emanating from much abstract art of the 1960s. Combined, these factors recast the artist as an altogether more engaged figure, one whose 'commitment' to society was

directly proportional to the 'responsibility' they assumed within it. This attitude also ran counter to an earlier conception of the British avant-garde, which presented the artist as individuals whose creative energies were marshalled outside of mainstream culture.

Just as Pop Art sought to occupy the ground between art and life through the use of motifs culled from mass-media sources, the professionalism adopted by abstract artists like Moon signaled their sympathy with the productive ideologies powering the industrial complex at large. By claiming a greater affiliation with other technical fields abstract artists were not entirely unlike their Pop counterparts, in that they too sought to bridge the gap between aesthetic and lived experience. The primary difference is that while Pop Art can be characterised as focusing on consumption as a phenomenon, hard edge painting attempted to associate itself with professionalised conditions of production. Robyn Denny, looking back several years later at the *Situation* exhibitions, drew a similar comparison, saying the two 'were not widely separated.' This was because the programme of abstraction he and others were pursuing 'also included ideas about the relationship of painting to its audience, which was discernible with known attributes of cultural orientation and perceptual characteristics.'[138]

What is harder to establish is how Lynton's observations relate to Moon's use of serial production, and the anonymity of the grid. As identified by Harrison there was a pictorial tension that Moon continually exploited between figure and ground in his paintings, but also between single works and the broader groupings to which they belonged. Present in even the most overtly serial works of 1967 and 1968 is a tendency to challenge or partly destabilise the *a priori* logic suggested either by the framing edge of a canvas support or gridded composition. So persistent is this tendency that it is possible to identify these disturbances to pre-established logic as their primary 'content' or site of interest. Krauss' analysis of the grid as a site of secular repression and Huizinga's observations about serious play are both useful, in that they allow for an interpretation in which two conflicting concepts are overlaid on top of one another.

---

[138] Robyn Denny, 'Situation: The British Abstract Scene in 1960,' in *Isis Reviews Developments in Abstract Painting*, June (1964): 7.

In either case the figure of professionalised objectivity becomes a necessary pre-condition for the rigorous exploration of other factors. What in Moon's paintings has elsewhere been called 'tension', 'illusionism', or implied 'movement' can in this way be regarded as the result of a neurotic attempt to maintain and consolidate an array of competing interests within one artwork.

Moon's desire to relinquish an original conception in order to render the finished painting an autonomous object exposes the gulf between an initial process of ideation and its physical embodiment. He saw this point of origin as unrestrained and linked to play as an operative concept. By overwriting this conceptually predetermined motif with repetitive coatings and amendments the paintings themselves by contrast signify a greater investment of workmanship or labour. In some senses this division corresponds closely to Huizinga's opinions about the role 'the forming hand' performs in limiting the play concept in art, and its comparative presence in the automatism of the sketch or doodle. In others though it could be said to be more akin to what Matisse, an artist that Moon held in especially high esteem, called the state of 'condensation' he wished his paintings to reach. This position contradictorily suggests that labour can still be secreted within artworks whose outwards appearance speaks directly to the leisurely situation in which subsequent viewers will encounter them. Either, in this case a question of whether play conceals work or *vice versa*, is equally plausible.

Such a conundrum is evident in the dual system of titling Moon employed from 1964 onwards, a strategy that artificially delineated between the private and public characteristics embodied within a single work. A parallel preoccupation is visible in the folio of drawings kept as a private record of completed paintings, this document functioning as a palimpsest of their ongoing circulation in the public realm. Here even objects surrendered to the outside world mimic some of the ludic properties inscribed in them pictorially. This is insofar as they are recorded as still being 'in play,' as envoys of artistic identity subsequent to their departure from the studio. Moon's Latchmere Road studio, situated as it was in an intermediary zone between the rural and the urban, evoked a range of connotations too. It is tempting to infer in the grid paintings produced there the suburban associations suggested by the titling of *Trellis*, one of

their earliest primogenitors. What such an analogy cannot be allowed to descend into is a search for representational subject matter in the garden just outside Moon's studio. As has been demonstrated previously, such allusive titling spoke more to the paintings' reception than they did to their production. Nonetheless, read as Moon himself demanded they be –as specific combinations of vertical and horizontal elements non-objectively thrusting towards specific emotive responses– these gridded paintings actively conflate aspects of the decorative and the administrative. This operates in such a way as to render these two conflicting categories contiguous.

In continuing to play his part as a straight-laced abstract painter, while at the very same time actively problematising the formal orthodoxy he vocally endorsed, there is a degree to which Moon's position could be interpreted in relation to what Susan Sontag categorized in 1964 as 'camp.' In 'Notes on Camp' she distinguished 'Pure Camp' from lesser, more 'deliberate' iterations, saying:

> In naïve or pure Camp, the essential element is seriousness, a seriousness that fails. Of course not all seriousness that fails can be redeemed as Camp. Only that which has the proper mixture of the exaggerated, the fantastic, the passionate, and the naïve.[139]

Although in many circles it would be considered heretical to speak of the campness of non-objective abstraction, is it not possible to consider the central focus of Moon's paintings –those qualities felt by Lynton amongst others to elude critical analysis– in terms of 'a seriousness that fails'? If one is prepared to relinquish the criterion of taste widely considered to accompany the formalist project, Sontag's definition of objects and actions 'alive to a double sense in which some things can be taken' seems to offer a coherent method of explaining such earnest yet calculated disruptions to the internal logic of Moon's paintings.[140] Like Krauss and Huizinga, Sontag similarly outlines a set of contradictory elements functioning not in opposition to one another, but rather as productively co-extensive. Overlapping, but not entirely in alignment, camp elucidates the degree to which play could retain so visible a role within paintings that

---

[139] Susan Sontag, 'Notes on Camp,' in *Against Interpretation and Other Essays* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1966), 283.
[140] Ibid., 281.

otherwise purported themselves with the utmost seriousness.

In a series of notes made prior to delivering a lecture on Matisse to Chelsea students in 1964, Moon recorded with evident satisfaction a biographical comparison between himself and the Frenchman. Both had obtained qualifications as lawyers prior to relinquishing their careers in order to paint, and this parallel appears to have further fueled Moon's admiration for Matisse's pictures.[141] For Moon the declaration of artistic intent signaled by leaving conventional working life, marked by his decision to begin to 'paint seriously,' had come about following his exposure to *Situation*. He was particularly struck by the professional attitude radiated by the artists involved. Despite this, Moon also retained an intellectual affiliation with an older model of artistic subjectivity, one in which the artist laboured to encode artworks with the figure of leisure. Tension, insofar as it can be determined to function as a dynamic pictorial element in his practice, emerges from the intersection of these two imperatives. Hard edge abstraction served as a professional matrix, a series of conventions upon, into or underneath which artistic subjectivity could be inscribed. Haunted by his own late start to artistic practice, Moon's paintings rehearse and re-enact this break with the responsibilities of normal working life, only to continually return to it as their ideological headspring.

---

[141] These lectures ran over the course of several sessions, and covered the evolution of modern painting from Impressionism to Pollock. Jeremy Moon Archive

# Conclusion

In the December 1971 issue of *Studio International* a piece by Moon entitled the 'Enemies of Painting' was published, railing against what he regarded as the critical marginalisation of painting and other 'conventional' media. Like Heron before him, whose complaints had often been printed in the same publication, 'Enemies of Painting' had been provoked by a feeling that the work he and his peers had produced in the last decade was being sidelined in favour of newer 'experimental' or anti-disciplinary approaches. Although they were not acknowledged directly the emergence and international visibility of more conceptually oriented British artists such as Hilliard, and McLean, both Moon's former students at St. Martin's, was in effect an unspoken subtext. Tellingly, and suggestive of what was ultimately considered at stake in such a discussion, Moon's article was mistitled in the contents page of the magazine as 'Enemies of Art.'

In defending the 'continued viability' of painting the issue of the artist's 'moral imperative' was also returned to. 'Those who rejected the convention from outside' were said to have substituted 'casual, unconsidered and arbitrary judgement' for 'a deep and open-minded personal confrontation' with the materials and traditions of painting.[1] By deliberately limiting its engagement with previous forms of skilled artistic labour, conceptual art had little to do with the qualities of rigour and workmanship that were so crucial to Moon's moral conception of practice. The main target of 'Enemies of Painting' however was not younger artists but rather critics, who he saw as having failed to apprehend artworks as anything other than part of an 'evolutionary' narrative, and had instead opted for the comparative ease of writing about these more novel forms of production.

Elsewhere Moon would lament that art criticism had become the province of any 'young kid just out of the Courtauld who has just had a couple of drinks with

---

[1] Jeremy Moon, 'Enemies of Painting,' *Studio International*, December (1971): 226.

Greenberg,' but this was in truth only part of the problem artists like himself faced.[2] While it was not a viewpoint British abstractionists always enthusiastically identified with, these shifts in critical thinking more accurately reflected the failing star of Greenbergian Modernism, the fortunes of which they remained perceived as conjoined to. Besieged by a diverse range of emerging artistic tendencies –more or less all united by a common emnity towards his opinions– Greenberg's own essays had taken on an increasingly defensive air. By the early 1970s he had almost entirely receded from producing commentary on contemporary art altogether. Amongst of the last of these texts, 'Avant-Garde Attitudes: New Art in the Sixties,' had appeared in *Studio International* a year prior to 'Enemies of Painting.'[3] Rifts within the coterie of writers most closely associated with Greenberg made his position even less stable, as former acolytes like Krauss looked to expand their accounts to include a more diverse range of artistic positions.[4] More locally, the shifting sands were emblematised by the closure of the Kasmin Gallery towards the end of 1972.[5] As the venue with Britain's most direct line to advanced American abstraction, Kasmin's decision to close signaled a symbolic change in climate. This was a change Caro summed up by saying:

> Quite suddenly it wasn't a time for optimism; it was a time for getting down to reality. The confidence in the future wasn't there anymore.[6]

Corresponding to this was the decline in the urban figure that had been so central to the image of Swinging London as an artistic locus. Paralleling the emergence of land art as an established tendency, the dispersal of many established artists to more bucolic locations outside of the capital marked another phase in the development in British art, one that again placed greater stock in the natural environment and an existing national lineage of 'pastoral' art. Smith, ever an acute barometer for changes in the cultural atmosphere, had moved his family to Wiltshire

---

[2] Martin, 'Jeremy Moon, 29th October 1973, Interview with Barry Martin,' 7.

[3] Clement Greenberg, 'Avant-Garde Attitudes: New Art in the Sixties,' *Studio International*, April (1970): 142-145.

[4] For a detailed account of the breakdown of the Greenberg circle see Amy Newman, *Challenging Art, Artforum 1962-1974* (New York: Soho Press, 2000).

[5] This closure marked the end of Kasmin's business relationship with Sheridan Dufferin. Along with Terence Conran he later opened a new space in London called Garage.

[6] Caro quoted in Sotheby's, *The New Situation: Art in London in the Sixties* (London: Sotheby's, 2013), n.p.

in 1969. There he lived nearby to Blake, Hodgkin and Hoyland, while sculptors like King and Scott had relocated to Bedfordshire and Yorkshire. Others like Witkin immigrated to the United States, to Vermont and a teaching position at Bennington College in 1965. This change in scene was in turn detectable in a series of material changes to art made by these individuals. Notable in this regard are the tensioned 'Kites' Smith began to produce in 1972, spurred on by having attended a workshop on modern tent manufacture at the Aspen Colorado Design Conference in 1966.[7] With the dispute over Greenberg's stripping of David Smith's sculptures raging abroad, the New Generation sculptors began to take an increasing interest in uncoated surfaces traditional metal working techniques like forging. A 'cool' finish, so endemic as to be considered the lingua franca of 1960s art, was gradually being overtaken by a growing taste for the homespun and the organic. Now replacing what Eddie Wolfram described in 1966 as the 'undulating jungle of P.V.C. that litters London galleries,'[8] was a proliferation of artworks that gave Robertson cause to 'think back uneasily to Victorian ladies who pressed flowers and leaves in books as keepsakes.'[9]

Bracketed on one hand by the growing visibility of American culture in the mid to late 1950s, and the ascendancy of dematerialised forms of conceptual art towards the end of the 1960s, the period covered by this study is marked by a heightened sense of optimism around the potential future of abstract painting and sculpture. It was a sentiment that would not survive into the following decade. During this short-lived heyday younger artists who associated themselves with such a discourse had found success relatively quickly. Corporate patronage, enthusiastic press coverage and several supportive educational institutions all contributed to an accelerated uptake of recent students into the professional field. This extended to a degree of international exposure through exhibitions like *Primary Structures* and *London: The New Scene*, as well as biennial presentations in cities including Venice, Paris and Sao Paolo. In presuming that these conditions would not change, those profiting from such circumstances could not see what is all too clear with hindsight: that the increasingly

[7] Rose, *Richard Smith, Seven Exhibitions*, 30.
[8] Eddie Wolfram, 'Cool Clean: Tucker and Wragg,' *Art and Artist*, May (1966): 59.
[9] Robertson, 'Notes on British Sculpture 1952-1977,' n.p.

orthodox status of abstract art would inevitably lead to lingering questions about who it served, and a growing desire for alternative forms of expression.

This lends the period a particular poignancy, and it is the naivety of such optimism that most specifically implicates 1960s British abstraction with Sontag's remarks on the core precepts of a camp aesthetic touched upon previously. Whereas Smith, on first inspection the most obvious candidate to occupy the category, falls into the grouping of 'deliberate camp,' by failing to acknowledge the same set of cultural cues the New Generation sculptors and Moon arguably qualify as 'purer' iterations of the sensibility. In their artworks a combination of the exaggerated, the fantastic and the passionate acts to confound and undermine what otherwise purports itself to be a sincere commitment to formalism as a self-reflexive enquiry. Attempting to delineate what was 'proper to sculpture,' or beginning to 'paint seriously,' their work nonetheless fails to completely repel the connotations suggested by latent anthropomorphism, synthetic materials, or decorative patterning. Though more commonly applied to figurative art many of the issues addressed here relate to Sontag's description of a phenomenon that was 'theatrical,' 'fantastic' and 'urban,' acting as 'something of a private code,' and 'emphasising texture, sensuous surface and style at the expense of content.'[10] As objects 'alive to the double sense in which some things can be taken' it is this sense of an artwork's hybridity that one returns to again and again when attempting to make sense of the motivations underpinning their production.

For each of the individuals examined here, abstraction functioned as a decorous method, one by which a calculated withdrawal from representational imagery could be performed. The supposition made by many was that this method marked a similar break with the societal conditions through which their imagery was transmitted and subsequently validated. Smith, due in part to his earlier encounters with the long front of culture advanced by other ICA members, was too perceptive to fall into this trap. He instead employed abstraction to re-imagine mass media spectacle as a hollowed out framework. Although his mid-town aesthetic and wry allusions to the branded

---

[10] Sontag, *Against Interpretation and Other Essays*, 278

exploits of the New York School were not imitated to any great extent, his influence remains significant due to the semantic properties he imagined his paintings espousing.

These same semantic properties underpin the quest for an emancipated sculptural language at St. Martin's School of Art, where the syntactical potential of a work was perceived to determine its quality. As a collegiate style it has been largely characterised as having developed inversely in relation to Modernist Painting, but what an analysis of the differences between these sculptures and those made by Caro yields is evidence of a more complex inter-disciplinary relationship. Posing an explicit challenge to existing methods of siting and display, and supported by an impression of weightlessness provided by synthetic materials and painted coatings, many key tropes of abstract painting were in fact appropriated and repurposed to advance sculpture as a radically emancipated form of speech. What a semiological division between *langue*, the lexical options available to a speaker, and *parole*, the specific uses a speaker makes of such a lexicon, provides is a method of articulating how sculptors like Annesley, Bolus, King, Scott, Tucker and Witkin conceived of their efforts individually, while remaining so effectively grouped under the collective umbrella of 'New Generation sculpture.'

Finally, it is the collective sense of identity afforded by an affiliation with formalist methods of artistic production that provides the means of describing how British abstract artists of the 1960s, despite forsaking representational imagery or any overt interest in depicting popular sources, remained inextricably connected to broader economic conditions. The professional persona adopted by abstract painters like Moon formed a method of distancing the artist from connotations of amateurism and the Establishment values associated with it. Instead of addressing the structural language of consumer imagery so central to Smith's practice, the cultivation of such a persona signaled an identification, albeit artificial, with technocratic ideologies powering the industrial complex. Moon imagined for his practice a moral purpose, one that revolved around his use of hard edged abstraction as a professional matrix, a field upon, or from which, subjective breaks could be performed.

The limitation of Alloway's rubric 'Pop abstraction' is that it assumes a connection between abstraction and a consumer's environment. By doing so Alloway did not consider the productive forces acting to guarantee the hallucinatory promises of such consumer imagery. There is enough in the synthetic surfaces of New Generation sculpture and decorative repetition of compositional elements in Moon's paintings to suggest a familial resemblance to the commodity, but to focus on these factors in isolation would be to overlook an equally crucial relationship between formalist abstraction and the wider cultural field in which it momentarily thrived during the 1960s. One of the principal claims this thesis makes is that abstract artworks were considered as analogous in a variety of ways to structural conditions holding society together. Expressly acknowledged in Smith's skeletal renderings of advertisements, such analogies are no less evident in the meta-linguistic preoccupations of the New Generation sculptors, or the neurotic interaction of labour and leisure in Moon's paintings. In each of these instances abstraction mimicked other societal functions, functions that operated underneath the surface of everyday life. Coming to prominence at a time when a structuralist worldview was prevalent, and of which a formalist conception of the visual arts could itself be argued to constitute a part, the decline in the popularity of such approaches to art making likewise parallels the emergence of post-structuralist theory and the challenge it posed to concepts of underlying order. The optimistic character of 1960s British abstract art –its perceived relationship with other, more functional aspects of urbanised modernity– drew on this assumed interconnection in a variety of ways.

Another goal of this enquiry has been to more precisely establish the position 1960s British abstract art occupied internationally, specifically with respect to the Trans-Atlantic dialogue it was involved in with the United States. While American abstraction is now so canonised as to seem indelibly preordained, its British counterpart still appears resistant to a similar treatment for a number of reasons. Smith's retention of illusionism in his three-dimensionally shaped canvases, the New Generation sculptors' relational approach to sculptural assemblage, and Moon's preoccupation with unsettling the homogeneity of the pictorial field are all

problematic when assessed in relation to the dominant practice of abstraction as it evolved in the US. There qualities such as objecthood and non-relational seriality acted as the primary criteria for advanced art.

From an American perspective British abstraction was comprehensible only in relation to debates being held on home soil. The exportation of such debates to Britain undeniably played an instrumental role in forming the complex tension between formalist aesthetics and other cultural influences that this thesis has attempted to articulate. However, much of the shared humour of the abstract artworks examined here, to use the phrase in a physiological sense while not entirely overruling its comic overtones, derives from the manner in which British artworks proved resistant to interpretations using the critical concepts underwriting American abstraction of the period. Central to this collective humour is the way in which various kinds of indeterminacy were exploited as deliberate formal elements. These were used to render both paintings and sculptures as equivocal, often contradictory propositions. The exact origins of such equivocation is something that is difficult to establish in any complete sense, drawing as these practitioners did on a wide, and at points disparate, range of critical positions and technical innovations. But to characterise such a sensibility as a dilution of other, more serious efforts is to deny the clear intentionality their strategies demonstrated. If a more nuanced picture of postwar abstraction and it relation to issues of cultural topicality is to be constructed, these traits should be interpreted not as an impediment, but rather as another form of achievement.

# Bibliography

## Archival Resources

This text makes extensive reference to an archive of Jeremy Moon's material, held by the artist's estate. This has been organised into several labelled sections. The first and largest of these sections relate to the working drawings Moon produced prior to making his paintings. Numbering twenty-one archive boxes, this working material is supplemented by a separate folio of drawings that functioned as an administrative record of paintings and sculpture completed. The remainder of the archive is divided in sections relating to the artist's written correspondence, press clippings, financial records, notes and drafted texts. Additionally, the archive includes several folders of photographic documentation of Moon's work, originally held by the Rowan Gallery.

## Cited Bibliography

Aitken, Jonathan. *The Young Meteors*. London: Secker and Warburg, 1967.

Albers, Josef. *Interaction of Color*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971.

Alloway, Lawrence. 'Introduction to Action.' *Architectural Design*, Vol. 26, No.1, January (1956): 30.

——. *This is Tomorrow*. London: Institute of Contemporary Arts, 1956.

——. 'Technology and Sex in Science Fiction: A Note on Cover Art.' *Ark*, No.17 (1956): 19-23.

——. *New Trends in Painting: Some Pictures from a Private Collection*. London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1957.

——. 'Personal Statement.' *Ark*, No.19 (1957): 28.

——. 'Film Backgrounds Three: Communications Comedy and the Small World.' *Ark*, No.20 (1957): 41-43.

——. *Dimensions: British Abstract Art 1948–1957*. London: O'Hana Gallery, 1957.

——. 'Reaction to Atomics.' *Design*, Vol.122, February (1959): 42-45.

⸺. *Abstract Impressionism: An Exhibition of Recent Paintings arranged by Lawrence Alloway and Harold Cohen*. University of Nottingham, 1958.

⸺. 'Paintings from the Big Country.' *Art News and Review*, 14th March (1959): 3, 671.

⸺. 'Sic Sic Sic,' *Art News and Review*, 11th April (1959): 5, 8.

⸺. 'Making a Scene,' *Art News and Review*, 26th September (1959): 2.

⸺. 'Classicism or Hard-Edge?' *Art International*, Vol.4, No.2-3 (1960): 60-61.

⸺. 'Notes on Abstract Art and the Mass Media,' *Art News and Review*, 27th February- 12th March (1960): 3, 12.

⸺. 'Interview with Anthony Caro.' *Gazette*, No.1 (1961), n.p.

⸺. 'Artists as Consumers.' *Image*, No.3 (1961): 14-19.

⸺. 'Richard Smith.' *Metro*, No.6 (1962): 112.

⸺. *The Shaped Canvas.* New York: Guggenheim Museum, 1964.

⸺. *Systemic Painting.* New York: Guggenheim Museum, 1966.

⸺. 'The Development of British Pop Art.' In *Pop Art*, edited by Lucy Lippard, 27-139. London: Thames and Hudson, 1966.

⸺. 'The Public Sculpture Problem.' *Studio International*, October (1972): 122-125.

⸺. 'The Long Front of Culture.' In *Modern Dreams: The Rise and Fall of Pop*, edited by Edward Leffingwell, 31-35. Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1988.

Amaya, Mario. *Pop Art… and After*. New York: Viking Press, 1965.

Amos, Jeff. *Alloway, Denny and 'Situation': Critical and Technical Issues in the Emergence of British Hard-Edge Painting*. PhD Thesis. Brighton, University of Sussex, 2000.

Andre, Carl, and Hollis Frampton. *Twelve Dialogues*. Halifax NS: Nova Scotia School of Art and Design, 1980.

Annesley, David, Rolouf Louw, Tim Scott, and William Tucker. 'Anthony Caro's Work: A Symposium by Four Sculptors.' *Studio International*, January (1969): 14-20.

Annesley, David, Phillip King, Tim Scott, and William Turnbull. 'Colour in Sculpture.' *Studio International*, January (1969): 21-24.

Anon. 'Newsight: Pop Art.' Daily Mail. 'Newsight: Pop Art.' 26th February (1965): 6.

Ascott et al. 'Amateurs in Art.' *Sunday Times*, 9th June (1963).

Ashton, Dore. 'New York Commentary.' *Studio International*, June (1965): 40-43.

Auther, Elissa. 'The Decorative, Abstraction and the Hierarchy of Art and Craft in the Art Criticism of Clement Greenberg.' *Oxford Art Journal*, Vol.27, No.3, (2004): 341-364.

Auping, Michael, ed. *Abstract Expressionism: The Critical Developments*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1987.

Ballard, J. G. 'The Overloaded Man.' *New Worlds Science Fiction*, Vol.36, No.108 (1961): 28-40.

Banham, Reyner. 'New Look in Cruiserweights.' *Ark*, No.16 (1956): 44-47.

——. *The New Brutalism: Ethic or Aesthetic?* London: Architectural Press, 1966.

——. *Fathers of Pop*, BBC Documentary, 1979.

Bann, Stephan. 'Language In and About the Work of Art.' *Studio International*, March (1972): 106-11.

——. 'Abstract Art– A Language?' In *Towards a New Art, Essays on the Background to Abstract Art*, edited by Michael Compton, 125-145. London: Tate Gallery, 1980.

Barker, Ian. *Anthony Caro: Quest for the New Sculpture*. Aldershot: Lund Humphries, 2004.

Baro, Gene. 'British Sculpture: The Developing Scene.' *Studio International*, (October, 1966): 173-181.

Barreiro, Gabriel Perez, ed. *Concrete Invention: Reflections on Geometric Abstraction from Latin America and its Legacy*. Madrid: Ediciones Turner, 2011

Barrett, Cyril. 'Richard Smith: Sculptor or Painter?' *Art International*, Vol.2, No.8 (1967): 35-38.

Barthes, Roland. *Mythologies*. Translated by Annette Lavers. London: Jonathan Cape, 1972.

——. *Elements of Semiology*. Translated by Annette Lavers and Colin Smith. New York: Hill and Wang, 1973.

Baudrillard, Jean. *The System of Objects*. London: Verso, 2005.

Beatty, Frances and Samuel Lorin Trower, eds. *Richard Smith: The Green Gallery Years, 1960-1965*. New York: Richard L. Feigen and Company, 1992.

Becker, Howard. *Art Worlds*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982.

Bell, Clive. *Art*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1912.

Benhabib, Seyla and Maurizio Passerin d' Entrèves, eds. *Habermas and the Unfinished Project of Modernity*. Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1997.

Blume, Dieter and Wilhelm Bojescul, *Tim Scott: Skulpturen* (Kunstverein Braunschweig, 1988).

Blundell-Jones, Peter. *Ahrends Burton and Korelek*. London: Academy Editions, 1991.

Bochner, Mel. 'Primary Structures: A Declaration of a New Attitude as Revealed by an Important Current Exhibition.' *Arts*, No.40, June (1966): 32-35.

Boice, Bruce. 'The Quality Problem.' *Artforum*, October (1972): 68-70.

——. 'After the Quality Problem.' *Artforum*, February (1973): 73-75.

Bois, Yves Alain. 'Whose Formalism?' *Art Bulletin*, March (1996): 9-12.

Boshier, Derek. *Artist's Lives*. Audio Recording, Interviewer Hester Westerley. London: National Library Sound Collection, 2000-2009.

Bourdieu, Pierre. *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1993.

Bourdon, David. 'Our Period Style,' *Art and Artist*, June (1966): 54-57.

——. *Carl Andre Sculpture: 1958-1977*. New York: Jaap Rietman, 1978.

Bowness, Alan. 'Denny Smith and Rumney in *Place*.' *Arts*, Vol.34, No.3 (December 1959): 20.

——. 'Problems of Abstract Painting.' *Observer*, 18th August (1963).

——. *Peter Stuyvesant Foundation, A Collection in the Making*. London: Whitechapel Gallery, 1965.

——, ed. *London: The New Scene*. Minneapolis: Walker Art Centre, 1965.

——. *Sculpture in the Open Air, An Exhibition of British Contemporary Sculpture*. London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1966.

——. 'British Art Today.' In *Art of Our* Time, edited by Will Grohmann, 107-136. London: Thames and Hudson, 1966.

——. *Modern British Painting, Peter Stuyvesant Foundation Collection*. London: Tate Gallery, 1967.

——. 'The American Invasion and the British Response.' *Studio International*, June (1967): 285-293.

Bradnock, Lucy, Courtney Martin, and Rebecca Peabody, eds. *Lawrence Alloway: Critic and Curator*. Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2015.

Brener, Roland. 'The Concerns of Emerging Sculptors.' *Studio International*, Jan (1969): 25.

Breslin, David, ed. *Raw Colour: The Circles of David Smith*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014.

Brett, Guy. 'London Galleries.' *Guardian*, 2nd September (1963).

British Pathé. *The Eye of the Artist*. Newsreel. 1958.

Bulgin, Sally-Ann. *Situation and New Generation*. PhD Thesis. London: Courtauld Institute, 1993.

Cahill, Holger. *Modern Art in the United States: A Selection from the Collection of the Museum of Modern Art, New York*. London: Tate Gallery, 1956.

Carruthers, Robert, Garth Evans, Barry Flanagan et al. 'Peter Stuyvesant Foundation City Sculpture Project.' *Studio International*, July (1972): 1632.

Chave, Anna. 'Minimalism and the Rhetoric of Power.' *Arts*, January (1990): 44-63.

Chermayeff, Ivan, Tom Geismar, and Steff Geissbuhler. *Trademarks Designed by Chermayeff and Geismar*. Baden: Lars Muller, 2000.

Coleman, Roger. 'Film Backgrounds: The City… And On the Shady.' *Ark*, No.18 (1956): 55-56.

——. 'Dream Worlds Assorted.' *Ark*, No.19 (1957): 30-32.

——. 'Two Painters.' *Ark*, No.20 (1957): 23-26.

——. *Five Painters*. London: ICA, 1958.

——. *Guide to Place*. London: ICA, 1959.

——. 'The Content of Environment.' *Architectural Design*, November (1959): 517-518.

——. *Situation: An Exhibition of British Abstract Painting*. London: Royal Society of British Artists, 1960.

——. *Richard Smith*. London: ICA, 1962.

Collings, Matthew. *Jeremy Moon: 1969 Grid Paintings*. London: Rocket Gallery, 2006.

Colpitt, Frances. 'The Shape of Painting in the Sixties.' *Art Journal* Vol.50, No.1, Spring (1991): 52-56.

Cooke, Lynn. 'New Abstract Sculpture and its Sources.' In *British Sculpture in the Twentieth Century*, edited by Sandy Nairne and Nicholas Serota, 167-184. London, Whitechapel Gallery 1981.

——. 'The Independent Group: British and American Pop Art, A Palimpcestous Legacy.' In *Modern Art and Popular Culture: Readings in High and Low*, edited by Kirk Varnedoe and Adam Gopnik, 192-217. New York: H. N. Abrams, 1990.

Coplans, John. 'Serial Imagery: Definition.' In *Provocations, Writings by John Coplans*, edited by Stuart Morgan, 77-98. London Projects, 1996.

Cornish, Sam. *Stockwell Depot: 1967-1975*. London: Ridinghouse, 2015.

Craven, David. *Abstract Expressionism as Cultural Critique: Dissent during the McCarthy Era*. Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Crippa, Elena. *When Art Schools Went Conceptual: The Development of Discursive Pedagogies and Practices in British Art Higher Education in the 1960s*. PhD Thesis. London: University of Birkbeck, 2014.

——, ed. *Exhibition, Design, Participation: "an Exhibit" 1957 and Related Projects*. London: Afterall Books, 2016.

Crow, Thomas. Modernism and the Transatlantic Dialogue.' In *Pollock and After: The Critical Debate*, edited by Francis Frascina, 217-232. London: Harper and Row, 1985.

——. 'London Calling.' *Artforum*, Summer (1993): 80-85.

——. *The Rise of the Sixties: American and European Art in the Era of Dissent*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1996.

——. *The Long March of Pop: Art Music and Design 1930-1995*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014.

Danto, Arthur. 'The Art World.' *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol.61 No.19 (1964): 751-784.

Darby Bannard, Walter. 'Quality, Style and Olitski.' *Artforum*, October (1972): 64-67.

De Antonio, Emile and Mitch Tuchman. *Painters Painting*. New York: Abbeville Press, 1984.

De Chassey, Eric. '*Place*, A Constructed Abstract Situation in the Urban Continuum of the 1960s.' *October*, Vol.120 (Spring 2007): 24-52.

De Duve, Thierry. *Kant After Duchamp*. Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1996.

Debord, Guy. *The Society of the Spectacle*. London: Rebel Press, 1992.

Dempsey, Michael. 'The Caro Experience.' *Art and Artist*, February (1969): 17-19.

Denny, Robyn. 'Togetherness?' *Gazette*, No.1 (1961), n.p.

——. 'Situation: the British Abstract Scene in 1960.' In *Isis Reviews Developments in Abstract Painting*, June (1964): 6-9.

Denny, Robyn and Richard Smith. 'Ev'ry-Which-Way, Project for a Film.' Four page pull out, *Ark*, No.24 (1959).

Dickie, George. *Art and the Aesthetic: An Institutional Analysis*. Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1974.

Dimtrijevic, Nena. *Bruce McLean*. London: Whitechapel Gallery, 1981.

Elderfield, John. 'Grids.' *Artforum*, Vol.10, No.9, May (1972): 52-59.

Enokura, Koji et al. *Mono Ha, The School of Things*. Cambridge: Kettle's Yard, 2001.

Erich, Franz, ed. *Tim Scott: Skulpturen*. Kunsthalle Bielefeld, 1988.

Evans, Garth. 'Sculpture and Reality.' *Studio International*, February (1969): 61-62.

Faulkner, Simon. *A Cultural Economy of British Art: 1958-1966*. PhD Thesis. Manchester Metropolitan University, 1998.

Fenton, Terry. *Appreciating Noland*. Alberta: Edmonton Art Gallery, 1991.

Finch, Christopher. *Image as Language: Aspects of British Art 1950-1968*. London: Penguin, 1969.

——. 'London Pop Recollected.' In *Pop Art: US/UK Connections, 1956-1966*, edited by David E. Brauer and Jim Edwards, 20-41. Houston TX: Menil Collection, 2001.

Finkelstein, Louis. 'New Look: Abstract/Impressionism.' *Art News,* Vol. 35, No.1, March (1956): 36-39.

Flam, Jack, ed. *Matisse on Art*. London: Phaidon, 1977.

Flanagan, Barry. *Silans*, edited by Jo Melvin. London: Lethaby Press, 2011.

Forge, Andrew. 'Some New British Sculptors: Whitechapel Gallery breaks out one of the most exciting developments in recent British art.' *Artforum*, May (1965): 31-35.

Frascina, Frances, ed. *Pollock and After: The Critical Debate*. London: Harper and Row, 1985.

Frascina, Frances and Jonathan Harris, eds. *Art in Modern Culture: An Anthology of Critical Texts*. London: Phaidon, 1992.

Freeman, Robert. 'Comment.' *Living Arts*, No.1 (1963): 80-95.

Fried, Michael. *Anthony Caro: Sculpture 1960-1963*. London: Whitechapel Gallery, 1963.

——. *Art and Objecthood: Essays and Reviews*. London: University of Chicago Press, 1998.

Frith, Simon and Howard Horne. *Art into Pop*. London: Methuen, 1987.

Frutiger, Adrian. *Signs and Symbols, Their Design and Meaning*. London: Studio Editions, 1991.

Fry, Edward. *Guggenheim International 1967*. New York: Guggenheim Museum, 1967.

——. *David Smith*. New York: Guggenheim Museum, 1969.

Fry, Roger. *Vision and Design*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1928.

Garlake, Margaret. *New World, New Art: British Art in Postwar Society*. London: Yale University Press, 1998.

——. ed. *Artists and Patrons in Post-War Britain*. London: Ashgate, 2001.

Galbraith, J. K. *The Affluent Society*. London: Pelican, 1958.

Geist, Sidney. *Brancusi: A Study of the Sculpture*. New York: Grossman, 1968.

Gilchrist, Maggie. *Richard Smith: Paintings 1956-1962*. MA Report. London: Courtauld Institute, 1978.

Glaser, Bruce. 'Three British Artists in New York.' *Studio International*, November, (1965): 178-183.

——. 'Questions to Stella and Judd.' In *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Gregory Battcock, 148-164. Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 1968.

Glueck, Grace. 'New York Notes.' *Art in America*, December-January (1965-1966): 118-124.

Godfrey, Mark, ed. *Richard Hamilton*. London: Tate Publishing, 2014.

Goldberg, Keren, ed. *ARK: Words and Images from the Royal College of Art Magazine 1950-1978*. London: Royal College of Art, 2014.

Goosen, E. C. *The Art of the Real*. London: Lund Humphries, 1969.

Gorley Putt, S. *An Exhibition of Recent Works by the Harkness Fellows*. London: Leicester Galleries, 1966.

Gorman, Paul, ed. *Derek Boshier, Rethink Re-entry*. London: Thames and Hudson, 2015.

Gouk, Alan. 'Proper to Sculpture.' *Artscribe*, October (1980): 12-24.

Greenberg, Clement. *Art and Culture*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1961.

——. 'Avant-Garde Attitudes: New Art in the Sixties.' *Studio International*, April (1970): 142-145.

——. 'Anthony Caro.' *Studio International*, September (1967): 116-117.

——. *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism, Volume 4, Modernism with a Vengeance 1957-1969*, edited by John O'Brian. London: University of Chicago Press, 1986.

Gregory-Hood, Alex and Annely Juda, eds. *Twenty Five Years, Annely Juda Fine Art/ Juda Rowan Gallery*. London: Annely Juda Gallery, 1985.

Grieve, Alastair. *Constructed Abstract Art in England after the Second World War: A Neglected Avant-Garde*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005.

Guilbaut, Serge. *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom and the Cold War*. London: University of Chicago Press, 1983.

Halle, Morris and Roman Jakobson. *The Fundamentals of Language*. New York: Mouton, 1956.

Halliwell, Rupert and Lyndsey Ingram, eds. *Gerald Laing Prints and Multiples: A Catalogue Raisonné*. London: Sims Reed, 2006.

Hamill, Sarah. 'Polychrome in the Sixties: David Smith and Anthony Caro.' In *Anglo American Exchange in Postwar Sculpture, 1945-1975*, edited by Rebecca Peabody, 91-104. Los Angeles: Getty Institute, 2011.

Hamilton, Richard. *Richard Hamilton: Collected Words*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1984.

Harrison, Charles. 'Jeremy Moon's Recent Paintings.' *Studio International*, March (1968): 134-139.

——. *Since 1950: Art and its Criticism*. London: Yale University Press, 2009.

Harrison, Martin. *Transition: The London Art Scene in the Fifties*. London: Merrell, 2002.

Heron, Patrick. 'The Ascendency of London in the Sixties.' *Studio International*, December (1966): 280-281.

——. 'A Kind of Cultural Imperialism?' *Studio International*, February (1968): 62-64.

——. 'The Americans at the Tate Gallery.' Reprinted in *Painter as Critic: Patrick Heron, Selected Writings*, edited by Mel Gooding, 100-104. London: Tate Gallery, 1998.

Hess, Thomas. *Barnet Newman*. New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1971.

Hewison, Robert. *In Anger: Culture in the Cold War, 1945-1960*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1981.

——. *Too Much: Art and Society in the Sixties 1960-75*. London: Methuen, 1986.

Hilton, Tim. *The Sculpture of Phillip King*. Abingdon, Lund Humphries, 1992.

Hoffman, Malvina. *Sculpture Inside and Out*. New York: W. W Norton and Company, 1939.

House, Gordon. *Tin Pan Valley: A Memoir with Paintings by Gordon House*. London: Archive Press, 2004.

Huizinga, Johan. *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1955.

Hughes, Robert. 'Caro Generation.' *Sunday Times*, 10th April (1966).

James, Phillip. *Sculpture in the Open Air*. London City Council, 1960.

——. ed. *Henry Moore on Sculpture*. London: MacDonald, 1966.

Johnston, Jill. 'Review and Previews.' *ARTnews*, September (1965): 16-18.

Jones, Caroline. *Eyesight Alone: Clement Greenberg and the Bureaucratization of the Senses*. London: University of Chicago Press, 2005.

Judd, Donald. *Donald Judd: Complete Writings, Review, Articles, Letters to the Editor, Reports, Statements, Complaints*. Halifax NS: Nova Scotia School of Art and Design, 1975.

Kallina, Richard, ed. *Lawrence Alloway: Imagining the Present, Context, Content and the Role of the Critic*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2006.

Kandinsky, Wassily. *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*. New York: Dover Publications, 1977.

Kazanjian, Dodi, and Calvin Tompkins. *Alex: The Life of Alexander Liberman*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993.

King, Phillip. *Phillip King, Sculpture*. Paris: Galerie Lambert, 1968.

——. 'Phillip King Talks about his Sculpture. '*Studio International*, June (1968): 300-305.

Kostelenetz, Richard. *Soho: The Rise and Fall of an Artists' Colony*. New York: Routledge, 2003.

Kozloff, Max. *Renderings*. London: Studio Vista, 1970.

Kramer, Hilton. 'The New Sculpture: Aspirations and Blind Alleys.' *The New York Times*, November 12th (1967): 37.

Krauss, Rosalind. 'Changing the Work of David Smith.' *Art in America*, September–October (1974): 30–33.

——. 'Grids.' *October*, Summer (1976): 50-64.

Kudielka, Robert. *Robyn Denny*. London: Tate Gallery: 1973.

——. *Phillip King*. London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1981.

La Prade, Eric. *Breaking Through: Richard Bellamy and the Green Gallery 1960-1965, Twenty-Three Interviews*. New York: Midmarch Arts, 2010.

Langsner, Jules: *West Coast Hard-Edge: Four Abstract Classicists*. London: Institute of Contemporary Arts, 1960.

Lewis, David. *Constantin Brancusi*. London: Alec Tiranti, 1957.

Lichtenstein, Claude, and Schreggenberger, Thomas, eds. *As Found: The Discovery of the Ordinary*. Baden: Lars Muller, 2001.

Lippard, Lucy. 'Richard Smith: Conversations with the Artist.' *Art International*, Vo.8, No.9 (1964): 30-34.

——. *Changing: Essays in Art Criticism*. New York: Dutton and Company, 1971.

——. *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object*. London: University of California Press, 1997.

Livingston, Marco. *Jeremy Moon, A Retrospective*. London: Hard Work, 2001.

——. *Richard Smith: Works on Paper, A Forty Year Survey*. London: Flowers Gallery, 2014.

Lubbock, Tom. 'Great Works: Hoop-La (1965) by Jeremy Moon.' *The Independent*, 3rd July (2009).

Lucie-Smith, Edward. 'An Interview with Clement Greenberg.' *Studio International*, Jan (1968): 4-5.

Lynton, Norbert. 'Latest Developments in British Sculpture.' *Art and Literature*, Summer (1964): 195-211.

——. 'London Letter: American Pop Art and Richard Smith.' *Art International*, Vol.3, No.1 (1964): 42-43.

——. 'London Galleries.' *Guardian*, 15th June (1965).

——. *Sculptures by Phillip King*. London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1975.

——. 'Jeremy Moon.' *Art International*, Vol.20, No.7-8 (1976): 40-43.

——. *Jeremy Moon: Paintings and Drawings 1962-1973*. London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1976.

——. *Jack Smith: A Painter in Pursuit of Marvels*. London: Momentum Books, 2000.

Marcuse, Herbert. *One Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society*. Oxon: Routledge, 2002.

Marlow, Tim. *The Marketing and Impact of New Generation Sculpture*. MA Report. Courtauld Institute, 1988.

Martin, Barry. 'The Problem of British Sculpture.' *Studio International*, May (1972): 186-188.

——. 'Jeremy Moon, 29th October 1973, Interview with Barry Martin.' *One*, April (1974): 3-9.

——. 'Jeremy Moon Retrospective, Serpentine Gallery.' *Studio International*, May/June (1976): 300-301.

Massey, Anne. *The Independent Group: Modernism and Mass Culture in Britain, 1945-1959*. Manchester University Press, 1995.

Massey, Anne, Gregor Muir. *Institute of Contemporary Arts: 1946-1968* (London: ICA, 2014).

May, Tim, ed. *Monad: A Magazine about Painting*. No.1, Summer (1964).

McAlpine, Alistair. *Once a Jolly Bagman*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1997.

McHale, John. 'Technology and the Home.' *Ark*, No.19 (1957): 25-27.

McIntyre, Ian. *Judgment by Eye: The Art Collecting Life of E.J. Power*. Masters Thesis, Norwich: University of East Anglia, 2008.

McLuhan, Marshall. *The Gutenberg Galaxy*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962.

——. *The Mechanical Bride: Folklore of Industrial Man*. Berkeley CA: Gingko Press, 2001.

——. *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. Oxon: Routledge, 2010.

——. *Counterblast*. Berkeley CA: Gingko Press, 2011

McLuhan, Marshall and Harley Parker. *Through the Vanishing Point: Space in Painting and Poetry*. New York: Harper & Row, 1968.

McShine, Kynaston. *Primary Structure: Younger American and British Sculptors*. New York: The Jewish Museum, 1966.

Mellor, David. *The Sixties Art Scene in London*. London: Phaidon, 1993.

——. *Robyn Denny*. London: Tate Publishing, 2006.

Melly, George. *Revolt into Style: The Pop Arts in Britain*. London: Allen Lane, 1970.

Melville, Robert. 'Action Painting, New York Paris, London.' *Ark*, No.18 (1956): 30-33.

Melvin, Jo. *Studio International Magazine, Tales from Peter Townsend's Papers, 1965-1975*. PhD Thesis. University College London, 2013.

——. *Five Issue of Studio International*. London: Raven Row, 2015.

Meyer, James. *Minimalism: Art and Polemics in the Sixties*. London: Yale University Press, 2001.

Miles, Barry. *London Calling: A Countercultural History of London since 1945*. London: Atlantic Books, 2010.

Miller, Bernie and Melony Ward, eds. *Crime and Ornament, The Arts and Popular Culture in the Shadow of Adolf Loos*. Toronto: YYZ Books, 2002.

Miller, Sandra. *Constantin Brancusi*. London: Reaktion, 2010.

Moffett, Kenworth. *Kenneth Noland*. New York: H.N. Abrams, 1977.

Moon, Jeremy. *Jeremy Moon: Paintings 1961-1963*. Exhibition Leaflet. London: Rowan Gallery, 1963.

——. 'British Artists at the Biennale des Jeunes.' *Studio International*, September (1967): 86-87.

——. 'Enemies of Painting.' *Studio International*, December (1970): 226.

Moore, Henry. 'Statement for Unit One.' in *Unit One: The Modern Movement in English Architecture, Painting and Sculpture*, edited by Herbert Read, 29-30. Manchester: Platt Hall, 1934, 29–30.

Morphet, Richard. *Bernard Cohen: Paintings and Drawings 1959-71*. London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1972.

Morris, Robert. *Continuous Project Altered Daily: The Writings of Robert Morris*. Cambridge MA, 1993.

Mullins, Edwin. 'Age of Craftsmen.' *Daily Telegraph*, 6th June (1965).

Mundy, Jennifer, ed. *From Brancusi to Beuys: Works from the Ted Power Collection*. London: Tate Publishing, 1996.

Newman, Amy. *Challenging Art: Artforum 1962-1974*. New York: Soho Press, 2000.

Newton, Eric. *Souvenir Catalogue of the Open Air Exhibition of Sculpture at Battersea Park*. London County Council, 1948.

O'Doherty, Brian. *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space*. Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 1999.

Oldenburg, Claes. *Claes Oldenburg: Writing on the Side, 1956-1969*. New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2013.

Overy, Paul. 'Premature Exposure.' *The Listener*, 21st July (1966).

——. *The Visual Scene: Playing it Cool*. Televised Documentary. London: BBC, 1969.

Oxenaar, R.W.D. *Phillip King*. Otterlo: Kröller-Müller Museum, 1974.

Packard, Vance. *The Hidden Persuaders*. London: Penguin, 1960.

Penrose, Stewart. 'Profile: Jeremy Moon.' *Arts Review*, 11th May (1965).

Peters-Corbett, David and Lisa Tickner, eds. *British Art in the Cultural Field, 1939-69*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012.

Postle, Denis. *Who is Richard Smith?* Televised Documentary. London: BBC, 1968.

Pevsner, Niklaus. *Sculpture, An Open Air Presentation at Battersea Park, May to September 1951*. London County Council, 1951.

Purcell, Kerry William. *Alexey Brodovitch*. London: Phaidon, 2002.

Ratcliffe, T.W.W. *Between Paris and New York: Abstract Art in England from 1945-1965*. PhD Thesis. Leeds Metropolitan University, 2010.

Read, Herbert. *A Coat of Many Colours: Occasional Essays*. London: George Routledge and Sons, 1945.

——. *An Exhibition of works by Sutherland, Wadsworth, Adams, Armitage, Butler, Chadwick, Clarke, Meadows, Moore, Paolozzi, Turnbull: Organised by the British Council for the XXVI Biennale, Venice*. London: British Council, 1952.

——. *Sculpture: Open Air Exhibition of Contemporary British and American Works*. London County Council, 1963.

Reid, Norman, ed. *The Alistair McAlpine Gift*. London: Tate Gallery, 1971.

Reise, Barbara. 'Colour in Sculpture.' *Quadrum*, No.18 (1965): 71-78.

Renzio, Toni del. 'Shoes, Hair and Coffee.' *Ark*, No.20 (1957): 27-30.

Richards, J. M. *The Castles on the Ground: The Anatomy of Suburbia*. London: Architectural Press, 1946.

Riley, Bridget. *The Eye's Mind: Collected Writing 1965-1999*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1999.

Roberts, James. 'The Right Stuff.' *Frieze*, June-August (2002): 90-95.

Robertson, Bryan. *New Generation 1964*. London: Whitechapel, 1964.

——. *New Generation 1965*. London: Whitechapel, 1965.

——. *Richard Smith: Paintings 1958-1966*. London: Whitechapel Gallery, 1966.

——. *New Generation 1966*. London: Whitechapel Gallery, 1966.

——. *John Hoyland: Paintings 1960-1967*. London: Whitechapel Gallery, 1967.

——. *Tim Scott: Sculpture 1961-1967*. London: Whitechapel Gallery, 1967.

——. 'Notes on British Sculpture 1952-1977.' In *A Silver Jubilee Exhibition of Contemporary British Sculpture*. Greater London Council, 1977.

——. *Colour Sculpture: Britain in the Sixties*. London: Waddington Galleries, 1999.

Robertson, Bryan, John Russell, and Snowden. *Private View*. London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1965.

Robbins, Corrine. 'New York.' *Art and Artist*, January (1967): 64-65.

Robbins, David, ed. *The Independent Group: Postwar Britain and the Aesthetics of Plenty*. Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1993.

Rose, Barbara. 'ABC Art.' *Art in America*, October-November (1965): 57-69.

——. 'ABC Art,' In *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Gregory Battcock, 274-297. Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 1968

——. *Richard Smith*. New York: Jewish Museum, 1968.

——. *Claes Oldenburg*. New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1970.

——. *Richard Smith: Seven Exhibitions, 1961–1975*. London: Tate Gallery, 1975.

——. *Richard Smith: Kite Painitngs*. London: Flowers Gallery, 2015.

Rosenberg, Harold. *The Tradition of the New*. University of Chicago Press, 1982.

Rosenblum, Robert. 'Pop Art and Non-Pop Art.' In *Pop Art Redefined*, edited by Suzi Gablik and John Russell, 52-56. London: Thames and Hudson, 1969.

Rosenquist, James. *Painting Below Zero: Notes on a Life in Art*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2009.

Rouvé, Pierre. 'Smith and Space.' *Arts Review*, 17th November (1964): 8.

Royal Society of British Artists. *Young Contemporaries 1962*. Exhibition Catalogue, London, 1962.

Rubin, William. *Anthony Caro*, New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1975.

Rumney, Ralph. 'The Leaning Tower of Venice,' *Ark*, No.24 (1959): v-vi.

——. *The Consul Vol.2: Contributions to the History of the Situationist International and its Time*. London: Verso, 2002.

Sampson, Anthony. *The New Anatomy of Britain*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1971.

Sandbrook, Dominic. *White Heat, A History of Britain in the Swinging Sixties, 1964–1970*. London: Abacus, 2009.

Sandler, Irving. 'Review and Previews.' *ARTnews*, April (1963): 14.

——. 'The New Cool Art.' *Art in America*, January-February (1965): 96-101.

——. *A Sweeper Up after Artists: A Memoir*. London: Thames and Hudson, 2003.

Saussure, Ferdinand de. *The Course in General Linguistics*. Edited by Charles Balley and Albert Sechehaye. New York McGraw-Hill, 1959.

Seago, Alex. *Burning the Box of Beautiful Things: The Development of a Postmodern Sensibility*. Oxford University Press, 1993.

Sedgley, Peter. *Directory of Artists: 1975 SPACE Open Studios*. London: SPACE Studios, 1975.

Senie, Harriet F. *Contemporary Public Sculpture, Tradition, Transformation and Controversy*. Oxford University Press, 1992.

Seymour, Anne. *Richard Smith*, *Studio International*, June (1970): 256-261.

——. 'Preoccupations, Richard Smith talks to Anne Seymour.' *Art and Artist*, June (1970): 18-22.

Shkuda, Aaron. *Lofts of Soho: Gentrification, Art and Industry in New York, 1950*-1980. London: University of Chicago Press, 2016.

Sleeman, Joy. 'William Tucker: The Language of a Sculptor.' Leeds: Henry Moore Institute, 1995.

——. *The Sculpture of William Tucker*. Aldershot: Lund Humphries, 2007.

Smith, David. 'Notes on My Work.' *Arts*, February (1960): 40-49.

——. 'Notes on My Work.' *First*, No.2 (1961): 34-35.

Smith, Jacob Getlar. 'Everyone Wants to Get into the Act.' *American Artist*, June-August (1957): 30, 90-92.

Smith, Richard. 'Ideograms.' *Ark,* No.16 (1956): 53-56.

——. 'Film Backgrounds: The City, On the Sunny Side of the Street.' *Ark*, No.18 (1956): 54-57.

——. 'Film Backgrounds Two: At Home, Sitting in the Middle of To-day.' *Ark*, No.19 (1957): 13-15.

——. 'Man and He-Man.' *Ark*, No.20 (1957): 12-16.

——. *Paintings and Drawings by John Plumb*. Exhibition Leaflet. London: New Vision Centre Gallery, 1957.

——. 'Jackson Pollock 1912-1956.' *Art News and Review*. 22nd November (1958): 5.

——. *Gordon House*. Exhibition Leaflet. London: New Vision Centre, 1959.

——. 'That Pink.' *Gazette*, No.2 (1961): n.p.

——. 'Brief Statement.' *Metro*, No.6 (1962): 120.

——. 'New Readers Start Here…' *Ark,* No.32 (1962): 37-43.

——. 'Trailer: Notes Additional to a Film,' *Living Arts*, No.1 (1963): 29-35.

——. 'Paintings' *Ark*, No.37 (1964): 32-37.

——. *Richard Smith, A Retrospective Exhibition of Graphics and Multiples*. London: The British Council, 1979.

——. *Artist's Lives*. Audio Recording, Interviewer Cathy Courtney. London: National Library Sound Collection, 2010-2015.

Smithson, Alison and Peter. 'Personal Statement I: But Today We Collect Ads.' *Ark*, No.18 (1956): 48-50.

Solomon, Alan. 'The Green Mountain Boys.' *Vogue*, August (1966): 104-109, 151-152.

Sontag, Susan. *Against Interpretation and Other Essays*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1966.

—— ed. *Roland Barthes: A Reader*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1982.

Sotheby's. *The New Situation: Art in London in the Sixties*. London: Sotheby's, 2013.

Spalding, Frances. *John Minton: Dance Till the Stars Come Down*. London: Lund Humphries, 2005.

Spear, Athena. *Brancusi's Birds*. New York University Press, 1969.

Spencer, Charles. 'The Peter Stuyvesant Collection, Paintings While you Work,' *Studio International*, June (1963): 18-21.

Spencer, Robin, ed. *Eduardo Paolozzi: Writings and Interviews*. Oxford University Press, 2000.

Stephens, Chris. *Brian Wall*. London: Momentum Books, 2006.

Stein, Judith. *Eye of the Sixties: Richard Bellamy and the Transformation of Modern Art*. New York: Farrar Strauss and Giroux, 2016.

Steinberg, Leo. *Other Criteria: Confrontations with Twentieth Century Art*. Oxford University Press, 1972.

Stella, Rachel. *Supports/Surfaces*. Saint Étienne: Ceysson Editions d'Art, 2015.

Strickland, Edward. *Minimalism: Origins*. Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1993.

Sutton, Denys. *Metavisual Tachiste Abstract*: *Painting in England Today*. London: Redfern Gallery, 1957.

Sylvester, David. 'A New Orthodoxy.' *The New Statesman*, 10th September (1960): 337.

——. 'Dark Sunlight.' *Sunday Times*, 2nd June (1963): 3-14.

Swartz, Anne, ed. *Pattern and Decoration: An Ideal Vision in American Art 1975-1985*. New York: Hudson River Museum, 2007.

Taylor, Basil. 'Contemporary Arts: Modern American Painting.' *Spectator*, 20th January (1956): 80.

Tickner, Lisa. 'The Kasmin Gallery.' Oxford Art Journal, Vol.2, No.20 (2007): 233-268.

Tuchman, Phyllis. 'An Interview with Anthony Caro.' *Artforum*, June (1972): 56-58.

Tucker, William. 'An Essay on Sculpture.' *Studio International*, January (1969): 12-13.

——. 'Four Sculptors: Brancusi.' *Studio International*, April (1970): 156-161.

——. 'Notes on Sculpture, Public Sculpture and Patronage.' *Studio International*, December (1972): 9.

——. 'Pro-Stuyvesant.' *Studio International*, December (1972): 215-216.

——. *The Language of Sculpture*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1974.

——. *The Condition of Sculpture: A Selection of Sculpture by Younger British and Foreign Artists*. London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1975.

——. 'Confessions of a Formalist.' *New Review*, June (1976): 52.

——. 'Tate Rehang.' *Tate etc.*, Issue 28, Summer (2013): 85.

—. 'Beginnings in Sculpture.' In *Collaborating with Caro*, Symposium Pamphlet, 2-6. London: Central Saint Martins, 2014.

Turnbull, William. 'The Joining Edge.' *Gazette*, No.1 (1961): n.p.

Vaizey, Marina. 'Rowan Gallery: Jeremy Moon.' *The Financial Times*, 29th January (1974).

Veblen, Thorstein. *The Theory of the Leisure Class, An Economic Study of Institutions*. New York: Dover Publications, 1994.

Verwoert, Jan. 'World in Motion,' *Frieze*, June (2004): 90-95.

Vreeland, Diane, ed., 'Youthquake.' *Vogue*, Vol.145, No.1, January 1st (1965): 112-119.

Vyner, Harriet. *Groovy Bob: The Life and Times of Robert Fraser*. London: Faber and Faber, 1999.

Waldman, Diane. *Carl Andre*. New York: Guggenheim Museum, 1970.

—. *Kenneth Noland: A Retrospective.* New York: Guggenheim Museum, 1977.

—. 'Kenneth Noland: Color, Format and Abstract Art,' *Art in America*, May-June (1977): 99-105.

Walker, John A. *Art Since Pop*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1975.

—. *Cross-Overs: Art into Pop/Pop into Art*. London: Methuen, 1987.

—. *Cultural Offensive: America's impact on British Art Since 1945*. London: Pluto Press, 1998.

Wallis, Simon, ed. *Caro in Yorkshire*. Hepworth Wakefield and Yorkshire Sculpture Park, 2015.

Welchman, John. *Invisible Colours: A Visual History of Titles*. London: Yale University Press, 1997.

Whiteley, Nigel. 'Cultural Imperialism? British Hard-Edge Painting in the 1960s.' *Third Text*, Vol.22, Issue 2, March (2008): 209-227.

—. *Art and Pluralism: Lawrence Alloway's Cultural Criticism*. Liverpool University Press, 2012.

Whittet, George. 'Whatever Happened to Mama?' *The Studio*, May (1962): 124-129.

Whyte, William H. *The Organization Man*. London: Pelican, 1963.

Wilkin, Karen. *Isaac Witkin*. New York: Hudson Hills Press, 1998.

Wilson, Harold. *Labour's Plans for Science*. Labour Party Pamphlet, London: Victoria House, 1963.

Wolfram, Eddie. 'Cool Clean: Tucker and Wragg.' *Art and Artist*, May (1966): 59-61.

Wollheim, Richard. *On Formalism and its Kinds*. Barcelona: Fundacio Antoni Tapies, 1995.

Wyver, John. 'The Filmic Fugue of Ken Russell's *Pop Goes the Easel.' Journal of British Cinema and Television*, Vol.12, No.12, October (2015): 438-451.

Zukin, Sharon. *Loft Living: Culture and Capital in Urban Change*. London: Radius, 1988.

# Appendix One: Chronology: 1956-1968[*]

**1956**

January

> Over the holiday period Richard Smith reads McLuhan's *The Mechanical Bride*, which he has received from a cousin working in the advertising business who has recently travelled to New York.
>
> *Modern Art in the United States: A Selection of Work from the Collection of the Museum of Modern Art, New York* opens at the Tate Gallery. The final section of the show is devoted to abstraction and features paintings by Franz Kline, Jackson Pollock and Mark Rothko.

July

> The French artist Georges Mathieu paints *The Battle of Hastings* (1956) in front of a televised audience at the ICA.

August

> *This is Tomorrow* opens at the Whitechapel Art Gallery. It displays exhibits conceived by grouped teams made up both of British Constructionist artists and members of the Independent Group.

Autumn

> Roger Coleman assumes editorship of *Ark*. In the upcoming issues it publishes articles by Smith, but also many of the IG members including Lawrence Alloway, Reyner Banham, Toni Del Renzio, John McHale and Peter and Alison Smithson.

December

> At a RCA Sketch Club John Minton attacks abstract paintings by Smith and Robyn Denny. In protest Smith and Denny collaborate on a painting entitled *Eden Come Home*, and publish a text called 'A Stiffy on Whose Easel?' in the *RCA Newssheet*.

**1957**

February

> Coleman is recruited to the exhibition committee of the ICA.

---

[*] The primary aim of this document is to elaborate on the overlapping of key events, exhibitions and critical texts addressed by individual sections of the thesis. For timelines more generally contextualising the development of British art alongside other cultural milestones of the period see David Mellor, *The Sixties Art Scene In London*, 212-223; Chris Stephens and Katherine Stout, eds., *Art & the 60s: This Was Tomorrow*, 138-144.

A conversation between Alloway, Del Renzio and Robert Melville titled 'Action Painting' is held at the RCA. Denny designs a poster to advertise it.

An exhibition of small sculptures by Phillip King opens at the Heffers Bookshop in Cambridge. Around this time Jeremy Moon and King become acquainted, Moon purchasing King's *Reclining Woman* (1955) as a result.

March

The second of Smith's articles on 'Film Backgrounds' appears in *Ark* No.19. It is accompanied by a text from Coleman analysing the 'dream worlds' of commercial imagery.

April

*Metavisual, Taschiste, Abstract* opens at the Redfern Gallery and includes gestural works by Denny and Ralph Rumney.

Summer

Smith and Denny complete their studies at the RCA. Smith receives a travel grant to visit Italy, later saying the experience 'had no significant effect on his art.'

August

*an Exhibit*, an environmental display of coloured Perspex planes by Hamilton and Pasmore opens at the ICA, having previously been displayed at the Hatton Gallery in Newcastle in June.

December

*Dimensions*, a survey of British abstraction opens at the O'Hana Gallery. The accompanying catalogue contains a timeline by Del Renzio outlining key events in its development.

Following a brief spell working in Manchester Jeremy Moon enters the finance department of London advertising agency Napper, Stinton and Wooley.

Beginning in the October issue of *Art News and Review* Alloway publishes a series of articles collectively titled 'Background to Action,' looking at current developments in painting.


**1958**

January

*Five Painters*, curated by Coleman opens at the ICA. It includes a painting by Smith, *Sky Limit* (1957-58), which is shown suspended from the ceiling.

February

*Some Paintings from the E.J Power Collection* opens at the ICA, featuring artworks by Pollock, Rothko, Willem De Kooning, Clifford Still, as well as Europeans like Jean Debuffet and Antoni Tapies.

*Abstract Impressionism* opens at Nottingham University. Curated by Alloway and Coleman it combines British, American and Continental European

painters with the aim of articulating a link between abstraction and non-representation depictions of space.

April

Upon receiving a Foreign Leaders Grant Alloway travels to America for the first time. He visits the Cedar Tavern, the offices of *Mad Magazine* and a retrospective of Barnett Newman paintings that has been organised by Greenberg at Bennington College in Vermont. Later he journeys to Los Angeles where he meets critic Jules Langsner.

November

A solo exhibition of Pollock opens at the Whitechapel Art Gallery. Smith writes an article praising it for *Art News and Review.*

King enrols as a student at St. Martin's.

## 1959

February

'New American Painting' opens at the Tate Gallery. Absent from the 1956 American survey Newman exhibits *Concord* (1949) and *Adam* (1951-52).

March

*Ark* No.24 is published, and includes Denny and Smith's collage 'Ev'ry Which Way,' as well as the first instalment of Rumney's 'The Leaning Tower of Venice.'

Summer

Caro meets Greenberg for the first time in London, at a party given by William Turnbull.

September

*Place* a maze-like presentation of floor-based paintings by Denny, Smith and Rumney is opened at the ICA by Stefan Munsing, the cultural attaché to the United States Information Service in London.

The recipient of a Harkness Fellowship, Smith leaves London for New York on the Queen Mary ocean liner. He joins Harold Cohen there, who arrived in the summer.

November

Caro visits the United States. There he meets Kenneth Noland for the first time and sees sculpture by David Smith.

King begins working for Henry Moore, and also begins to teach evening classes in the Sculpture Department at St. Martin's.

The freshman issue of *First*, edited by amongst others Tim Scott, is released. Utilising collaged imagery it parallels the presentation of contemporaneous issues of *Ark*.

Scott moves to Paris to work as an architect at the Atelier Corbusier-Wogenscky.

Alloway's essay 'The Long Front of Culture' appears in the *Cambridge Opinion*, and argues for a 'continuum' between popular culture and the fine arts.

**1960**

January

> *Moments Preserved: Eight Essays in Photographs and Words* by Irving Penn is released. This publication will go on to have an important effect on Smith's treatment of photographic sources in his work.

March

> *West Coast Hard-Edge: Four Abstract Classicists* opens at the ICA, showing paintings by Los Angeles painters Karl Benjamin, Lorser Feitelson, Frederick Hammersley and John McLaughlin. Langsner's conversational term 'hard edge' is subsequently appropriated by Alloway to label what he regards as a general move away from gestural abstraction in British painting.

May

> A Morris Louis show, organised by Alloway, takes place at the ICA. It is the first British exhibition to showcase the technique of staining, or 'one shot' painting.

September

> *Situation* opens at the RBA Galleries on Suffolk Street. Organised by a committee including Alloway, Denny and William Turnbull the entry requirement is that a painting be over thirty square feet in size. The exercise is intended as a critique of exhibiting practices of London galleries.

October

> With the financial backing of collector Robert Scull, Richard Bellamy opens The Green Gallery at 15 West 57th Street in New York.

Following a period at Brighton School of Art and the Central School where he learns how to weld, William Tucker attends Caro's evening classes at St. Martin's.

**1961**

Spring

> *Arts Yearbook 4* prints Greenberg's influential essay 'Modernist Painting,' in which he links the flatness of a painting with its advanced status.

April

> Smith's first solo exhibition opens at The Green Gallery. A short text by Alloway accompanies the show.

Summer

> Smith, returning from NY and in imitation of his accommodation there rents a two floor, loft-like studio on Bath Street in London's East End. Having made increasingly flat pictures whilst resident in the United States he begins experimenting with increased pictorial depth, a spatial property he later dubs

'corrugation' and links to the way products are packaged to elicit desire in the consumer.

August

*New London Situation* opens at the Marlborough Gallery. Although held in an inauspicious month for a groundbreaking show, it nonetheless indicates the beginnings of the absorption of large-scale painting into the commercial gallery system. It features *After Six* (1960) and WA*DO* (1961) by Smith, as well as a sculpture by Caro.

September

Offered a temporary teaching post at Bennington College Alloway leaves Britain for the United States. The subsequent year he obtains a curatorial position at the Guggenheim Museum, remaining in America.


Beacon Press publish *Art and Culture*, an anthology of Greenberg's writing up until this point.

Upon completing his studies at St. Martin's Witkin begins working for Henry Moore.

Scott returns from Paris and begins to teach at St. Martin's, while maintaining work as an architect.

The second issue of *First*, a more conventionally arranged affair edited this time by Tucker, is released.

Having been deeply impressed by *Situation* Moon enrols at the Central School. However, he only remains there for a single term before leaving to devote himself to painting professionally.

Following a deal brokered between Turnbull and the solicitor Tony Fawkes, a group of painters affiliated with the *Situation* exhibitions move into a group of townhouses on Camden Square. These include Bernard Cohen, Tess Jaray, Peter Stroud and Marc Vaux.


**1962**

January

A painting and a sculpture by Moon are accepted by the judging panel of *Young Contemporaries* and are put on display at the RBA Galleries.

*James Rosenquist: Paintings* opens at The Green Gallery.

March

A display of Tucker's sculpture appears at Grabowski Gallery alongside paintings by Michael Kidner. Included are early fibreglass sculptures such as *Ceremony* (1961) and *Prayer* (1962).

Ken Russell's film *Pop Goes the Easel*, documenting the practices of Peter Blake, Derek Boshier, Pauline Boty and Peter Phillips is screened as part of the BBC series *Monitor*. A party sequence for the film was filmed earlier that year in Smith's studio.

May

An Ellsworth Kelly exhibition at Tooth's further consolidates hard edge painting and its American credentials in London.

July

'New Readers Start Here,' a text by Smith endorsing the younger generation of RCA Pop painters Boshier, Hockney and Phillips appears in *Ark*, No.32.

Rowan Gallery, founded by Alex Gregory-Hood and Diana 'Wonky' Kingsmill, launches its gallery programme at 25a Lowndes Street.

September

An Exhibition of sculptures by Claes Oldenburg's sculpture opens at the Green Gallery

October

Seven of Smith's paintings are exhibited at the ICA.

November

Smith and Freeman screen their collaborative film *Trailer* at the ICA. It is made up of a combination of commercial imagery and shots of Smith's recent paintings set to a Pop music soundtrack.

Tucker begins teaching in the Sculpture Department at St. Martin's.

With the respective help of Annesley, Bolus and Witkin, Caro produces the early welded sculptures *Hopscotch*, *Early One Morning* and *Lock* (all 1962).

Scott moves to a house on Peckham Rye, establishing what he regards as his 'first real studio.'

**1963**

April

Following spells working for Gallery One and the Marlborough Gallery, and with the financial backing of Sheridan Dufferin, the Marquis of Bute, John Kasmin or 'Kas' opens the Kasmin Gallery. Its inaugural exhibition is of paintings by Noland and marks the beginning of a close relationship with artists aligned to Greenberg that will continue until the gallery closes in 1972.

June

Following David Sylvester's article 'Dark Sunlight' in the *Sunday Times*, an artists' response entitled 'Amateurs in Art' denounces the 'suffocating club atmosphere' prevalent in British critical circles.

July

A solo exhibition of Tucker's sculpture opens at the Rowan Gallery.

August

*Jeremy Moon: Paintings 1961–63* opens at the Rowan Gallery.

September

*Anthony Caro: Sculpture 1960–63* opens at the Whitechapel Art Gallery. In his accompanying catalogue text Fried states that the 'syntax' of Caro's sculptures relies on a combination of their 'gestures' and 'abstractness.'

To the Labour Party Conference in Scarborough Harold Wilson delivers his infamous 'white heat' speech, stating that Britain can no longer afford to remain 'a nation of gentlemen in a world of players.'

Organised by Caro, a group of younger sculptors including Annesley, Bolus, King, Scott, and Tucker club together to cover the cost of Greenberg's airfare to Britain, in exchange for a series of studio 'crits' with the critic.

October

Delayed by his Whitechapel exhibition Caro arrives to America to teach at Bennington College several weeks into the semester.

November

An exhibition of volumetrically shaped canvases by Smith opens at the Kasmin Gallery. While evolving from an existing interest in commercial packaging these are the first to dramatically annex the gallery space.

An exhibition of Witkin's sculpture opens at the Rowan Gallery. Alongside several carved works it includes the wood and fibreglass piece *Alter-Ego* (1963).

Rowney release Cryla, the first water-miscible paint by a British manufacturer.

December

Donald Judd's first solo exhibition takes place at The Green Gallery.

Moon is awarded part time teaching contracts in both the Sculpture Department at St. Martin's and the Painting Department at Chelsea. Marrying Beth Bryant he moves to a flat on King's Henry Road and establishes a studio in the living room there.

Smith returns once again to New York.

Annesley begins teaching in the Sculpture Department at St. Martin's.

Witkin begins teaching in the Sculpture Department at St. Martin's.


**1964**

January

Moon begins to experiment using acrylic paint. Around the same time he also institutes a system whereby each of the artworks he begins are assigned a numerical title.

February

An exhibition of Phillip King's sculpture opens at the Rowan Gallery. It features the majority of his seminal early works in fibreglass, including *Rosebud* (1962), *Genghis Khan*, *Twilight* and *Tra La La* (all 1963).

May

*New Generation 1964*, organised by Bryan Robertson, opens at the Whitechapel Art Gallery. Sponsored by the Peter Stuyvesant Foundation it

attempts to place itself 'halfway' between student showings like *Young Contemporaries*, and the commercial interests of the Bond Street galleries.

September

> Replacing Caro, King travels to Bennington College to teach for a semester. He meets American sculptor David Smith who tells him that anything that can be done with fibreglass can also be done with steel, leading King to have *And the Birds Began to Sing* re-fabricated using the material.

> *Frank Stella Recent Paintings* opens at Kasmin Gallery and features examples from the *Notched V* and *Running V* series.

December

> *The Shaped Canvas* opens at the Guggenheim Museum in New York. Curated by Alloway it includes work by Smith alongside Americans Paul Feeley, Sven Lukin, Frank Stella and Neil Williams.

McLuhan's book *Understanding Media: the Extensions of Man* is first published in Britain, and introduces the phrase 'the medium is the message.'

Following two years living in South Africa, Bolus returns to London and begins teaching in the Sculpture Department at St. Martin's.

## 1965

February

> *London: The New Scene* opens at the Walker Art Gallery in Minneapolis supported by the Colouste Gulbenkian Foundation. It includes artworks by King, Moon, Tucker and Smith, and later tours to Boston, Seattle, Vancouver, Toronto and Ottawa.

March

> *New Generation 1965*, this time showcasing developments in British sculpture, opens at the Whitechapel Art Gallery. Although representatives of three London art colleges were chosen, the majority of the participants were former Caro students from St. Martin's.

> *Private View: The Lively World of British Art*, a report from 'inside' the scene illustrated by the photographer Anthony Armstrong-Jones, or Snowden, is launched at a party on the lawn of Kensington Palace.

April

> Smith's third exhibition opens at The Green Gallery, and a new series of paintings collectively titled *Sphinxes* are heavily represented. Resting directly on the floor these present a narrow, curving edge of canvas that protrudes several feet from the wall.

May

> David Smith dies following a car accident driving home from an event in Bennington.

June

*Jeremy Moon: Paintings 1964-65* opens at the Rowan Gallery. Reviewers of the show pay particular attention to his experimentation with shaped canvases like *Orange Queen* (1964).

Autumn

Witkin travels to Bennington College to work as artist in residence there. This marks the beginning of an association with the area that will eventually lead to him becoming an American citizen in 1975.

September

Michael Bolus has his first solo exhibition in London at the Waddington Galleries.

November

Peter Townsend is appointed editor of *Studio International*. The magazine begins to take a greater interesting more experimental methods of art-making.

Published as part of an *Arts Digest* yearbook devoted to 'Contemporary Sculpture,' Judd's essay 'Specific Objects' claims that 'half or more of the best new work in the last few years has been neither painting nor sculpture.' The article is illustrated with works by both Smith and King.

Mario Amaya's early study on the subject 'Pop Art and After...' is published. It separates Smith from the rest of the British contingent examined in the book, labelling him as a 'Anglo-American' artist.

Tucker holds his first American exhibition at the Richard Feigen Gallery in New York.

## 1966

February

Tim Scott has his first solo exhibition in London at the Waddington Galleries.

March

David Annesley has his first solo exhibition in London at the Waddington Galleries

April

*Primary Structures: Younger American and British Sculptors* opens at the Jewish Museum in New York. Despite being frequently lauded as Minimalism's first institutional appearance, New Generation sculpture is also heavily represented.

May

*Richard Smith: A Retrospective* opens at the Whitechapel Gallery and offers the first survey of his two and three-dimensional canvases.

*Young British Artists at the Venice Biennalle*, organised by the British Council includes works by Smith, along with Caro, the Cohen brothers and Denny.

June

An exhibition of Witkin's sculpture, including work from his *Vermont* series opens at the Robert Elkon Gallery, New York.

August

A retrospective of David Smith's sculpture opens at the Tate Gallery.

September

Having left the Rowan Gallery, an exhibition of Witkin's sculpture opens at the Waddington Galleries.

Exhibitions of King's sculpture takes place at the Richard Feigen Gallery, New York and Chicago.

*Systemic Painting*, an exhibition curated by Alloway opens at the Guggenheim Museum. In the catalogue text Alloway points towards the increasing prevalence of artworks whose finished state is envisaged prior to completion.

Annesley visits Bennington and spends time with Noland at his house at South Shaftesbury, as well as visiting Smith's studio at Bolton Landing. He also has a solo exhibition at the Poindexter Gallery in New York

Bolus has an exhibition at the Kornblee Gallery in New York.

Moon moves to a house on Latchmere Road in Kingston Upon Thames and begins constructing on a twenty by thirty foot breezeblock studio in the back garden of the property.

Lucy Lippard's printed survey *Pop Art* features an essay by Alloway, in which he retrospectively distinguishes between the first, second and third 'phases' of British Pop.


**1967**

March

An exhibition of William Tucker's sculpture opens at Kasmin Gallery.

April

*John Hoyland: Paintings 1960-67* opens at the Whitechapel Art Gallery. A substantial proportion of the works included were produced in his Kingston Upon Thames studio, a space that he had moved to in 1965.

*American Sculpture of the Sixties* opens at the LA County Museum, and includes work by Caro. In an essay for the exhibition catalogue entitled 'The Recentness of Sculpture' Greenberg criticises the 'far out' and 'inert' appearance of Minimalist art.

June

*Tim Scott: Sculpture 1961-67* opens at the Whitechapel Art Gallery.

Denouncing Minimalist art as 'theatrical,' and theatricality as the 'negation of art,' Michael Fried's article 'Art and Objecthood' appears in a summer issue of *Artforum* devoted to sculpture.

Alan Bowness, writing in *Studio International*, publishes 'The American Invasion and the British Response,' reflecting on the shift in influence between Paris and New York over the last decade.

July

A group of recently graduated St. Martin's Sculpture students establish Stockwell Depot, creating studio spaces in a disused brewery.

Autumn

Smith receives the gold medal and a $10,000 prize at the Sao Paulo Biennial.

September

Moon represents Britain at the Paris Biennale des Jeunes.

Bernard Cohen moves to Kingston Upon Thames.


## 1968

January

Greenberg, in an interview with Edward Lucie-Smith for *Studio International* states 'I think certain younger Englishmen are doing the best sculpture in the world today –sculpture of originality and character.'

February

Patrick Heron, once an enthusiastic supporter of American art, publishes 'A Kind of Cultural Imperialism?' in *Studio International*, branding Greenbergian formalism a hegemonic force.

Rowan Gallery moves to larger premises on Bruton Place. Alongside with a group show on the lower floor a display of Moon's paintings launches the programme at the new location.

March

A solo exhibition by Smith opens at the Jewish Museum, New York.

June

Along with Bridget Riley Phillip King is selected to represent Britain at the Venice Biennale. Protests result in the pavilion remaining closed for the majority of the exhibition.

July

The Hayward Gallery opens its door to the public with a Matisse retrospective, an artist who is a touchstone for both Moon and the New Generation sculptors.

September

*Phillip King Sculpture 1960-68* opens at the Whitechapel Art gallery.

Riley and Peter Sedgley found SPACE studios, and secure a two-year lease for warehouses at St. Katherine's Docks.

Hoyland establishes a studio in a disused church in Market Lavington, Wiltshire.

Smith moves to East Tytherton, Wiltshire.

**Appendix Two: Images**