The Independent Group: Postwar Britain and the Aesthetics of Plenty

Edited by David Robbins

Exhibition Organized by
Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College
Institute of Contemporary Arts, London
The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles
University Art Museum, University of California at Berkeley

Introduction by
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Chronology by
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Magda Cordell McHale
Dorothy Morland
Eduardo Paolozzi
Toni del Renzio
Alison and Peter Smithson
James Stirling
William Turnbull
Colin St. John Wilson

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The Independent Group: Forerunners of Postmodernism?

by David Robbins

Postmodernism and the IG

Postmodernism in all its manifestations has played such an important role in shaping the terms of cultural interpretation that its influence inevitably informs any contemporary assessment of the Independent Group. Here I shall employ a few selected postmodernist perspectives as "significance frames" for the IG. The approach is necessarily pluralist. There have been so many postmodernisms since the mid-1970s that we now find we must carry rough maps of their differences in our heads. And since criticism has increasingly emphasized the interplay of texts rather than their authority, even the historical accounts of modernism (from which one's assumptions about the IG's aims are likely to derive) have become contested reference points within an ongoing meta-historical dialogue.

Reyner Banham announced the emergence of this "history of history" at the outset of his 1955 essay, "The New Brutalism," and he himself played a major role in producing it. Significantly, the IG was influenced less by Banham's vision of a New Brutalist movement (unified around the Henderson-Paolozzi-Smithson alliance) than by his critical aggressiveness, especially his persuasive re-readings of the Modern Movement's canonical histories. For us, Banham's heterodox positions at the time of the IG (available in his journalism, although their separate emergence is not precisely datable) provide a reliable starting point in assessing the IG's anticipations of contemporary thinking. His use of industrial issues to unsettle the traditional boundaries between high culture and the marketplace, his scholarly challenge to modernist claims of a unilinear historical development, and his belief that the "throw-away" culture of postwar consumerism constituted a decisive break with the social and technologial conditions of the first half-century, all anticipate major themes of postmodernism, and they decisively influenced the intellectual direction of the Independent Group. The case of Banham also alerts us to the necessity of employing both modernist and postmodernist interpretive concepts. Banham's neo-futurist faith in technological innovation inspired a remarkably programmatic application of the modernist vow to "make it new." I shall argue, nevertheless, that the postmodernist viewpoint is indispensable to any contemporary view of the Independent Group. It suggests that we share much the same world as that which the IG members addressed in the 1950s. Or better, that they figured out how to live in the one we inherited.

We must come to terms with the IG's diversity and conflicts, however, if we are to improve upon the reductive portrayal that flourished in the 1970s, when the IG was treated as a subdivision of Pop Art. What makes this difficult is the paucity of documentation about the specific issues raised during the early stages of Independent Group meetings (1952-55), which Banham directed towards technology, and the seductive relevance to both Pop Art and postmodernism of the better-known sessions organized by Lawrence Alloway and John McHale (1954-55). Postmodernist perspectives, moreover, are at least as potentially reductive as that of Pop Art. The very idea of postmodernism implies a binary logic based on the rejection of modernism, whereas the IG's collective aim, if we can fairly infer one from the range of avant-garde paradigms it invoked, was a modernist renaissance with a radically inclusivist ("both-and" or "non-Aristotelian") outlook. By the 1980s, however, critics were generally cognizant of the fact that postmodernist interpretive norms like fragmentation, appropriation and textuality were essentially erasures of old avant-garde strategies. Jean-François Lyotard, pressing the paradoxical implications of this line, even calls postmodernism "the nascent state of modernism."

The so-called postmodernism debates of the 1980s still dominate analyses of the social and cultural issues that are likely to be raised in a discussion of the Independent Group. Following Jürgen Habermas's 1980 attack on both architectural postmodernism and post-structuralism as opposite threats to the "uncompleted Modernist project," an international, politically charged cultural debate emerged that gathered theorists as different as Jean Baudrillard, Fredric Jameson, and Jean-François Lyotard under the rubric of postmodernism. Discipline-specific uses of the term became secondary to a periodizing usage that defined the media-saturated postwar culture as "a new type of social life and a new economic order." Consumer culture was interpreted as a historic displacement of the Industrial Age labor-based categories of production, and its meanings (if any) were seen as systematically destabilized and aestheticized by the mass media.

The postmodernists produced a variety of response strategies, ranging from a mobile engagement with the heterogeneity of game-playing possibilities generated by capitalism (Lyotard) to a dialectic between ideological critique and recognition of the utopian desires behind commodity fetishism (Jameson) to a contemplative recognition of the disappearance of reality into simulations of the real that exploit its absence (Baudrillard). Rough equivalents of each of these approaches existed within the IG. Alloway drew upon game theory in his pluralist engagement with contemporary art and popular culture. Banham and Hamilton analyzed the techniques of commodification in relation to the dreams of the consumer. And the centrality of the image within the IG milieu, through collage appropriations for backboards and art works, in photographic exhibitions and in critical discussions, anticipated many of the issues raised by recent studies of the destabilized "society of the spectacle."

The relevance of the Independent Group to the postmodernist debate lies less in the IG's specific arguments about popular culture than in its profound suspicion of claims to stand outside or above it. Class issues certainly lay behind this (as Alloway and Banham reiterated, popular culture was "their" culture) and fed the IG's passionately anti-academic eclecticism. An undeniable intellectual recklessness worked to its advantage, drawing into currency a host of just-emerging perspectives that challenged hierarchic thinking, such as information theory and communications theory, media studies, cybernetics, and semiotics, within a theoretical horizon that foregrounded the realities of mass consumption.

The connections the IG assumed between avant-garde art strategies and advertising (a curiously scandalous discovery for many theorists of the 1980s) anticipated Fredric Jameson's argument that "the commodity is the prior form in terms of which modernism can be structurally grasped."
Within the IG, this linkage emerged in three ways: from McLuhan's *The Mechanical Bride* (1951), which showed advertising borrowing avant-garde techniques from art and literature for audience manipulation; from the contacts of artists like Henderson, Paolozzi, and Turnbull with the collections of Paris-based Dadaists and Surrealists; and from the IG's practice of appropriating high-impact, sociologically revealing images from media sources for their tackboards, then for collages.

The most important point of agreement between the IG and postmodernism is that both are resolutely interpretive enterprises. Thus the indeterminacies and fragmentation of evidence that frustrate attempts to represent the IG in traditional terms, as an "art movement," are more easily accommodated from postmodernist interpretive perspectives that are skeptical of coherence and open to textual interplay. Anne Massey and Penny Sparke addressed the critical problem in their article, "The Myth of the indecency," which is an indispensable discussion despite the reductiveness of some of their arguments. (The working class affiliations within the IG, for example, are far too significant to dismiss as mythical.) Rightly emphasizing the diversity of interests within the Group, they point out that the IG had disappeared as a public reference point before resurging as "historical" in the 1960s. It was indeed the later success of Pop Art that first enabled the IG to "count" as history. Significance, however, is always constructed out of the present, and the postmodernists' assumption that history is a negotiation between interpretations has a special relevance to this reappraisal. For what must be acknowledged in discussing the IG, but without Massey and Sparke's overtones of art-historical scandal, is the emptiness at its center.

There is scarcely any documentation about actual IG discussions and there is even some disagreement about when they began. We have only a set of notes on the topics of each meeting in the second series, probably made by the co-organizer, John McHale. We are thus forced to work with traces of the past, inferring positions from texts that largely postdate the IG meetings. The exhibitions produced by IG members during this period have usually been treated as embodiments of an IG viewpoint. Yet none of them was produced with that intention, and some IG members deny that their shows had any connection with the Group.

In terms of modernist historiography, the Independent Group simply does not add up. The chief requirement of the modernist enterprise—the production of one or more masterpieces that epitomize a movement and exert a stylistic influence upon subsequent production—is absent. Although there are distinguished works of art by each of the artists in the IG, the only collective term that was ever used for them was Banham's "New Brutalism" in 1955, and that was not convincing enough to be carried on. The artworks that now seem prophetic of Pop Art did not even count as art until years later—Paolozzi's collages and Hamilton's collage for the TTT catalogue, just what is it that makes today's homes so different, so appealing?

From the standpoint of postmodernism, on the other hand, the absence of paradigmatic masterworks and of any obvious historical influence simply enriches the interpretive situation. Ultimately, the IG's "empty center" compels us to recognize that everything counts. Thrown open to the remarkable diversity of production by IG members—writings, exhibitions, art and architecture—we are forced to develop a more inclusive semantic field, one that can sustain dialogue with that which nourished the IG's own restless critical activity.

IG members appear to have been acutely aware of the double-sidedness of their historical position within modernism. Several had personal contact with major figures of modern art and architecture and saw themselves as successors, charged with the task of recuperating the lost international legacy. Nevertheless, theirs was the first generation to address the consequences of machine-age modernism, which had been around long enough for its products to accumulate. Much of the architecture that had been hailed as utopian in the 1920s and 1930s looked weathered and outdated after the war. Banham felt that the creative vitality of the Bauhaus had been debased into rote repetition of its exercises in "basic design" studies. Independent Group members assumed a sympathetic but critically engaged relation to the Modern Movement, bringing a variety of sociological and "as found" anti-aesthetic perspectives to bear upon its academicizing tendencies. Out of this collective reappraisal, which foreshadowed the critiques of postmodernism, grew the IG's investigation of consumer culture as the previously overlooked reality of contemporary life.

In the following discussions of the art and architectural sides of the IG, I shall be drawing upon three major versions of postmodernism. The periodization version, which assumes that the postwar transformations of capitalist society require new kinds of analysis, puts a special emphasis upon the second IG session, led by Lawrence Alloway and John McHale. Alloway's "Null-A" thinking encouraged horizontal mobility along the "continuum" of the total culture. This is strikingly similar to the self-consciously postmodernist approach of Jean-François Lyotard, for whom a field of "little narratives" displaces the authoritarian tendencies of culture. The most dramatic indication of this consonance with IG assumptions was Lyotard's 1985 art-and-technology exhibition at Beaubourg, called Les Immatériaux. This staging of the information society's postmodernist museum included a labyrinth of simulations and "collected ready-mades from the most diverse sources," linking the early avant-gardes with the electronic era. As John Rajchman observes, the show reflected a "monumental effort to find a place for 'Americanism' in the history and philosophy of Europe."

Second, it will be useful to consider the connection between the art of IG members and the terms of postmodernism as it emerged in art historical discourse in the mid-1970s, chiefly through Rosalind Krauss. Repudiating her own grounding in Greenbergian formalism, Krauss launched a theoretically informed emphasis on the copy rather than the original, on printing and photography rather than painting, and on issues of appropriation rather than self-expression. (The success of the ensuing critical movement, launched from Krauss's journal, *October*, contributed to an explosion of appropriation tendencies in art of the late 1970s and 1980s.) From the time of the earliest discussions of postmodernism in art, Robert Rosenblum figured as both its pioneer and paradigm. It is evident, however, that the collage-based works of Paolozzi and Hamilton employed analogous strategies, with a thicker, sociologically inflected informational dimension.

Finally, the American architectural movement that was launched as "inclusivism" in the mid-1960s and dubbed "Post-Modernism" in the
mid-1970s shows numerous parallels with the IG's revisionist view of the city in the age of consumerism and the car culture. (I shall use the hyphenated term Jenkins popularized, to distinguish the architectural movement from the miscellany of other postmodernisms.) This is a case where a historical connection between the IG and American postmodernism is arguable, through the influence of the Smithsons, and perhaps Banham as well, upon Denise Scott Brown and Robert Venturi.

**Between Art and Life**

The Independent Group had an early role in the study of semiotics and aesthetics in the postwar period. Although we have no details of the discussions of communications theory among the theoreticians of the IG, the "backboard" exhibit that Alloway, Holroyd, and del Renzio constructed for *This Is Tomorrow* should be seen as an important first step in the application of semiotic perspectives to Anglo-American thinking about the urban environment. Like much else that was informally developed within the IG milieu, however, this particular ball was not picked up until much later, when Charles Jencks and George Baird edited an issue of *Arena* (1967) that became *Meaning in Architecture*. In the meantime, the theoretical investigation was carried on by the Italians—in the 1950s by Sergio Bettini and Gillo Dorfles, whom del Renzio brought to the ICA, and in the 1960s by Umberto Eco and others.

When Group Twelve put up its two-sided board—on one side, a system of gridded panels of photo-images showing, as Holroyd puts it, "how to organize and think with imagery," and on the other, a "backboard" dialogue between images that were to be changed daily—the chief aim was to emphasize the spectator's involvement in the construction of the urban world. In effect, this exhibit extended the IG members' use of backboards to everyday. The democratizing impulse was supported by concurrent local developments in communications theory. In 1953 Colin Cherry, an electrical engineer and expert on information theory who appears to have been a "brutalist" pungency in American culture that delighted Banham and Hamilton in the car ads and that impelled McHale. Baudrillard finds the same "brutalist" pungency in American culture that changes is the material of the popular arts.)

Alloway defended the proliferation of choice in consumer society both anthropologically, as the culture's way of adapting to rapid change ("everything in our culture that changes is the material of the popular arts") and politically, as a recovery of power from elitist professionalism. The following comment on the urban environment, written at the end of the 1950s, typifies Alloway's affirmative application of cybernetics to the mass media:

> The city as environment has room for a multiplicity of roles, among which the architect's may not be that of a follower. Consider, for example, images of the city in the popular arts which reflect and form public opinions in that transmitter-audience feedback which is the secret of the mass media.

Nothing could be further from Jean Baudrillard's ironic and antagonistic meditations of the 1980s:

> We should agree neither with those who praise the beneficial use of the media, nor with those who speak of manipulation— for the simple reason that there is no relationship between a system of meaning and a system of simulation. Publicity and opinion polls would be incapable, even if they so wished and claimed, of alienating the will or the opinion of anyone whatsoever, for the reason that they do not act in the space/time of will and representation, where judgment is formed.

This strikes the familiar note of the postmodernist theorists' critique of mass media culture—a complete immersion in simulacra, the age of mechanical reproduction gone berserk. Like Alloway and most of the IG, however, Baudrillard starts from the elimination of hierarchies, including distinctions between high and low culture. This totalizing strategy opens the door to slippages of valuation. Beyond the binary oppositions that structure his rhetoric, Baudrillard finds the same "brutalist" pungency in American culture that delighted Banham and Hamilton in the car ads and that impelled McHale. Paolozzi, and Turnbull to separately accompany Alloway to grade b Hollywood films. It is the contrast between America's straightforward commercialism and European hierarchies that triggers the convergence. Calling America "the primitive society of the future," Baudrillard remarks that the "latest fast-food outlet, the most banal suburb, the blandest of giant American cars or the most insignificant cartoon-strip majorette is more at the center of the world than any of the cultural manifestations of Europe."

This "brutally naive" America functions for Baudrillard much as Algiers did for Camus in the late 1950s: barbaric clarities offering relief from bourgeois conventions. "Things, faces, skies, and deserts are expected to be simply what they are. This is the land of the 'just as it is'". The same modernist taste for pungent facticity lay behind the IG's fascination with America.
which continues to hold an exotic fascination for the European avant-garde. "America is the original version of modernity," Baudrillard remarks. "We are the dubbed or subtitled version."

When Baudrillard refers to America as "the only remaining primitive society," we think of Eduardo Paolozzi, who exploited the same intuition in his collages and scrapbooks of the late 1940s and early 1950s. With major achievements behind him in several media, Paolozzi had by far the greatest artistic influence of anyone within the IG. In terms of the IG's intellectual development, however, Paolozzi's key work was his epiphanyscope showing at Is in his collages and scrapbooks of the late 1940s and early 1950s. With major artistic influence of anyone within the IG. Paolozzi's collages do function critically, although not by inviting the privative presence that evening, by most accounts). Paolozzi was virtually alone at that time in recognizing the importance of the technology of image production. This may help explain the silence surrounding his collages and "scrapbooks" of mass media imagery from the late 1940s, although they appear to have had a curiously private status. What was publicly known of them during the period of the IG was through his epiphanyscope presentations at several venues and from Alloway's Collages and Objects show (1954), which included the Psychological Atlas collagebook as well as four "head" collages.

Jürgen Jacob traces the origin of Paolozzi's collages to two early modernist sources Paolozzi encountered in Paris in 1947-48. Mary Reynolds showed Paolozzi Duchamp's room papered with pages from American magazines, and Tristan Tzara showed him twenty Max Ernst collages from the early 1920s that represented Ernst's "idea of the age." The collages Paolozzi then produced from American magazines, Jacob argues, departed from the founding terms of Dadaist collage by failing to criticize bourgeois culture. Paolozzi's collages do function critically, although not by inviting the anti-capitalist readings assumed by the Berlin Dadaists in the twenties. They puncture the inular idealism of the official culture by juxtaposing symbolic images - much of it sexual, from the "low" end of the mass media. This privileging of the marginal and the exotic occurs within a profoundly destabilizing visual discourse. The interaction of ephemeral images released from their contexts, the blurred cultural boundaries, and the absence of norms are certainly legible, for us, in terms of the postmodernists' "depthless" culture of equivalences.

It will be more useful, however, to acknowledge Paolozzi's grounding in ethnographic Surrealism, for it directed his collage strategies toward a subversive expansion of cultural references, not as signs without depth but as "significant images" with "a hundred hidden meanings." Paolozzi clearly brought a more vital sense of anthropology into the IG than the ICA's British Surrealist founders had assumed in their MOMA-style exhibition of primitive-modernist affinities, 40,000 Years of Modern Art (1949). Significantly, Paolozzi was in touch with both British and French enterprises of linking Surrealism and ethnography in interpreting their own societies. In the late 1960s the Surrealist-inclined founders of Mass Observation undertook to document British working class life through interviews, participant observation, photographs, and films. Kathleen Raine recalls that they treated everyday objects (ads, songs, souvenirs, etc.) as manifestations of the collective imagination, combining the Surrealist concept of the found object with sociology.

Paolozzi, who lived in Raine's house in the early 1950s, was also in touch with this "anthropology of ourselves" through the Hendersons. In his catalogue essay, David Mellor notes that Nigel Henderson had been personally associated with the Mass Observation project, and as James Lingwood notes, Tom Harrison - the anthropologist who co-founded Mass Observation - assisted Judith Henderson in her field studies of working class family life. For Paolozzi and Nigel Henderson, Mass Observation provided a rare British validation of their choice of the street as visual subject and resource. It was a surprisingly uncommon theme in Surrealist art.

Paolozzi's Last Magic Kingdoms show at the Museum of Mankind in London (1985) underscored his specific sense of indebtedness to the French legacy of ethnographic Surrealism. Dawn Ades argues that Paolozzi was inspired by the great Surrealist periodicals of the 1930s (Documents and Minotaure) to turn his own culture into an otherness, at once a play of the familiar and the strange and a "collection of documents" available for interpretation. Ades cites James Clifford's 1981 study of ethnographic Surrealism, in which Clifford draws the norm of "ethnography as collage" from the same texts of the thirties, which treated all cultures as contingent, artificial arrangements. Stressing the incongruities, cuttings, and arbitrariness involved in the "constructivist procedures" of ethnographic discourse, Clifford has since established a postmodernist school of anthropology, charged with reflecting upon its own narrative practices.

Paolozzi's Surrealist-inspired collages, however, suggest a more immersed and vulnerable interplay of self and world. The city figures as a labyrinth of error, where "savage" desires and fears are evoked for commercial manipulation, then "found" and recycled as collective manifestations. Throughout Paolozzi's work of the IG period, he presents the human form as a "matter" of monstrous indeterminacy, equally explicable in terms of comic vulnerability or heroic adaptability. Society appears as a prothetic adventure, endlessly re-equipped the human (always, for Paolozzi, "primitive") while the human body serves as the point of interchange between the usable, the used-up, and the artifact. The standard "either-or" polarity between technology and primitivism vanishes, displaced by monstrous constructs - the robot as a futurist vision of the wild man, or the consumer as an android of the car culture. The IG started from such intuitions of technology and metempsychosis, pressing them into formulation. The collage aesthetic was a generally shared enthusiasm within the IG: if postwar culture was unstable, it nonetheless made all human experience available in graphic form. However one may evaluate Gregory Ulmer's contention that the "post-criticism" of our time is only the transformation into theory of modernist techniques, with collage as "the principal device," the idea certainly has an allegorical suggestiveness with respect to the IG. Its artists - four of whom exhibited in the Collages and Objects show (Henderson, McHale, Paolozzi, and Turnbull) - probably contributed more to the Group's assumptions than has been assumed. In 1957, Banham reviewed the ICA's Young British Sculptors show, which included works by Paolozzi and Turnbull. "The true myth of our own time is the Anthropological Man," Banham declared, "and the sculptors are breaking the mould of the ideal man of Democracy and Humanism." Despite Banham's brief effort to unify this
tendency around “The New Brutalism,” it remained an anti-idealistic impulse behind a diversity of artistic productions.

While William Turnbull chose silence as a rhetorical strategy for his sculpture—his primitivist forms were incised with markings that remained on the “dumb” side of sign content, rejecting the “noise” of consumerism—most of the artists in the IG turned the current revival of figuration into modes of discursive engagement. John McHale, in his visual studies of consumer imagery, used food metaphors and sumptuous collage colors to suggest both cornucopia and triviality. Magda Cordell, addressing a society whose commercial images of the female rendered women invisible, produced celebratations of woman as an awesome yet indeterminate physical presence, heightening the sense of otherness with allusions to science fiction and primitivist sources. After This Is Tomorrow, Richard Hamilton tackled the issue of sex and consumerism directly, exploring the calculated dismemberment of the human body in advertisements.

In this aggressively Brutalist sense, these images can be placed within the anti-aesthetic tradition Rosalind Krauss associates with Georges Bataille and a heterological “art of excess,” where, she observes, “we find the body inscribed in a mimetic response to external forces.” Krauss aligns this modernist counter-tradition of the lowly with Dubuffet’s “materiological explorations” of the 1940s, which were probably the major influence on the human images of the IG artists.32 Paolozzi’s conflation of the body with ruins (the “comedy of waste”) fully accords with this oppositional tradition, recalling Bataille’s insistence that Surrealism means seeing the world from the standpoint of its decomposition.

A more affirmative reading of the Art Brut tendency was also in currency, associated with Alexander Dorner’s The Way Beyond “Art” (1947), which Banham particularly valued. Dorner saw texture, once simply a modernist weapon against perspectival illusion, as acquiring an anti-formalist role by encouraging viewers to “become involved in the new play of energies.”28 Hence, in many works associated with Brutalism, the seductive ambivalence of the threshold zone between marks and signs, noise and signals. Once again, between disintegration and renewal there is no idea of the human, no convention to defy. If “man” has not yet been erased, as Foucault put it, his identity has been pushed to the limits of recognition, where the human image can function as a site of transformation. Significantly, much of the art of IG members registered both positive and negative valences of this instability, whereas the critical bias of the IG was absolutely affirmative.

What linked Alloway and McHale as leaders of the second IG session was a belief that an expanded consciousness was produced by the explosion of consumer options and even by the stresses of a destabilized society. Similarly, Hamilton’s TTT catalogue statement addressed the new demands imposed upon human capacities in educative terms, as an opportunity for widespread self-improvement. What was needed was not a selection of images, “but the development of our perceptive potentialities to accept and utilize the continual enrichment of visual material.”29

John McHale particularly emphasized the potential of this attitude, turning the breakdown of traditional art-life boundaries into a “future consciousness” with increased adaptability to change and new stimuli. In a 1973 dialogue between McHale and Alvin Toffler about futures research, Toffler raised the objection that Turnbull and the Smithsons embodied in their work and doubtless raised in IG discussions. Are we not “bombarded with imagery” that we are “numbed and turned off”? Toffler asked. McHale responded that the job of artists is to restimulate the viewer-participant, until the overload produces “new patterns or Gestalts.” If “receptivity is not numbed but maximized,” McHale argued, “you become extraordinarily alert to changes in your environment.”30 Through his futures studies, McHale would consolidate his linkage of technology, mass culture and avant-garde zest for change in increasingly evolutionary terms.

McHale’s technologist bias sharply contrasts with the preoccupation of other IG artist-members with the “prothetic” fitting of the body to a fully mechanized world. Paolozzi’s comic graphic of man-and-camera in battered inefficiency (cat. no. 43) and Hamilton’s photographic “epic” of the pioneering adventures of Men, Machine and Motion suggest the awkwardness and sense of struggle accompanying new adaptations to the machine. What distinguishes McHale’s art, however, is the exuberance of his plunge into technical processes. His collages rencart the Dubuffet head-landscape conceit in sensuous rather than “wasteland” terms, exploiting the improvements in color-printing technology as orchestral resources. As Alloway notes, McHale wanted the “original channels” of the U.S. magazines to remain identified, yet coalesce into the “coloristic unity” of an “expanded realm” of transformations.31 The pungency of the Brutalist engagement with hard materials and artifacts, never far from ruin, is translated into a soft-textured, seductively bright and lyrical new order.

Richard Hamilton is the IG member who best fits the profile of the postmodernist artist, particularly if we focus on the post-1956 works that implemented the Pop program he was unable to persuade other IG members to join. His announced goal was to create a new aesthetic by putting popular culture items into a fine art context. The result was a translation of the language of advertising into a remarkably analytic visual discourse about its technique and iconography. It is surprising that his work has been given so little attention within postmodernist art criticism. Without speculating on why this might be so, it may be useful to consider the terms in which Rauschenberg’s paintings of the late 1950s were classified as postmodernist by Leo Steinberg in 1972. Steinberg’s argument, in turn, became the basis of Krauss’s early formulations of a postmodernist aesthetic a few years later.

Steinberg praised Rauschenberg for “inventing a pictorial surface that let the world in again,” revealing a “consciousness immersed in the brain of the city.” Rauschenberg turned the picture plane into a “matrix of information” (Duchamp is cited) by treating it as a horizontal “flattened” plane, a surface for anything thinkable.32 The technical processes of making images are stressed, as are the “deepening inroads of art into non-art.” On such an “all-purpose picture plane,” the picture is not a glimpse of the world, but printed material. This, Steinberg concluded, should be called “post-Modernist painting.”33 Its models are the printing press and tabletop, not the vertical win-
dow. In 1974, Rosalind Krauss expanded upon Steinberg's model, introducing the discursive as a temporal factor in Rauschenberg's work that required an "image-by-image reading." The parallels with Hamilton's paintings and graphics from 1956 and after are striking, although as both Richard Morphet and Richard Field have demonstrated, the analytic rigor with which Hamilton explores the techniques and iconography of commercial media is unparalleled in contemporary art.

Writing about his now famous This Is Tomorrow collage (just what is it?...), Hamilton provided the list of subjects that he had prescribed for the work, concluding that "the image should ... be thought of as tabular as well as pictorial." Steinberg's "tabletop" information plane comes immediately to mind, although an Ig tackboard is probably a more literal model. It was Hamilton's preoccupation with Duchamp that led him to go beyond this to dramatize the instability of the sign. This was also Rosalind Krauss's next critical move in the late 1970s.

The IG and the City
Although architectural issues were not central to the second series of Ig meetings, a new idea of the city was at stake, and it was quite different from that of the heroic age of modernism. In his 1966 essay, "The Development of British Pop," Lawrence Alloway identifies it as "a sense of the city neither as a means to reform society (Mondrian) nor as the typical form of Ideal Form (Leger), but as a symbol-thick scene, criss-crossed with the tracks of human activity. The feeling is not an easy one to set down, but it was a kind of subjective sense of the city, as a known place, defined by games, by crowds, by fashion." This enthusiasm for the busy city of consumer society achieved a limited circulation among younger British architects by the early 1960s, and the Ig milieu was acknowledged as its source. The 1963 Living City exhibition at the ICA, organized by the Archigram group, celebrated urban disorder and consumerism with an explicit sense of continuity with This Is Tomorrow. However, it was not Archigram but the American architects later associated with Post-Modernism who brought the city as a "symbol-thick scene" to the foreground of architectural thinking in the 1960s.

To see exactly why this is so — and why Alloway's Dadaist-inspired defense of the existing city meant far more to the artist-members of the Ig than to the architects — requires recognition of two other, competing ideas of the city within the Ig, represented by the Smithsons and Banham. Here the perspective of Post-Modern architecture must be deferred. Although the positions of Alloway, Banham, and the Smithsons each anticipate key elements of Post-Modernism, especially in its inclusivist and populist 1960s phase, those of Banham and the Smithsons, at least, are quite incompressible in Post-Modernist terms. The Smithsons, above all, regarded themselves as the postwar avant-garde of the Modern Movement, and both they and Banham played largely oppositional roles during the heyday of Post-Modernism. If we understand the working strategies behind the Smithsons' ambitious redefinition of the city at the time of the Ig, the factional tensions surrounding the popular culture emphasis of Alloway and McHale will be seen as inevitable, and less reducible to personality clashes.

The Smithsons' prestige in the 1950s was enormous, due to the re-cognition given their school at Hunstanton, their leadership of Team 10 in challenging CIAM's rationalist dogmas, and the impact of Brutalism as an architectural translation of the "rough poetry" in ordinary realities, including mass production. Their astonishing range of achievements during the period of the Ig, despite losing competitions with brilliant designs (Golden Lane, Coventry Cathedral, and Sheffield University), was accompanied by a correspondingly wide-ranging intellectual development. To appreciate the clarity and force of the Smithsons' productions, we should be aware of the irresolution haunting British architectural thinking at this time. James Stirling, who attended Ig meetings without taking an active role in them, published important articles in the mid-1950s on Le Corbusier's shift to Mediterranean vernacular models in the Maisons Jaoul and Ronchamp and on the general trend towards regional architecture. In each essay, after a sympathetic analysis of Le Corbusier's new direction, Stirling complained of "the disappearance of the rational principles which are the basis of the modern movement." Stirling's ambivalence illustrates a widespread sense of impasse, with architecture viewed as suspended between reason and feeling (or culture and nature, or classicism and romanticism). This pseudo-explanatory dichotomizing, authorized by Sigfried Giedion, had become the standard way to cope with the simultaneous upsurge of romantic revolts from machine age rationalism and classical or scientific elaborations of it.

The Smithsons preempted such conflicts in two ways: by seeking to generate a new kind of order from the social and physical realities beneath style, and by devising ways to absorb both sides of the prevailing oppositions into their theories and designs. Looking back on their development in the 1950s, Peter Smithson stressed the coexistence of two tendencies. First, reacting against the excesses of the Festival of Britain, they called for a "retreat to order," inspired by Wittkower's Architectural Principles in the Age of Humanism and Le Corbusier's Unité. Second, Smithson recalls as "co-existing with this (surprisingly) and triggered off by the first European sight of Pollock (49ish), the relationship with the Dubuffet-Paolozzi-Appel 'validation of the human image' phenomenon, and the confidence inspired, especially by Pollock, that a freer, more complex yet quite comprehensible idea of 'order' might be developed." It would be hard to overestimate the importance of the Smithsons' alliance with Henderson and Paolozzi in this regard. Both had personal connections with the artists of the Continental avant-garde, and Paolozzi, who had worked with Jane Drew's architectural firm, was developing his own versions of what became known as Brutalism in quite different media. When the Smithsons joined Henderson and Paolozzi in producing Parallel of Life and Art, they were positioning themselves at a point of maximum tension. While mounting a sociologically based challenge to the older modern architects at the Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne (CIAM), they were also developing their Dadaist-inspired "as found" aesthetic in ways that fully tested their commitment to clarity and order.

The Smithsons turn toward "human association" immediately became the collective aim of the young, dissenting CIAM architects who called themselves Team 10. Paolozzi certainly contributed to both aesthetic and sociological emphases, as did Henderson through his photographic engagement with the streets of Bethnal Green (see the Smithsons' CIAM Grille,
However, Judith Henderson appears to have been the crucial resource on the Smithsons' sociological perspective. Trained in anthropology at Cambridge and at Bryn Mawr, her studies of working class neighborhood life were conducted in conjunction with a Sociology course whose guiding principle would have counted for much with the Smithsons: "that a given community is an organic unity whose attitudes reflect the historical evolution of that community."

Banham's 1955 article, "The New Brutalism," was an attempt to connect the anti-formalist side of the Smithsons with the art of other IG members like Cordell, Henderson, and Paolozzi by aligning them all with Dubuffet and Art Brut. Privileging the anti-classical concepts of image (affect) and topology (form), Banham's paradigm was the Smithsons' competition design for Sheffield University (1953). However, the Smithsons' writings of the period, especially the "Urban Re-Identitization" essays that became the core of Ordinary and Light (1970), provide a more trustworthy sense of the balance they sought from their wide-ranging sources.

On the one hand, the Smithsons affirmed a Purist taste for well-formed everyday objects, refined by a Japanese aesthetic. "Ordinariness" stood for a contemplative ideality of types as the Smithsons phrased it, "the chair chair, the table table, the cup cup." On the other hand, as Peter Smithson suggested in the quotation above, their encounter with a Jackson Pollock painting in 1949 inspired an all-over, random or "scatter" aesthetic, subversive of fixities and hierarchies, which they called their "aesthetic of change." As the Smithsons observed with reference to Henderson's "life-in-the-streets" photographs, they wished to transform the Pollock-inspired notion of "manifestation" into architectural patterns responsive to the patterns of human association. Their radical concept of the street deck for Golden Lane housing (cat. nos. 67-68) illustrates the high modernist line, visionary and anti-historical, that was recuperated through this design process. Arguing that "the street has been invalidated by the motor car, raising standards of living and changing values," the Smithsons designed their elevated street decks as "an equivalent to the street form for the present day."

House, street, and city were outlawed, in effect, by becoming continuous. That is the radical significance of the famous graphic pattern of Golden Lane City (cat. no. 69). It reflects the expressive graphism of the tachiste and Art Brut traditions (Peter Cook called it the "potent scribble"), while carrying a symbolic burden as an objective pattern of human activities. Like the structural patterns in the New Landscape macro-photography of Moholy-Nagy and Kepes, which played a key role in Parallel of Life and Architecture (reprinted here in "Critical Writings"). the Smithsons placed the "throw-away object and the pop-package" within the contemplative context of Japanese aesthetics. At stake, as I suggest in my note on American advertising in this catalogue, was the need for strategies of control, to appropriate the images and ephemera of the new consumer culture while remaining free of its chaotic, "noisy" tendencies. In this quest the crucial resource was the work of the great California designer Charles Eames.

Eames apparently served much the same role with regard to "as found" commodities as Nigel Henderson served in relation to "as found" debris. Although we have no records of the discussions about Eames at the ICA, it appears that his productions were interpreted in at least two major ways, as Geoffrey Holroyd clarifies in his 1966 analysis of Eames's influence. Holroyd (who brought the Eameses' films and ideas to the ICA) first clarifies the high-impact communications side of Eames - the visual displays using "multi-image involvement" to "drive through the audience's habitual responses by the sheer quantity and rapidity of change of images in order to rearrange the responses." We may assume that this aspect of Eames particularly appealed to Banham, Alloway, and McHale.

In Holroyd's next section, aptly titled "Place and Control," he argues that the specifically architectural application of Eames lay in his dualist strategy of treating structure and decoration as "not one idea but two, in disagreement with each other." Eames's "House of Cards" display of structure as a vehicle for contrasting images, which directly influenced the Smithsons' exhibition designs, became a paradigm of the controlled dichotomy between the architectural unit and "as found" ephemera. Thus the Smithsons recall that they designed the structure for Patio and Pavilion in This Is Tomorrow and then left it to be "inhabited and so decorated by Nigel Henderson and Eduardo Paolozzi."

Within the IG, the Smithsons' bias towards a "calm" city, at once structurally lucid and pragmatically organized (yet designed for surprisingly high densities), contrasted with the laissez-faire, "noisy" city favored by Banham, Alloway, and McHale, which was given over to rapid change and communications. (In a 1955 talk, Banham recommended an "aesthetic effect with high immediate signal strength" to "compete with the 'random noise' aroused in situations of practical use.") Peter Smithson, following his first visit to America in 1957, wrote of his profound disappointment with both the architecture and the landscape. In response, he turned the dualist control strategy into a resigned figure-ground solution. Since only the "throwaway" commodities had any design virtues, he argued, the best option was a stabilizing "fix" or "background permanency" (e.g., the freeways or any unused space), against which objects and activities could appear in relief. In effect, but for quite different, ultra-modernist reasons, the Smithsons found themselves in considerable agreement with the Architectural Review's campaign against the unplanned American landscape.

Nothing better represents what most IG members opposed in the British architectural establishment than the famous December 1950 issue of the Architectural Review whose announced purpose was "to investigate the mess that is man-made America." The American landscape was attacked as a symptom of moral crisis, its "visual chaos" testifying to a perverse refusal to control the spread of "materialism."

"At the very moment when the exhausted European had seen through the error of materialism, America, he is inclined to feel, has given it a build-up that may enable it to stagger through the twentieth century, postponing at one stroke the revival of civilization and threatening the survival of man."

ROBBINS
The success of the Independent Group in challenging this New Humanist polemic was manifest in the May 1957 "Machine-Made America" issue of the Review, for which the "cover personage" was McClane's eerily beautiful collage robot ("assembled from one of America's favorite flattering mirrors, coloured magazine illustrations")9). The articles within, however, dodge the issue of the existing environment. They assume that America's commitment to mechanization is producing a new vernacular architecture that satisfies the aims of the modern movement in unexpected ways, through mass-produced options like prefabricated curtain walls.

McClane's "Marginalia" article prefaces this celebration of the American building boom. It typifies the IG's tendency, following Banham's lead, to turn architectural questions into issues of industrial design. McClane discusses specific products that either gratify the consumer or require active decision-making. He begins with his own idea of a "U-bild-it" house kit based on Charles Eames's choice of window elements from a steel company catalogue, then reproduces the catalogue page, with Eames's choice of unit combinations circled. The obvious referent is McClane's own sculptural constructions from the early 1950s, which Alloway analyzed as games of spectator choices. Most of McClane's examples, however, are gadgets reflecting the "current consumer preference" for "curvy plastic build-up," from a hand sculpture to a rifle bolt mechanism to the back of a Chrysler. McClane refers the reader to Banham's 1955 "Machine Aesthetic" article in the Review, which defended "Borax" design - the pejorative term used by the Review since 1948 for the "tear-drop" streamlining that epitomized American commercialism.

The point here is that the "noisy city" IG members, despite the environmental enthusiasm evident in their exhibitions, demolished the presuppositions of modernist design theory without worrying about an architectural alternative. Reyner Banham's tactic was to eat away at the architect's traditional domain, showing how much design is actually done (more effectively because more pragmatically) by industrial designers. In effect, the IG's investigations of mass culture simply pushed architecture to the side. Banham, however, always theorized this issue in neo-futurist terms, as a quest for an architecture sui te that would translate as many traditional architectural functions as possible into technological innovations.

There were thus three different ideas of architecture and the city in tension within the IG. The Smithsons envisioned the translation of "city" into "home," as they emphasize in their writings of the 1950s collected in Ordinary and Light. Within mixed-use areas of density, traditional neighborhood patterns of activity would be reassigned to high-rise structures where children could play and people would gather on the street decks. In two essays of 1959, on the other hand, both Banham and Alloway clarified quite different assumptions about architecture and the city that each had been working from. The neo-futurist Banham agreed with the Smithsons (as Alloway would not) that "words like 'city' will have to go." However, he also argued (contra the Smithsons) that electronic communications and the car culture had outmoded the "group pressures" of the physically bonded traditional community. The old city had to be replaced ("or else") by the new "scrambled egg" cities of conurbation, where "only voluntary association takes place." Instead of the Smithsons' elision of house, neighborhood, and city into a "potent scribble," Banham simply wanted "an infra-structure of usable facilities."
before she came to America, bringing her own British background of pop sympathies and rule-breaking wit play to her collaboration with Venturi. She also describes her considerable sense of debt to the achievements of the Smithsons, recalling the parallels she drew in 1967 between the ideas they contributed to Team 10 and those of the Yale-based American architects of Perspecta 9/10. It was the Smithsons’ bold responses to previously ignored social realities that mattered — their “shocking directness” in problem-solving and their stress on “socio-plastics” and “built meaning.” The Smithsons “liking of the ugly — liking what they did not like,” as Scott Brown put it, clearly anticipated the “ugly and ordinary” epithet Philip Johnson derisively assigned to a Venturi and Scott Brown mass housing design in 1968, a term they adopted with ironic relish in their subsequent writings.8

By 1969, however, Venturi and Scott Brown’s defense of commercial vernacular development, along with their façadist (“decorated shed”) solution to the dualist separation of decoration and function, had placed them in opposition to the Smithsons’ calm aesthetic and structural emphasis. In a 1969 RIBA article, Alison Smithson accused Lutyens of fostering an “Americanized” stylistic eclecticism in British suburban housing (“a packaged environment” with “completely devalued symbols”). Architecture had a responsibility, she argued, to be “an anchor in the mess.”9 The Venturis responded that the architect “must illuminate the mess rather than jump over it, and will do so by first participating in it.”10

In this debate, we seem to have come full circle from the old controversy over “the mess that is man-made America.” Once again, the perceived threat is the linkage between America, capitalism, and chaos, but it is the Smithsons who now make the humanist appeal to stability. From the Venturis’ standpoint, and in particular from that of Denise Scott Brown, who aligns herself with the sociological side of Brutalism and with the Pop side of the IG, the controversy with the Smithsons raises the central issue of a “non-judgmental” engagement with popular culture and commercialism. The debate, of course, had already taken place at This Is Tomorrow, in the dialogue between the Group Two “fun house” exhibit and Patio and Pavilion, and it led to the Smithsons’ disavowal of the Pop line in the early 1960s.

As for Banham, many of his ideas of the 1950s position him as a forerunner of Post-Modern architectural developments, such as his pioneering justification of façadism (a way of valuation “human disorder . . . because it is human”64) and his defense of architecture as “a branch of advertising,” including appreciation of America’s “exemplary hamburger bars, and other roadside retail outlets.”65 Despite these convergences, however, Banham’s technologism led in the 1960s to the visionary playfulness of Archigram, not to the Venturis’ aesthetic, social, and historical commitments. In fact, Banham was even more actively opposed to Post-Modern architecture than the Smithsons. He fiercely attacked any sign of historical eclecticism. Hence his use of the Review as a forum in the late 1970s to condemn the Italian Neo-liberty style, which effectively broke that movement.54

Almost twenty years later, in The Language of Post-Modern Architecture, Charles Jencks would celebrate Neo-liberty as a “precursor” of Post-Modernism, after criticizing the Smithsons’ Robin Hood Gardens housing development as a summation of Modernist design weaknesses.64 Not surprisingly, the revival of the avant-garde architectural legacy in the 1980s brought renewed appreciation of the Smithsons’ achievements, led by Peter Cook of Archigram. However, by positioning Archigram as the avant-garde successor to the Smithsons, within a genealogy climaxing in “The New Spirit” of experimental architecture, Cook ignores the profound differences between Banham’s “exclamatory” neo-futurism and the Smithsons’ more contemplative adaptation of the avant-garde tradition.65

Between Modernism and Postmodernism
The historical and poietological complexities glimpsed in this account of the architectural side of the IG confirm the usefulness of employing a variety of modernist and postmodernist significance frames while recognizing their contextual limits. The IG itself mandated this pluralist agility, and Alloway’s “fine art-popular continuum” became its paradigm. Moreover, as an art historical problem the IG’s elusiveness and many-sidedness makes competing perspectives inevitable. The modernist basis of the IG was an inter-textual project — the recuperation of the international avant-garde in the teeth of the dispiriting insularity of British culture. The chief resource in this oppositional enterprise was the production of a text called “America,” drawn from a broad range of verbal and visual sources, from scholars like Norbert Wiener and Claude Shannon to “action painters” like Pollock to America’s magazines, movies, science fiction and technology. In this respect, the IG’s total sphere of discourse, including the exhibitions organized by its members, constitutes a remarkably overt instance of Americanism — America as the ultra-modernist projection of a “readymade” technological society unburdened by cultural baggage.66

The postmodernist debates of the 1980s, on the other hand, underscore the significance of the IG’s connections between avant-garde techniques and the destabilizing tendencies of American consumerism. Since the politics of contemporary theory have been largely opposed to affirmative readings of capitalist society, recent discussions of the IG have tended to politicize the tensions within the Group. In his essay for this catalogue, for example, David Mellor develops Kenneth Frampton’s privileging of “the Brutalist spirit of resistance.” Frampton had pitted the Smithsons’ “sympathy for old-fashioned working class solidarity” in Patio and Pavilion against their House of the Future, which is seen as a surrender to consumerism — in effect, reversing Banham’s assessment of the same displays.67 Mellor, armed with references to “Tory Futurism,” views the Brutalist faction of the IG as an apocalypse-haunted opposition party, repudiating the commercial emphasis of Alloway, Banham and McLise.

One need only think of Paolozzi, who did more than anyone to launch the developments we now differentiate as Brutalist and pop, to grasp their complementary roles in the IG’s quest for an aesthetic based on mobility and change — terms the Smithsons placed at the head of the Team 10 agenda. Challenging the conventional opposition between abstraction and figuration, both Brutalist and pop tendencies were “anti-art” immersions in the unprecedented proliferation of signs and sensory stimuli in the postwar city. Among the artists of the IG, the Brutalist fascination with what Paolozzi called “multi-evocative” markings (leading back through Dubuffet to Ernst’s frottages) alternated with the “pop” practice (inspired by Dadaist photocollage) of exploiting the metaphorical suggestiveness of media images through collage. Paolozzi
moved freely between these two approaches in the late 1940s and early 1950s, and Nigel Henderson's 1949 screen (cat. no. 31) shows them interacting.

(Richard Hamilton's mid-fifties shift to pop images from iconically charged markings was a rationalist equivalent.) Both tendencies contributed to the IG's critical achievement — demolishing cultural idealism by exposing its elitist restriction of experience and its fictions of coherence and permanence.

Brutalist texture and pop figuration promoted the same contradictory goals — a pre-conventional emphasis upon facts, structures and events "as found" ("what moves a New Brutalist is the thing itself," Banham observed in 1955), and an insistence upon interpretive freedom that was to be theoretically elaborated into a reception-based aesthetic within the IG. Inevitably, however, the Brutalist iconography of ruins and fragments reflected facts toward process, metamorphosis and suggestiveness. For Paolozzi, the laws of decomposition "naturalize" from below the passage from commodity to rubbish that Banham celebrated from above as the "throw-away aesthetic" of industrial design. Viewed in this light, the Brutalist landscape does not require an anti-consumerist reading, particularly in the age of existentialism. It functions as an archaeological figure for "the variable meanings of everything," as Alloway put it while explaining the use of tackboards.

Given the IG's anthropologically motivated emphasis on the fall of culture into the marketplace and its grasp of the interconnections between disparate aspects of consumer society, its anticipations of contemporary social analyses matter more than its "complicity," to use the fashionable term for an impossible political ultimatum. Postmodernist critical theory, moreover, has its own "post-Marxist" weaknesses, epitomized by its failure to find credible examples of a "postmodernist of resistance," and its inability to acknowledge partially successful social formations.

Methodologically, both the IG and postmodernism agree that cultural meanings are not "given" but endlessly produced and contested. Thus the "signature" of the IG in the art and exhibitions of its members was the leap "beyond art" (Dornes) into discourse. Parallel of Life and Art, for example, problematized the boundary between art and society, literally surrounding spectators with signs of their world, then forcing them to keep switching reference frames, unlearning conventions of exclusion and separation. This environmentally defined "overspillings" of the work into life (Documents was the title before Parallel) accords with Jacques Derrida's reformulation of the Kantian sublime: by problematizing its own frame (perergon), "art" interacts with extra-aesthetic dimensions.

However, the IG's passionately democratic respect for the competing discourses of urban culture figures as the antithesis of the post-structuralists' principled (and elitist) subversion of successful communication. A closer contemporary parallel with the IG can be found in the neo-pragmatist emphasis on the possibilities open to the symbolic life of community. The task, from this perspective, is no different for us now than it was in the 1950s: to live the pluralism of the city as intelligently and generously as we possibly can.

5. Reyner Banham has two important critical statements on the image — his 1953 review of Parallel of Life and Art and his 1955 essay on the New Brutalism. In the review, Banham argued that: Parallel had turned the photograph into "an image, a work of art in its own right," displacing its documentary function through the interplay between images in a "new visual environment." See "Photography: Parallel of Life and Art," Architectural Review, 114 (October 1953), pp. 259-261. In "The New Brutalism," Banham describes the image in affective terms, as "something which is visually valuable." See "Critical Writing."
8. See Appendix. Copies of this document exist in the files of Maegle Cordell McIlhale and the Smithsonian.
9. John Rothenstein, "The Postmodern Museum," Art in America, 73 (October 1985), pp. 110-117, 171. There are other congruences with IG exhibitions: pathways demonstrating new mechanical extensions of the human body; microscopic blowups of diverse substrates; robots and computers mixed with avant-garde artworks, some of which, like Hausmann's The Spirit of Our Times, Mechanized Head, had influenced IG artists. The point of the show was to go beyond "art" by showing the ways a society based on technology abolished traditional classifications, like those between mind and matter and those between high and low culture. And just as an Alloway script was intended to be read by Bobbe the Robot, welcoming visitors to This Is Tomorrow, so here Baudrillard's recorded voice lectured visitors on "the advent of the Age of the Simulation."
12. Colin Cherry, "Communication Theory and Human Behavior," in Studies in Communication, ed. A. J. Ayer et al. (London, 1955), pp. 45-67. The question is on p. 65. The interdisciplinary Communication Research Centre was established in 1955 at the University College, London, and Colin Cherry was invited to assist the professors, who were leaders in a broad range of disciplines. A. J. Ayer talked to the IG as part of their first series (according to Graham Whitman, "between August 1952 and spring 1953"), with the apparent result that the members decided they were better off teaching each other. Cherry's On Human Communication appeared in 1957.
16. Ibid., p. 28.
17. Ibid., p. 76.
Appendix:
Notes on the Independent Group Session of 1955

(Editor's note: The following account, almost certainly drawn up by John McHale, co-convenor of the IG meetings in 1955, is the only contemporary record of IG discussions that has survived. It exists in mimeograph form in the archives of both Magda Cor­
dell McHale and Alison and Peter Smithson. Three of the summaries below are identified as “speaker’s abstracts.” Thanks to this document, we have exact dates and attendance figures for the final series of IG meetings, which focused on popular culture.)

The Independent Group of the Institute of Contemporary Arts was formed in 1952 as a forum for the opinions of the younger members of the Institute (under 35). The Committee consists of Lawrence Alloway, Peter Reyner Banham, Richard Hamilton, John McHale, Eduardo Paolozzi, Toni del Renzo, Peter Smithson. Previously the I.G. had been convened by Reyner Banham to study techniques. In 1955 it was convened by Lawrence Alloway and John McHale for the purpose of investigating the relationship of the fine arts and popular art. The programme was not systematic but dependent on the current interests of the members who consisted the I.G. as a trial ground for new ideas. From these closed meetings public lectures were subsequently developed.

11 February 1955
Paintings by Richard Hamilton. Discussion centered round the use of photographically defined new reality (with a stress on popular serial imagery) in a fine art context: its legitimacy and effectiveness in relation to paintings as individual gestures. Main speakers: Richard Hamilton, John McHale, Reyner Banham, Lawrence Alloway. (Attendance 14.)

4 March 1955
Borax, or the Thousand Horse-Power Mink, by Reyner Banham. Banham equals, in this context, current automobile styling. Its theme (vide two Plymouth ads) is Metal in Motion, by an iconography which refers to, e.g., sports and racing cars, aviation, science fiction, all relevant to the theme of transportation, but all exotic to the American automobile. Auxiliary iconographies postulate brutalism, oral symbols, and sex, emphasizing that Borax is popular art, as well as universal style (in U.S. not in Europe) and sex-iconography establishes the automobile’s Dream rating – on the frontier of the dream that money can only just buy. (Speaker’s abstract.) (Given as a public lecture, METAL IN MOTION, at the ICA on 7 July.) (Attendance 18.)