Experimentation in Postwar Architectural Culture

anxious MODERNISMS

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We just haven't learned how to enjoy our new freedom: how to turn machinery, robots, computers, and buildings themselves into instruments of pleasure and enjoyment.\footnote{CEDRIC PRICE}

To pry the subject free from the stifling repetitions of everyday convention and to nurture an emergent individuality—these were the aspirations that galvanized the Fun Palace Project. As architecture, it would be purely utilitarian and purposeful: a mechanical slab served as a provisional stage to be continuously set and reset, sited and resited. What was expected to happen in the Palace was as diagrammatically diffused as the contraption itself. It wouldn't be the polite space of municipal geranium beds or fixed teak benches; rather, it was conceived as a social experiment that would fuel both conflict and cooperation.\footnote{CEDRIC PRICE}

Sometime in 1960 Joan Littlewood met and became friends with Cedric Price. Littlewood, a veteran of the English radical theater scene, was on the brink of resignation after a nearly thirty-year fight against establishment and commercial entertainments. Prior to the Second World War she had been a member of the Theatre of Action, a left-leaning theatrical company working out of Manchester that favored Brechtian aesthetics and agit-prop street theater.\footnote{Joan Littlewood} In 1945 she co-founded the Theatre Workshop and during the 1950s had some success in advancing the cause of experimental theater. At the time of their meeting, Price was still a young architect on the London scene. He was teaching at the Architectural Association, socializing within a circle of young aspiring architects with a penchant for technology, and was acquainted with architectural critic Reyner Banham.\footnote{Cedric Price} The meeting would prove auspicious. Littlewood's desire for a new kind of theatrical venue where her performances could flourish unconstrained by built form became the inspiration for Price's architectural imagination. In turn, their project for a Fun Palace became the vehicle through which the architect developed his idea for an anticipatory architecture capable of responding to users' needs and desires.
The Fun Palace was a proposal for an infinitely flexible, multi-programmed, twenty-four-hour entertainment center that married communications technologies and industrial building components to produce a machine capable of adapting to the needs of users. A grid of servicing towers supports open trusses to which a system of galleries are appended for maneuvering interchangeable parts (from information monitors to prefab units) into position (fig. 5.1). Circulation elements comprise moving catwalks, escalators, or travelators (suspended, stair-like, and ground-level systems). The conventional determination of built form as an enclosure or legible envelope for functional requirements is supplanted by an idea of environmental control in which, for example, adjustable sky-blinds perform the role of roofing and the task of spatial division is assigned to mutable barriers rendered by an idea of environmental control in which, for example, adjustable sky-blinds perform the role of roofing and the task of spatial division is assigned to mutable barriers described as movable screens, warm air screens, optical barriers, and static vapor zones.5 Programmatic elements with specific functional requirements such as kitchens or workshops are housed in standardized enclosed units sited on temporary, mechanically fitted deck-panels.6 The structure is serviced by a three-dimensional grid and an "ariable net of packaged conditioning equipment" distributed across a gigantic plinth housing a sewage purification plant and other support systems. The ever-pragmatic Price proudly declared it a "self-washing giant" capable of continually cleansing itself with recycled river water, and suggested that the site not be less than 20 acres.7 This description patently challenges the idea of architecture as shelter, as enclosure, or as a permanent signifier of social values. Here the concept of architecture as conveyor of symbolic expression has been forfeited for a fully automated and, above all, transient machine. Reyner Banham approvingly compared it to a "gigantic erector set."8

Price's ideas for a technologically innovative, "non-deterministic" architecture of planned obsolescence couched in terms of Littlewood's conceptions for alternative theatrical practice produced the quintessential anti-architectural project, the Fun Palace. Littlewood's aesthetic was characterized by an emphasis on direct communication between audience and performer and, importantly, on a communication that stresses physical forms over speech as the means of expressing content.9 The idea is that the form of theatrical experience should be dynamic, contrary to the well-oiled theater. Littlewood's work thrived on conflict, employed interactive techniques, drew on a variety of popular genres and media from pantomime to music hall to film and television, and adapted environmental forms such as festivals with the aim of engaging the sensory and physical participation of the audience in the action.10 In keeping with her early communist roots, theater had a pedagogical function. By the end of the 1950s, however, given rapidly changing social and political imperatives, a burgeoning of mass media and consumer culture, and the turn of the Left to an ideal of participatory democracy, the tactics of radical theater required reassessment. Theater as a forum for instruction was no longer an effective instrument where the pressing concern was to awaken the compliant subjects of an affluent consumer society. Welfare State passivity had to be countered through motivated, self-willed learning. Littlewood's theatrical expertise and social mission were well met by Price's wit and architectural objective: to produce an architecture that could accommodate change.

According to Littlewood, Price produced the first sketch for the Fun Palace in response to her complaints about the British taste for quaint old theaters.11 This first drawing minimally articulates Price's architectural intentions (fig. 5.2). The representation of the program is limited to a few hand-scrawled notations: a long-distance observation deck, large viewing screens, an inflatable conference hall, and an area designated for eating and drinking that is identical to a space labeled "open exhibition." A floating volume labeled "circular theater-part enclosed" is the most substantial clue to programmatic content. By Littlewood's account the drawing was inexplicable, more diagram than suggestion for built-form, the only identifiable objects being gantries, escalators, and various level markings within a thin-lined filigree-like structure of towers and trusses.12 Of the more than four hundred drawings consisting of time schedules, movement diagrams, mechanical drawings, details, and some perspectives (figs. 5.3 to 5.7), this initial conceptual sketch still accurately captures the essence of the scheme. The perspective is more locational than expressive of spatial qualities or formal characteristics — but then there really isn't much, in the way of architectonic qualities or materiality, to describe in the Fun Palace. As Price himself laconically noted, "It's a kit of parts, not a building" — one that he doubted would ever look the same twice.13

If the initiation of the project seems rather fortuitous, the ensuing campaign of fundraising and promotion, negotiations with jurisdictional bodies such as the London County Council, meetings with residential associations, and the struggle to find a site constituted a colossal undertaking that could only have been impelled by a passionate belief in the social necessity of realizing the project.14 Littlewood spearheaded the effort with Price managing the architectural aspects. In 1965 the enlisted the help of Dr. Gordon Pask, an expert on teaching machines who Littlewood characterized as the "romantic doyen of cyberneticians."15 That same year Pask formed the Committee for the Fun Palace Cybernetic Theatre,
which added a new twist to Littlewood's idea of direct communication. With the expertise of an unusual interdisciplinary committee now in place, the goals of the project were refocused: no longer merely the provision of a barrier-free venue for experimental theater, the technological mandate moved beyond the realm of mechanical mobility into the more ephemeral mobility offered by new information media and mass communications. The discrete disciplinary interests of the three protagonists - cybernetics, transient architecture, participatory theater and communications - merged in the objectives of the Fun Palace project to facilitate the emergence of an ephemeral subjectivity through the theatricality of communication. Thus began a working relationship spanning more than a decade of activity. The implicit consequence of the project: an institutional critique of Welfare State-administered culture.

Representing Architectural Reality: From Image-Based Anti-Formalism to Technological Ephemerality

Price's proposal for a technologically factual system of assembly - a mobile architecture - that eschewed architectural image easily recommends itself to Banham's ideas about the true vocation of architecture as promulgated in Theory and Design in the First Machine Age (1960). Banham's revisionist history of the modern movement was coupled, in the book's last chapter, with a radical prognostication for the future of architecture. In a polemic chastising architects of the first machine age for their preoccupation...
with the representation of technology, Banham challenged the architects of the second machine age to run with technology. The heroes of his tract were the Futurists and Buckminster Fuller, between whom Banham identified a shared inclination toward permanence and a resolution to exploit science and technology. In somewhat apocalyptic terms, he declared architects should emulate the Futurists, discard their whole cultural load, and propose the continual renovation of the built environment, or architecture as a profession would not survive the technological revolution. Fuller's 1927 proposal for the Dymaxion House provided Banham with an object lesson in which "a liberated attitude to both mechanical services and materials technology" organized the plan, and where "formal qualities were not remarkable, except in combination with the structural and planning methods involved." The essence of Banham's message was to drop illusionism and the symbolic use of a machine aesthetic and to accept the unhaltable progression of constant accelerated change.

Banham's promotion of an anti-formalist, technological approach to architecture is central to understanding the context of British postwar architecture and the rejection of International Modernism. In brief, the critique may be framed in a threefold way. The perception that International Modernism was elitist and overly pre-occupied with formal issues was met with a response that emphasized a visual approach (the picturesque) couched in terms of nationalism and traditional crafts. These responses, which included such movements as British Townscap or the New Romanticism, were in turn counter-critiqued by the British avant-garde. One of the strongest reactions to the revaluation of modernism in postwar Britain was launched by the Independent Group, which, in response to the insularity of tradition-oriented aesthetics, advocated complete immersion in the visual excesses of (mostly American) mass consumer culture. The London-based avant-garde of the mid 1960s cultivated an image-based aesthetic with, in part, the intention of raising (or, as some argue, lowering) visual communication to a threshold in keeping with everyday materiality and the experience of mass media. In contrast to this, Price in the early 1960s advanced a third position, an alternative to the dominant counter-critiques. For Price, the new transient social configurations emerging from mass culture were as transient as the means of mass communication themselves, and thus an architecture that might adequately service and ultimately encourage such social formations could not rely on image or an ethos based in materiality. To say that Price's work lacks strong visual impact is an understatement, but Price's idea of architectural communication has little to do with a mimetic function, that is, a natural correspondence with reality, and is rather as pure and ephemeral as the act of communicating itself. In the mid 1960s Price made the following observations on the relation of architecture to the visual:

The role of architecture as provider of visually recognizable symbols of identity, place, and activity becomes an increasingly attractive excuse for architects to revel in the immensity of their personal visual dexterity, aesthetic sensibility, and spatial awareness, demanding from both clients and observers recognition of the very causations of such revelry.

In his 1963 review of the Team 10 Primer, Price took the opportunity to inspect its rhetoric and dissociated himself from contemporary theories of urbanism and architecture. With citations from texts by the

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5.5 Fun Palace; sketch plans and interior perspective sketches, 1961-65. Cedric Price, architect and draftsman. Graphite with colored pencil on tracing vellum. CCA Collection.
Smithsons and others, he challenged Team Ten's ideas of social collectivism, for example, on the grounds that in promoting forms more valid in the past than the present, they fail to address the needs of an emergent society in which transience and fluctuations in population and group appetites will generate new and often unpredictable urban forms. For Price, "The needs of a new mobile society and communication systems which serve to invalidate existing town planning techniques of fixed building hierarchies and anonymous space." The Primer, he notes, surely identifies the pertinent issues of the times, but Price was not convinced of Team Ten's commitment, due in part to their faulty logic. The crux of his doubt centered on the ambiguous use of texts and images. For example, the work's authors rightly point to the phenomenon of mobility as a contributing factor in the development of urbanism and yet, Price asked, is mobility worth investing with architectonic importance simply because it is there? Price wondered whether we were not simply being confronted, once again, by the aesthetic of the early modernists, which visualized mechanization (real or imagined) rather than utilizing new technologies? Taking existing form as evidence for their critique, Team Ten's reliance on "the found" as reality neglected the complex ways in which cities really worked "in spite of their physical limits." For Price, both the group's criticism and its theory of production failed to offer, in his words, "a well-serviced mobility." These last points — mobility and an insistence that reality is not necessarily visibly evident — are issues he has adhered to ever since and continues to develop to this day.

Although the Fun Palace was never realized, Price achieved such notoriety with this and other projects such as the Potteries Thinkbelt as to secure for himself a seminal role within debates about architecture and technology. For cutting-edge technological visionaries such as Archigram, Price was the man to watch, but for those who thought architecture had a visually communicative role inextricably bound to optical appropriation, his work was anathema to everything architecture might stand for. But for Price, to ask what meaning might look like was to pursue the wrong line of inquiry; when confronted with new technologies (both mechanical and cybernetic) and new modes of scientific analysis (such as systems design theory), conventional notions of architecture were rendered moot. Price believed no premium could be placed on what might be considered meaningful experience, or how it might be achieved or represented in advance of use. In fact, architects were not in the business of providing meaning at all; according to Price, their task was to solve problems and extend the possibilities of choice and delight. Collective meaning, if the word can be used in this context, was to be deciphered from within a dynamically interactive field of communication. To this end, Price aimed to provide an environment that would both anticipate and accommodate change.

Is it not possible that with a little imagination we can ourselves find a new way of learning, new things to learn, and enjoy our life, the space, the light, the knowledge, and the inventiveness we have in ourselves in a new way?
Critique of the Welfare State: Architecture and Technologically Enhanced Performativity

In a statement typifying Pricean ambiguity, Price claimed that a structure should stand only as long as it was socially useful. To ensure the temporary of the Fun Palace, Price assigned a ten-year life to its structural frame. But temporality was not simply a matter of planned obsolescence, or the interchangeability and disposability of various building components; rather, time was intended to play a dynamic role in human perception—dynamic in the cybernetic sense of real-time.19

The production of the social and the individual—both physically and virtually—in real-time is the theoretical crux of the Fun Palace. Reiterated in the Fun Palace briefs is a soft leftist critique arguing that the disciplinary regime of time is dictated by a market-place that artificially divides a worker's life into work-time and leisure-time, a regimentation of time that is materially enforced through the zoning of work and leisure in urban space.20 For Price, this archaic sense of time ran counter to the emerging reality of cybernetics and its network of invisible services. The conflict between the simultaneous time of information and the disciplinary time of work (of schedules, timetables, industrial production) had to be amended for humans, to allow them to adapt to the flux and flow of the future technological world. In the article "Non-Plan: An Experiment in Freedom" of 1965, Banham, Barker, Price, and Hall almost paraphrase an earlier statement by one of the founders of cybernetics, Norbert Wiener, when they claim that the cybernetic revolution must be accompanied by a revolution in human thought and required a new mental and physical mobility.21 Fun Palace as a diagrammatic architecture of probability in present time would act as a temporary measure to ease the transition into the real-time of the information age.

In a conventional sense, the Fun Palace as architecture had no intrinsic meaning as a machine; it was merely an abstract machine that when activated by the users was capable of producing and processing information.22 In this way it may be considered performative, for only at the moment of transaction between user and machine would meaning or content be expressed, and at that moment would expression be identical with the act of performing. Furthermore, in the act of performing, the visibility and spatiality of the architecture would be annullied for the ephemeralization of pure, unrepeatable communication. For at the most literal level, activities such as the maneuvering of building components or the group determination of a program involves a basic form of social interaction. It was also imagined that the Fun Palace would be equipped with the latest in communications technology: reading machines, televisions, and computers.23 These scientific gadgets held the promise of thrusting the participant beyond mundane reality and into a virtual realm of communication.

The earliest stated objectives for the Fun Palace were "to arrange as many forms of fun as possible in one spot, to make moving in all directions, on feet or wheel, a delight, to provide conditions which make thinking, shouting, and resting... in the hopes of an eruption or explosion of unimagined sociality through pleasure."24 At first glance this agenda seems typical of calls during the 1960s for theatrical self-expression as a route to personal liberation. But Price was quick to say that what he had in mind was not "a mecca for conventional free-will activity."25 In the early documents, presumably written to convince legislative boards, the rhetoric of pleasure is accompanied by arguments for amendments to land-use policies and for the elimination of redundant programming brought about by borough-to-borough competition for new leisure and cultural facilities.26 In later briefs the cultural mission becomes more pointed: the Fun Palace was a learning machine that enabled self-participatory education through the interface between man and machine, between human beings, and, in keeping with the cybernetic theory it suggests, between smart machines.27 According to Price, the Fun Palace would be "a short term life toy of dimensions and organization not limited by or to a particular site, which is one good way of trying, in physical terms, to catch up with the mental dexterity and mobility exercised by all today."28 As a short-term exploratory toy, it would require the "co-ordination and cooperation in its day to day operations of local authorities, the State, industry, private organizations and individuals."29 And in its various designations as toy, university of the streets, or laboratory of pleasure it was not merely another container of amenities for Welfare State entertainment.30 As Littlewood and Price stated in 1962:

The present socio-political talk of increased leisure makes both a slovenly and dangerous assumption that people on one hand are sufficiently numb and servile to accept that the period during which they earn money can be little more than made mentally hygienically bearable and that a mentality is awakens [sic] during self-willed activity.11

This reiterated a commonly voiced criticism of British social conditions. In 1960 Malcolm Muggeridge described the routinized and self-satisfied Welfare State in vivid language:

The new towns rise, as do the television aerials, dreaming spires; the streams flow, pellucid, through comprehensive school; the BBC lifts up our hearts in the morning, and bids us good night in the evening. We wait for Godot, we shall have strip-tease wherever we go...32

Muggeridge captures the sense of social complacency that attended the success of Welfare State cultural and educational policies and the economic prosperity of the 1960s. The leveling of social experience—not to be mistaken for a leveling of the class structure—and the anaesthetization of society was perceived by some intellectuals as a situation nearing crisis. Two responses to this cultural uncertainty, Richard Hoggart's The Uses of Literacy (1957) and Raymond Williams's Britain in the Sixties: Communications (1962) attempted to analyze the crisis in view of the proliferation of mass-media communications. Written in a nostalgic vein, The Uses of Literacy reads as a lament for the loss of an identifiable working class and for the erosion of indigenous forms of popular culture.33 Hoggart targeted the pulp-print culture of tabloids, dailies, and romances as the cause of both the trivialization of life and the individual's distancing from concrete social reality. He argued that despite the rise in literacy, the profusion of junk culture had become debilitating, especially for the most vulnerable group, the working class, which easily succumbed to its appeals to conformity. Distinctive class characteristics—communal bonds, local wisdom and ethics, and, importantly, traditions in speech, "the guise of authority by putting a finger to the nose"—disappeared in the programming of homogenous appetites.34 Hoggart's problem with mass publications was not that they debased taste but that they over-excited it, eventually dulled it, and would finally kill it—"they
The problem was political: who controlled the proliferation of mass media; who formed and whetted the appetite for it? In his analysis of mass-communications technology in British culture, Raymond Williams did not worry about the loss of cultural distinctions but feared for the evolution of an educated and participating democracy. Williams claimed that Britain had been quick off the mark to employ new media technologies for cultural and educational purposes in the belief that via the airwaves, a classless and egalitarian society composed of literate and rational subjects would emerge. However, by the late 1950s it was clear that the ideal of the airwaves as a space of freedom outside the market was no longer tenable. Between the paternalistic educational policies adopted by BBC culture guardians and the imperatives of the commercial market there seemed to be little room for the kind of communication that Williams thought essential for the growth of a truly democratic society. He called for a rethinking of British cultural institutions and proposed the formation of new kinds of bodies, such as Communications Centers for research and analysis. However, more urgent was the need for a facility where ordinary people could exercise choice and effectively exert control within an uncensored network of communications. MARY LOUISE LOBSINGER

Control and Communication: From Participatory Architecture to a Cybernetic Learning Machine

If programmatic components such as an automated information library, a news room, auditoria, rallying spaces, and committee, therapy, and research rooms seem rather unusual for an entertainment center, and if some of the assertions about the Fun Palace seem naively optimistic ("the Fun Palace is both a pleasure arcade and an instrument which motivates the typically passive participant into thinking more abstractly," or "scientific gadgets, new systems, knowledge locked away in research stations can be brought to the street corner"), what is one to make of Littlewood's statement that "the 'fun arcade' will be full of games and tests that psychologists and electronic engineers now devise for the service of war - knowledge will be piped through juke-boxes"? To understand this we must examine the contribution of the Fun Palace Cybernetics Committee, specifically that of Dr. Gordon Pask. Pask's "Theatre Workshop and Systems Research: Proposals for a Cybernetics Theatre" offers some insight into the degree of his commitment to the project. After a few introductory remarks - such as, "the crux of a Cybernetics Theatre is that an audience should genuinely participate in a play" and that it should overcome "the restrictions in entertainment media such as cinema and television" - Pask proceeds to outline, in rather opaque technical jargon, a cybernetic analysis of the problem (fig. 5.8). He then provides some of the most initially baffling but fascinating diagrams of the entire project. It seems that in Pask's theater the seats would be equipped with controls allowing the audience to intervene in the action of the play. A computing machine located backstage would calculate audience input

![Diagram 1](image-url)
and relay the results to actors on stage. If the hardware proposed seems awkward and amusing by comparison with current developments in electronic communication, the terms both Pask and Littlewood use remind us of where communication technology was developed and the kinds of assumptions cyberneticians made about human interaction.

In this context a brief description of cybernetics is in order. Cybernetics arose during the Second World War in connection with the effort to develop radar-tracking systems capable of calculating input and producing feedback in order to accurately predict the responses of pilots engaged in combat. A control system that accurately analyzed messages between two combatants was of interest as a means of controlling the outcome of battles. Postwar research on information-feedback systems focused on a less antagonistic but equally competitive model of human interaction. In keeping with the classic definition of cybernetics as the study of "control and communication in animals and machines," research concentrated on how systems organize themselves - that is, how they reduce uncertainty and achieve stability by adapting, cooperating, and competing or basically how systems learn to survive.

One of the basic axioms of cybernetics is that messages contain information accessible to the communicator but not necessarily something intelligent - human beings would enjoy.

In a letter to Gordon Pask in 1964, Littlewood grappled with the use of "sensory apparatus to receive information about participants." She argues that it is right in a project of this kind to advance beyond the bounds of respectability and to move into the hinterland of things... 

The operators in the social system are like nerve and sensation. Its operators are actions or intentions or changes in the shade of joy or grief. We can to some extent control these transformations, though, in this case, we and our machinery act as catalysts and most of the computation is done as a result of the interaction taking place between members of the population, either by verbal discourse, or by cooperative utilization of facilities, or by cooperation to achieve a common objective.

The suggestion here of behavior-modification techniques gives way further on to descriptions of the program in the cozying terms of festival days, pranks, children's nurseries, and the experience of pleasure.

Within this discussion, it is not far-fetched to mention the work of Gilles Deleuze on emergent forms of social control. In Postscript on Control Societies, Deleuze argues that "control societies are taking over from disciplinary societies," and here "control becomes a floating control replacing the disciplinary time scales of closed systems." The archaic space and time of work and leisure is dissolving into a continuous aggravated pressure-control where seminars at work, continuing education, and upgrading exams in business or even the most "ludicrous game shows" are presented as healthy means for motivating humans to learn and to produce. This, for Deleuze, is a more nefarious kind of control - invisible, apparently freeing and constraining at the same time. In this context, the words that accompany the promotion of the Fun Palace - healthy competition to motivate self-willed learning through the stimulation of appetites, self-regulation to achieve group consensus - overide the light-hearted pleasure-seeking sense of the project, which in itself might be thought of as a form of control.

Contribution and Conclusion

At this juncture it is clear that the Fun Palace project was a free-wheeling exploration arising from a cross-disciplinary committee that entertained extreme notions of what a building might be and how or why it was necessary to 'educate' the masses for a new technological culture. The cross-disciplinary process - tacitly based, as was the Fun Palace itself, on ideas borrowed from systems-design theory, especially that of self-organizing systems - may be its most significant contribution to recent architectural history and theory.

In the early stage of Price's career, the architect was not explicit about his use of systems-design theory but it is clear that this first adventure offered him a willing client and the right circumstances for putting an experimental design and method into play. This interdisciplinary process, where Price's contribution is limited to architectural expertise, can be understood as a means of circumventing the...
Techniques which were to sponsor human all times to be put into action, it refused traditional notions of the architectural disciplining of space and time.

At the mention of control systems and the lax behaviorist psychologizing to produce happiness, one is inclined to recall in amused disdain. But this would misinterpret and misrepresent the contribution of the project. Certainly, by the end of the 1960s an anti-technology backlash was felt in both popular culture and architecture. For example, Alvin Toffler's Future Shock (1970) saw technology as "spinning out of control" and argued that the accelerated rate of change manifest in all facets of life was pushing social processes to the brink of socio-psychological shock. Future Shock is not the most sober assessment available of the state of society and technology, but its hyperbolic gloss is significant in that it captured popular sentiment and signaled a retreat from the optimism that had welcomed the "dawn of the second machine age." By 1970 the very techniques which were to sponsor human liberation, to facilitate the emergence of a participatory democracy, to de-institutionalize education and put scientific knowledge in the hands of the masses were viewed as instruments of social control. The hoped-for transformation to new social configurations within mass communication and the cybernetic dream of an evolved human perceptual awareness through human-machine interface had succumbed to disillusionment.

Toffler himself cites Price's Fun Palace as an instance of technocratic thought and the impoverishment of the most significant part of human experience, the built environment. A year earlier Price's Pottery's Thinkbelt project had faced criticism from within architecture when George Baird argued that the apparently neutral, hands-off design strategy was nothing less than a thinly veiled attempt to restructure the codes of architectural language. Baird stated that Price's refusal to provide "visually recognizable symbols of identity, place, and activity" and his reduction of architecture to a machine for "life-conditioning" displayed a gross misconception of architecture's place in human experience. For Baird, Price's architecture-as-servicing mechanism was equivalent to architecture as "a coffee-vending machine."

Beyond these humanist critiques there are aspects of the Fun Palace that are present of issues surrounding the use of information technologies and analytical processes associated with computational thought that have been taken up in some current critical architectural practices. Despite the fact that systems-design theory, as a non-hierarchical, more democratic process of problem-solving and producing architecture, has been shown to be patent false, the updating of its theoretical premises and the recent interest in its graphic means of analysis (particularly diagramming) has made a positive contribution to architectural theory. Many of these practices share with Price a concern about the design process - that is, the desire for a generative aesthetic process as a means of usurping formalist predilections, as a means to fully engage the potential of new technologies (such as computer software), and as a kind of radical utilitarianism. In the 1960s, as today, the Fun Palace offers architects a challenging conception of architecture that privileges organization and idea over architecture as built form.

Briefly returning to the ideas that galvanized the Fun Palace, of the conceptual connotations that pose problems for the claims underlying the project, the most obvious is the idea that an architecture that accommodates change, the very mode of consumption itself, might possibly be effective in awakening the compliant subjects of the paternalistic Welfare State. This counterintuitive idea suggests that Price held out for a value-free notion of capitalist entrepreneurialism against the bureaucracy of the state. Within this ideological frame, spontaneity and consumption are not obverse sides of the coin. Despite the fact that this optimistic vision of individual, active participation within free enterprise implies that enabled participants might somehow take hold of the market, one is compelled to ask at what point spontaneity and choice passes over into pure consumption? As perceptive critics have already pointed out, within late capitalism the distance between choice and control on the other hand is uncomfortably narrow.

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2 Document dated 18.2.64, Price Archive.
3 On Littlewood's contribution to British radical theater, see Howard Chunk, The Theatre Workshop Story (London: Eyre Methuen, 1981) or Joan Littlewood, Joan Littlewood: Peculiar History as She Tells It (London: Methuen, 1994). On her near retirement in 1966, see Goomey, "Goodbye note from Joan," 189 - News clipping from The Observer (10 July 1966), s, Price Archive, box 95, March 1965-September 1966. I've spent thirty years in the theatre, and I never want to see it again. It's dead, all that is over; people have got to be able to come and go, look at this or at that, have three rings to choose from or it's all compulsive. That's why I want the Fun Palace," Goomey, 11. Manifesto of the Theatre of Action: "The commercial Theatre of Action is limited by its dependence upon a small section of society which neither desires, nor dares to face the urgent and vital problems of today. The theatre, if it is to live, must of necessity reflect the spirit of the age. This spirit is founded on social conflicts which dominate world history today - the ranks of 3,000,000 unemployed, starving for bread while wheat is burned for fuel... This theatre will perform, mainly in working-class districts, plays which express life and struggles of the workers. Politics as its fullest sense, means the affairs of the people..."
5 Price Archive, box 15.
9 Goomey, 8.
11 Littlewood, 70.
12 Littlewood, 70.


24. Price, "Price's Process," 17. Price maintains that the architectural approach is to "... to formulise problems and develop ideas and possibilities rather than specific design solutions."


27. Price Archive, box 15.

28. Cedric Price, "Fun Palace Project," The Architectural Review 89 (January 1965), 34. He estimated that it would take 18 months to a year to build. Note that Alan Colquhoun published "Symbolic and Literal Aspects of Technology" in Architectural Design 40.4 (June 1971), 396-98. Both Colquhoun's criticism of the symbolic use of technology and Banham's critique of the symbolic use of machine imagery were probably influential.


30. In a later article on the Potteryies Thinkbelt, a project premised on ideas developed in the Fun Palace, Price stated: "I doubt the relevance of the concepts to Town Centre, Town and Balanced Community. Calculated suburban sprawl sounds good to me."


31. Cedric Price, "Non-Plan: An Experiment in Freedom," New Society 98 (15 March 1979), 442. See Norbert Wiener, Cybernetics and Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1948). 19. Later, Price reiterates his ideas of non-plan: "Non-plan and the advantages of unevenness, proposes to reduce the preoccupations of the assumed worth of the past uses of space through avoiding their reinforcement, society might be given not only the opportunity to re-access such worth but also be able to establish a new order of priorities of land, sea, and air which would be more directly related to the valid social and economic life span of such uses, replace Utopia with non-plan." Cedric Price, "Approaching Architecture of Approximation," Architectural Design 41.10 (1972), 96-97.

32. This interpretation is indebted to the work of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1987), 189-244.


34. Unpaginated document (Anti-architect document), Price Archive.


36. Price Archive. The main problem faced by the Committee was to find a site. This is somewhat paradoxical given that the project is premised on a lack of site specificity.


38. "Fun Palace: Being an account of the necessity of the Fun Palace as a temporary valve in a late