

**Discursive Sites: Text-Based Conceptual Art Practice
in Britain**

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Abstract

Focusing on the period from the mid-1960s to the late 1970s, this thesis traces the changing sites and trajectories of text-based conceptual art and artists' publications in Britain. Taking as its case studies various magazines, exhibitions and art schools including *Art-Language* by the group Art & Language, *Control* magazine by artist Stephen Willats and the Ealing Groundcourse at Ealing College of Art, I demonstrate how artists adopted text, language and publications in order to question paradigms of viewing and display. Although the term 'conceptual art' is now unanimous with art which eschewed traditional forms of art production such as painting and sculpture, its definition and dates are unclear and frequently contested. As such, I explore how the sites of artists' magazines, exhibitions and art schools, and their overlapping territories, can map generational networks and influences of text-based conceptual art practice in Britain.

This thesis attempts to avoid a retroactive linear reading and instead understands the 1960s and 1970s as linked by questioning the role of the artist as well as their value in a wider society. Bringing together published and archival material to explore the importance and relevance of using both exhibition histories and pedagogical practice in its analysis, I argue that exhibitions, both then and now, framed the dissemination and reception of this practice. In addition to this, art schools and art school magazines acted as platforms for discourse between students and teachers as well as a broader generational dialogue and the dissemination of ideas. In exploring text-based conceptual practice, I therefore align it to its social and political context demonstrating that the relationship between the 1960s and 1970s was based on a shared institutional and ontological enquiry into the dominant frameworks and networks of art.

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I dedicate this thesis to my mother, Annemarie, for encouraging my art and writing. Though she did not see this thesis materialise, without her it would never have materialised.

Declaration

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, University. All sources are acknowledged as References.

INTRODUCTION

History tends to be written like this. The normal procedure is to represent the art of the past as enabling the art of the present: we can understand the meaning and significance of the former, it is normally implied, insofar, as its potential and its implications are discovered in the latter... What follows is not an exercise in wishful thinking: 'what if...?' It is rather an attempt to remember with the minimum of sentimentality, but without presuming that an adequate representation of the past can be achieved in terms of the prevailing ratifications of the present.¹

The site shifted to the domestic space, and once again, when we got there... It was the specificity of *debate*, or discursive sites, that became increasingly important to me.²

My purposes here in constructing the dictionary fragments are pragmatic and heuristic rather than linguistic... how it draws a map.³

The artist Bruce McLean has said in interview that in 1973 upon the publication of Lucy Lippard's book, *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object 1966-1972*, conceptual art was over.⁴ In this thesis I seek to challenge the assumption that conceptual art practice in Britain peaked by 1973 following its initial rejection of the gallery system and subsequent incorporation into international retrospectives. Instead I argue for a re-reading and re-evaluation of conceptual art practice in Britain from the late 1960s through to the late 1970s by way of the themes of production, dissemination and reception, although these themes conflate and are frequently indistinguishable. This argument for a continuation rather than closure of the period is significant as it positions art produced in the 1970s as not ideologically distinct from that produced in the late 1960s. Instead, I propose that there was a discursive and recursive relationship between the two eras as both questioned the role and purpose of art and the artist in society.

¹ Charles Harrison, 'The late sixties in London and elsewhere', *1965 to 1972 – when attitudes became form* (Cambridge and Edinburgh: Kettle's Yard and the Fruitmarket Gallery, 1984), 9

² 'Douglas Crimp in conversation with Mary Kelly' in Homi K. Bhabha, Douglas Crimp and Margaret Iversen, *Mary Kelly* (London: Phaidon, 1997), 15

³ Lynn Lemaster, 'Optimistic Handbook', *The Fox* 2, 1975: 110

⁴ This is quoted from an interview between Louisa Lee and Bruce McLean, 3rd April 2016. In this interview McLean said that Lippard's book 'really upset people, this big thick glossy book with a wraparound cover and people thought she'd missed a point. She lost all respect from everybody then and she never appeared again after that. 1972 that came out.'

The term conceptual art has been, and continues to be, subject to competing definitions and claims of authority and is also frequently confused with ‘conceptualism’ – a term used in journalism as a ‘negative catch-all for what conservatives of various stripes do not like about contemporary art.’⁵ In its broadest definition, conceptual art placed ideas or concepts above the materiality of an art object and consequently opened the definition of the art object from a measurable quantity, displayed in the context of a gallery to a process, performance or an event, which was structured by time or duration rather than via its materiality. Yet, as is evident from the enduring definition of conceptual art as ‘dematerialized’ or ‘immaterial’, conceptual art’s definition continues to be understood in relation to its materiality, or lack of, and subsequently through traditional means of viewing and display.

My thesis seeks to re-examine this simultaneously expansive and reductive definition of conceptual art. I argue that the exhibition space in fact provides an important site of intersection between artist, audience and institution, which informs how we understand conceptual art today and that text-based conceptual art practice and artists’ publications were exhibited and circulated in the gallery and art market from the point of their original production and circulation. Therefore, rather than distinct from conceptual art, its legacy and historiography is informed by its institutional history. I use exhibition histories as case studies in order to critically explore how text-based art and artists’ magazines were, and continue to be, presented to the public and how their exhibition has framed and mediated our current understanding of conceptual art practice. In doing so, I argue that conceptual art is fragmented when positioned in an institutional context and is thus both read and looked at, therefore constituting multiple roles as art objects, literary texts and archival documents.

⁵ Paul Wood, *Conceptual Art* (London: Tate Publishing, 2002), 9

This thesis therefore tracks the various threads of dissemination of text-based conceptual art from the 1960s through to the 1970s through its institutional, sociological, political and pedagogical history. In particular, I look to the group Art & Language and their magazine *Art-Language* and relate their work to the text-based practice of their contemporaries including Stephen Willats, Roy Ascott, Mary Kelly, Margaret Harrison, Kay Fido Hunt, Conrad Atkinson, Ian Breakwell, The Newport Group and Barry Flanagan. However, I avoid using these protagonists as case studies and instead look to the artworks they produced, the exhibitions they were involved in, or their art school environments. These included, amongst others: the Ealing Groundcourse (1960-1964); *The New Art* exhibition at the Hayward gallery in 1972; *Documenta 5* (1972); the exhibition *Women and Work: A Document of the Division of Labour in Industry* exhibition at the South London Gallery in 1976; *A Survey of the Avant Garde in Britain* at Gallery House in 1972; *Post-Partum Document* at the Institute of Contemporary Art in 1976 and the Art Theory course at Coventry College of Art, run by members of Art & Language from 1969 to 1971.

For the purposes of my argument, it is necessary to outline my definition and understanding of the term ‘conceptual art’ as well as the reasons for this definition. In order to demonstrate the discursive nature of art produced in the late 1960s through to the late 1970s, I have purposefully avoided using particular dates to delineate when conceptual art started or finished and instead propose that there was a synchronicity of debates between the two eras rather than a linear development, a break, or a rejection,. This is a radical proposition which, as yet, has not yet been made in the literature of this period and is a theme I will explore more fully in my fourth chapter with the dissemination of conceptual art in the context of art schools in Britain. The multiple threads of conceptual art in Britain during this period would also make a linear narrative or history near impossible for conceptual art saw a plurality or dispersal of voices, which redefined how art was produced, how it was disseminated and how it was received. This plurality of voices also put greater emphasis on collectivity in an artwork’s production as well as consideration of the audience for which it was produced.

Discursivity between artists, artworks and audiences – talking together, writing together and reading together – foregrounded the importance of communication and media in the artwork as well as concepts of labour and the artist’s positioning, value and purpose in society. Therefore, the presentation of research materials, conversation and text were integral for conceptual art as they interrogated, even defied ‘the sensuous expectations of both the modernist spectator and his or her traditional opposition – the realist.’⁶ As such, conceptual art was not so much a rejection of modernism but a rejection, or at least a questioning, of the ‘transparent’ paradigms of display and viewing which had previously gone unchallenged. For this reason, I centre my thesis around text-based art practice or the ‘scriptovisual’, which utilises text, language or conversation as the medium for art rather than as the supporting critical framework where the text, its production, and its viewing, or reading, *is* the art.⁷ Central to this is the changing role of the audience or spectator, for as Benjamin Buchloh argues, conceptual practices ‘reflected upon the construction and role (or the death) of the author just as much as they redefined the conditions of receivership and the role of the spectator.’⁸ Although text-based practice was not specific to conceptual art nor the only form which conceptual art took – artists were also working in photography, film, performance amongst other media – it most clearly elucidates the conflation of production, distribution and reception and the resulting discursivity, which is central to my definition of conceptual art and to my argument.

I have based my methodology around archival research of text-based artwork and artists’ magazines and publications as ‘sites’. By ‘sites’, I refer to theorist Miwon Kwon’s idea of the ‘shifting-site’ where she proposes that we should leave behind the ‘nostalgic notions of a site as being essentially bound to the physical empirical realities of a place’ which is ‘out of synch with the prevalent description

⁶ John Roberts, *Revolutionary Time and the Avant-Garde* (London: Verso, 2015), 152

⁷ John Roberts defines text-based conceptual art practice as ‘scriptovisual’, which he describes as ‘defying the dominant drive in modernism to separate word and image as essentially different kinds of experience’ in *Revolutionary Time and the Avant-Garde*, 143

⁸ Benjamin Buchloh, ‘Conceptual Art 1962-1969: From the Aesthetics of Administration to the Critique of Institutions’, *October* 55 (Winter 1990): 1

of contemporary life as a network of unanchored flows.⁹ Rather, she argues, the definition of ‘sites’ should ‘address the differences of adjacencies and distances between one thing, one person, one place, one thought or one fragment next to one another rather than via one thing after another’, concluding ‘so that the sequence of sites that we inhabit in our life’s traversal does not become genericized into an undifferentiated serialization, one place after another.’¹⁰ I therefore propose that the relationship between text-based art and magazines of the 1960s and the 1970s is both discursive and ‘recursive’ – in that art and artists from these two periods were not distinct in their ideas and practices and did not progress through a linear thread of development, rejection and change. Instead the two periods are in dialogue with one another – they overlap and reproduce particular themes and concepts via different platforms and media with the ‘site’ of the magazine as both fluid and discursive, incorporating the viewer as much as the artwork. My thesis purposefully avoids a linear progressive narrative from the mid-1960s through to the late 1970s, and instead returns to artworks and archives as ‘sites’ of discussion and intersubjectivity in order to re-evaluate conceptual art in Britain’s place within art history. I argue that the text-based conceptual art practice in Britain produced from the late 1960s to the late 1970s, was subtler and more nuanced in its interrogation of an artwork’s production and its social context than has previously been considered and as such, deserves further exploration.

The majority of the archival research for my PhD has been conducted in the Tate Archives and Tate Library but I have also undertaken research at the Hayward Archives and the Southwark Council Archives in London; the Museum of Modern Art Archives in New York; the Archives at the Getty Institute in Los Angeles; the Bishopsgate Institute in London and through a research residency at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Barcelona. In addition to this, I have used private collections and conducted first hand-interviews with artists, curators and academics. Although the use of anecdotal evidence from interviews can be unreliable and subject to an individual’s particular agenda,

⁹ Miwon Kwon, ‘One Place After Another: Notes on Site Specificity’, *October* 80 (Spring 1997): 108

¹⁰ *Ibid*: 110

due to the scarcity of some of the primary material for this area, it has at times been a necessity. The interviews which I have conducted have also helped build a wider picture of the particular networks between artists, writers and gallerists during this period. Another important point to consider has been the changing status and categorisation of magazines, which has allowed me to think through the contradictory accounts of protagonists and the desire to narrate particular legacies of the era. Using magazines as research tools has therefore proved enlightening for the wider subject matter of conceptual art as magazines straddle a position between the museum collection, library and the archive, frequently occupying all of these spaces at once while not fully defined by any of these categorisations. Thus, the magazines and text-based art in my thesis represent 'site-specific' objects, which rely on their particular context for meaning: the context of the art school, the art gallery, the museum. Yet at the same time, their circulation and relationship enact a discursivity which was integral to the form of conceptual art and its dissemination. This I argue, occurred outside of these specific sites, on the pages of the magazine. I therefore differentiate my research from other recent doctoral theses by focusing on the role of the publication and text-based artwork as a document for tracing the various lineages and networks of conceptual art in Britain during the 1960s and 1970s.

As mentioned above, it has been necessary to contextualise my research within the recent historiographical landscape of conceptual art, through both its contestations and omissions. In this next section I define the most important recent PhD theses with regards to my research and how it overlaps as well as distinguishes itself from these studies. Each of these PhD theses approach the question of the definition of conceptual art through major themes including its pedagogy; conceptual art's legacy; publications; archives of conceptual art; the discursive; anecdote; the magazine and the pedagogical output and legacy of the group, Art & Language. Yet few have used the definition and framing of conceptual art, or conceptualism in its current permutation, as a focus of study in relation to archival materials. Fewer still have looked at Britain's placement within this landscape i.e. how its shaping and framing has taken place across a series of decades and subsequent art movements, by both its reception

in the early 1970s and its more recent reception in major exhibitions. My thesis is original in its approach by presenting these themes through the use of text, or the printed page, as primary sites. Looking to a few examples of relevant and related PhDs completed in the last ten years, I can clarify this further.

In his 2009 PhD thesis, *Systems, Contexts, Relations: An Alternative Genealogy of Conceptual Art* (2009), Luke Skrebowski sets up a re-evaluation of conceptual art through a series of ‘post-conceptual movements’ including: ‘Relational Aesthetics’ and ‘Participatory Art’, defined by Nicolas Bourriaud and Claire Bishop respectively. Skrebowski argues that the way we understand the character and critical legacy of conceptual art should be inflected by its contemporary history, writing, ‘Questions about art after modernism (and the attendant arguments over the adequacy of postmodernism as a critical category) have regulated debates ever since. Conceptual art has played a pivotal role within them.’¹¹ Thus, he positions the understanding of conceptual art in a retroactive lineage and argues for this reading as a result of too great a dependence on conceptual art as tied to a rejection of a Greenbergian modernism – a dependence on its origins rather than its aftermath. The reason for this re-examination, he argues, is that neither Greenberg nor Adorno ‘as the pre-eminent theorists of high modernism’, offer any real insight on conceptual art’.¹² Instead, he uses Peter Osborne’s theory that the categories of modernism and postmodernism should be put aside in favour of a modernism, conceptual art and postconceptual art theory, where such terms as modernism would not precede the latter two but instead include it within its temporal logic. As Skrebowski writes, ‘Conceptual art, for Osborne, is succeeded by a set of post-conceptual practices derived out of a critical legacy (in a sense, from its failures).’¹³

¹¹ Luke Skrebowski, “Systems, Contexts, Relations: An Alternative Genealogy of Conceptual Art” (PhD diss., University of London, 2009), 3

¹² Ibid, 18

¹³ Ibid, 19

Skrebowski's PhD thesis was supervised by Osborne and it is therefore worth exploring Osborne's contribution to the historiography of conceptual art within this perspective and in relation to Skrebowski's PhD thesis. Osborne's 2002 anthology, *Conceptual Art*, was introduced with the argument that any attempt at a definition of conceptual art 'runs up against the problem that definition is one of the main things at stake in conceptual art itself.'¹⁴ He continues that whatever conceptual art might be it is first and foremost about the 'art of *questions* left in its wake' which he describes as 'a whole series of questions about itself.'¹⁵ Osborne's book surveys conceptual art's history through a series of major themes including: Pre-History 1950-1960; Process, System, Series; and Institutional Critique. At the back of the volume are selected artist's biographies and an 'Afterwords' section, which lists some of the texts which were produced in the wake of conceptual art. He designates this period as post-1980 and connects it to the development of semiotics and 'neo-conceptualisms', thus placing conceptual art in a clear lineage with a definable point of closure. In a more recent publication by Osborne, *Anywhere or Not at All: Philosophy of Contemporary Art* (2013), a chapter is dedicated to 'Transcategorality: postconceptual art'. In this chapter he writes: 'if the critical destruction of medium as an ontological category, was the decisive, collective historical act of the most important of the 1960s, it is not surprising that it faced a barrage of institutionally reactive and reappropriative criticism and curation from the outset.'¹⁶

Thus conceptual art's definition and legacy have remained the main preoccupation for Osborne and Skrebowski with Skrebowski defining the use of archives by 'younger' art historians as a ransacking of the archives of sixties practitioners for 'fresh materials and insights'.¹⁷ Quoting James Meyer, Skrebowski argues that we must understand the archive to be constituted only 'by its ransacking' and by doing so it is also necessary, 'to be alert to the danger of presenting rejectamenta as

¹⁴ Peter Osborne, *Conceptual Art* (London: Phaidon, 2002), 14

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Peter Osborne, *Anywhere or Not At All: Philosophy of Contemporary Art* (Verso: London, 2013), 99

¹⁷ Skrebowski, "Systems, Contexts, Relations: An Alternative Genealogy of Conceptual Art", 19

radical new discursiveness.¹⁸ In this approach Skrebowski, Osborne and Meyer therefore dismiss the recent trend for returning to the archive in order to discover forgotten histories or artists who have not been included in the historiography of conceptual art. Although I agree with this view – that the trend for re-visiting archives in order to find forgotten or excluded material can avoid critical dialogue surrounding the work in question and instead focus on the discovery of artists and artworks in order to present them as a ‘radical new discursiveness’ – I argue that the history of conceptual art practice in Britain is a valid area of research, which has been written out of art history due to other contributing factors including dominant histories or individuals, rather than its lack of validity or status as ‘rejectamenta’. Furthermore, Skrebowski only avoids this ‘ransacking’ by arguing his thesis through a lineage of established movements and artists, thereby enforcing a status quo in conceptual art’s legacy and missing the analysis of an important transatlantic dialogue in which artists groups formed networks laterally as well as in a linear format, a feature integral to conceptual art practice in the 1960s and 1970s.

Other theses which have contributed to this area of knowledge and with which my own research overlaps through subject matter or shared methodology include Jo Melvin’s 2013 thesis *Studio International Magazine: Tales From Peter Townsend’s Editorial Papers 1965-1975* and Mark Dennis’ 2016 thesis, *Strategic Anomalies: Art & Language in the Art Schools 1969-1979*. Both of these theses utilise archives or original documents in order to re-examine publishing practices and the dissemination of conceptual art in the 1960s and 1970s in Britain. Melvin for example, uses the magazine *Studio International* to explore its production and impact through the editorial papers of Peter Townsend. She does this in order to demonstrate how Townsend sought to transform the magazine’s identity from a more provincial art magazine to one which returned to the radical principles of its founders in 1893. In turn, she explores how it acted as a platform for the international network of conceptual art in this period. Dennis, on the other hand, traces the ‘diaspora’ of the group Art & Language through their pedagogy

¹⁸ Ibid.

and the production of radical art school magazines such as *Ratcatcher*, *Ostrich* and *Issue* and the project ‘SCHOOL’, which I will explore further in relation to generational discursivity and conceptual art in the final chapter of this thesis. In Elena Crippa’s 2013 thesis, *When Art Schools Went Conceptual: The Development of Discursive Pedagogy and Practices in British Art Higher Education in the 1960s*, she traces the pedagogical roots of conceptual art in Britain. By looking at the legacies of the teachings of Victor Pasmore and Richard Hamilton at King’s College in Newcastle and the dissemination of these teachings through Basic Design to figures such as Roy Ascott on the Groundcourse at Ealing College of Art and in turn to their students such as the artist, Stephen Willats, Crippa explores how conceptual art in Britain has been informed by the discursive practices of cybernetics, behavioural theory, the ‘Group Crit’ and the Performance Lecture in art pedagogy. Crippa looks extensively at the formation of the ‘Group Crit’, which originated from the Sculpture Department at St Martin’s College of Art in London in the 1960s. She argues that the shifting dynamic from the teaching of art making to the creation of an art environment that fosters discussion and critical reflection redefined art schools as conceptual in that priority was given to the conception rather than the execution of the work. Lastly, I look at Hester Westley’s 2007 thesis, which uses oral history as a methodological framework to recuperate the voices of hidden protagonists of the Sculpture Department at St Martin’s from 1960-1979. In each chapter Westley aligns contemporary critical discourse with artist’s testimonies and previously unseen archival documentation. Although, I do not focus my research around artist’s testimonies, the alignment of the investigation of this material to contemporary discourse relates to my research in its use of contemporary framing and legacy and its original production and dissemination. The reliance on anecdotal evidence in Westley’s thesis is subject to too many discrepancies as well as the subjective decisions by the author and I have therefore only utilised interviews as supporting material.

There are, however, significant shared themes between Crippa’s thesis and mine but I demonstrate that alongside the site of the art school, the use of text-based art practice and publications

operated as integral sites for these discussions, thus allowing them not only to take place within an institution but to be actively critical of their environment as well as to foster dialogue with external art schools. This, in turn, enabled networks to form outside of London art colleges. Through the use of text-based practice, teachers and students could collaboratively protest existing and outdated structures in art schools as well as disseminate ideas for alternative ways of working. I argue that the site of the art school magazine was integral for the development and increase of this discursive approach in the period as well as the development of a ‘verbal fluency’ as defined by sociologists, Charles Madge and Barbara Weinberger.¹⁹ For while the changing structures of education enabled a more ‘liberal’ form of art education, it also fostered divisions between more traditional and formal techniques as well as more experimental and avant-garde practices. Thus, students were increasingly vocal in defining their roles in both art schools and upon graduation in a wider society. This resulted in an increased awareness and sociality of the art student which was present from the mid-1960s and continued into the 1970s.

While PhD theses exploring conceptual art and artists’ magazines have tended to centre around particular thematics, anthologies of the area have attempted to present definable parameters or closures of discussion, usually based around an American context. For example, the art historian Robert Bailey has written of Charles Harrison, Paul Wood and Jason Gaiger’s ubiquitous anthology *Art in Theory 1900-1999* (later published as *Art in Theory 1900-2000*) in relation to its contribution to the definition of modern and contemporary art, that the publication is utilised in almost every undergraduate History of Art course syllabus in American and European Universities and that ‘Harrison, Wood, and Gaiger’s approach to theoretical density and precision enjoys widespread, though not always knowing, sanction within the discipline of art history. In other words, all historians

¹⁹ Charles Madge and Barbara Weinberger describe a fictional college called ‘Midville’ which represents sociological studies of Coventry College of Art and Birmingham College of Art from 1967 to 1969. In this study they identify the ‘verbalizing impulse’ as relating to the art-socialization context and the emerging ‘Art & Language’ crisis out of Coventry College of Art. Charles Madge and Barbara Weinberger, *Art Students Observed* (London: Faber, 1973)

of modern and contemporary art may be conceptual art historians, wittingly or otherwise.²⁰ Likewise, Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson's 1999 anthology *Conceptual Art* has become one of the main reference publications for the study of conceptual art. In the introduction to this publication, the editors write that compared to other avant-garde movements there is a serious lack of discussion by art historians and critics over the last few decades of conceptual art and argue that this gap is particularly ironic given the tremendous influence of it on 'subsequent artistic developments, on the critical discussion surrounding the concept of postmodernism, and the recognition and use, more generally, of various forms of theory by artists, curators, critics, and historians.'²¹

Although I would agree that there is no question of the influence of conceptual art upon subsequent trends or movements in art, this statement reveals the discrepancies of using the word 'conceptual' without fully exploring its ontology or epistemic inheritance. For as mentioned above, conceptual art is a contested term and therefore to argue that it has had a lack of serious discussion presupposes we can define what conceptual art was, and the dates which it originally occupied. Furthermore, it describes the influence which conceptual art has had on different generations without describing the form of that influence or even how it was disseminated from one generation to the next. Alberro and Stimson's definition therefore mirrors the more recent trend of tracing the history of conceptual art through its retroactive lineage and legacy as exemplified in Skrebowski's thesis.

For example, for their anthology, Alberro and Stimson use a number of predominantly American practitioners' texts in order to demonstrate a predefined history of conceptual art – predefined in that it was being defined at the point of its exhibition/reception and therefore this later definition relies on a reproduction of that definition rather than a re-evaluation of the period in question. By choosing some of the 'best known' texts of conceptual art as well as lesser known articles and interviews in order to provide insight into the period from 1966 to 1977, the authors define the

²⁰ Robert Bailey, 'Conceptual Art History', paper given at *Looking at Art-Language: Artists Magazines and Conceptual Art 1969-1985*, University of York, October 2017

²¹ Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson, *Conceptual Art* (London and Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1999), xiv

term retrospectively and through a retroactive lens, collating texts that support the specific art-historical narrative they seek to demonstrate. Lastly, the anthology concludes with memoirs from artists involved including Jeff Wall and Adrian Piper as well as ‘a selection of the most important critical and scholarly histories of conceptual art written to date.’²² Thus it demonstrates a closure to the era rather than what is required: an opening up of discussion.

The art historian, Paul Wood, on the other hand, has written a more open-ended definition of the term ‘conceptual’ in his 2002 publication for the Tate:

[I]t is not at all clear where the boundaries of ‘Conceptual art’ are to be drawn, which artists and which artworks to include. Looked at in one way, Conceptual art gets to be like Lewis Carroll’s Cheshire cat, dissolving away until nothing is left but a grin: a handful of works made over a few short years by a small number of artists, the most important of whom soon went on to do other things’.²³

He concludes, ‘Conceptual art’s legacy is exceptionally argumentative. Most of the major players are still living, and matters of status and priority are jealously guarded.’²⁴ Thus, due to this difficulty of definition, combined with its reception and the protective nature of many of its main protagonists, it is useful to explore how conceptual art has been framed, and by whom, since its original permutation.

My approach to the area aims to differentiate itself from these framing narratives and pitfalls by returning to the artwork, the exhibition space and the art school, as well as the accompanying institutional and personal archives for these case studies. This is not as a way to ignore personal narrative or current historiographies but rather to assess them against their original documents, framing and reception in order to reassess the omissions and aporias of which the area is currently subject. Of course, the forming of archives is never objective or without wider institutional or cultural resonances and repercussions and as such I hope to approach them with this awareness as well as to consider how I might reconcile these problems with its history. Therefore, I look at the work’s

²² Ibid.

²³ Wood, *Conceptual Art*, 6

²⁴ Ibid.

production, display and reception at the time and more recently in order to argue that it was through the medium of communication – to audiences, artists, students, teachers, institutions and critics – that text-based conceptual art practice and magazines can be best situated, defined and explored. That is, the media is not the resulting text of these discussions following its transcription but how these texts were produced, how they were read and received, how they were disseminated and how their communicative value is continually transformed and contradicted by the conditions of their production, distribution and reception.

In looking to understand the framing of conceptual art further, it has been important to explore earlier examples of the use of the term ‘conceptual’. Various called Concept art, Conceptualism, Post-Object Art, Art-as-Idea, Theoretical art, Dematerialization, the first use of the term has been attributed to Ed Keinholz in the late 1950s and to Fluxus musician, Henry Flynt in 1961. However, the term did not enter artworld discourse until almost a decade later so its attribution to Kienholz or Flynt is misleading. As mentioned previously, however, this term is neither fixed nor without contestation but for the purpose of this thesis, it is necessary to define the term and its historical connotations to the best extent possible. The majority of early definitions of the term were produced by American theorists, which might explain why it has been defined by an American historiography. In Gregory Battcock’s 1973 publication *Idea Art* he wrote that by 1970 it was clear that a new type of art was emerging in the New York and European art worlds, ‘Quickly labelled Conceptual art or Idea Art, the form encompassed an extraordinary variety of works.’²⁵ He writes that what they had in common was a rejection of the ‘bourgeois’ values of traditional art, frequently not existing as objects but through the documentation of process. In the same year, and by the same publishers, E.P. Dutton, Ursula Meyer’s book *Concept Art* was released. In this book, Meyer described conceptual art as evolving from a group of young artists in the past several years, writing:

²⁵ Gregory Battcock, *Idea Art* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1973), 1

Conceptual artists take over the role of the critic in terms of framing their own propositions, ideas, and concepts. “Because of the implied duality of perception and conception in earlier art, a middleman (critic) appeared useful. This [Conceptual] art both annexes the functions of the critic and makes the middleman unnecessary.”²⁶

Meyer’s introduction was followed by a list of ‘conceptual’ artists to demonstrate this point. These included Vito Acconci, Terry Atkinson, John Baldessari, Mel Bochner, Jan Dibbets and Robert Morris, amongst others, thus defining conceptual art in 1972 as encompassing painting, photography and performance – a definition which might be understood as too broad in its inclusion today. In addition to this, the idea that conceptual art encompasses the critic or ‘the middleman’, has been a method of describing the role of writing used in art by circumventing its definition as a medium in itself and instead framing it in relation to the context of art history.

Finally, as mentioned at the start of this thesis, one of the most significant publications which has contributed to defining the parameters of conceptual art in this period, as well as its subsequent legacy, is Lippard’s, *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object 1966-1972*. First published in 1973, it has occupied an ambiguous status since: operating as book, exhibition and archival repository simultaneously. Until its reprint in 1997, the publication was categorised as a rare and valuable artefact of conceptual art encompassing fragments of text, theory and art works from the period 1966-1972 and was compiled as a bibliography set in chronological format. Yet, Lippard wrote in the foreword of the re-edition that when it was first published she was amazed that some ‘eccentric souls were unable to put it down and were plowing through it, plugging into the hidden narrative that I thought would be an involuntary secret.’²⁷ The publication has since come to represent a definitive account of this era rather than as a critical anthology and it stands for a simultaneous history, document and text of conceptual art. Acting as both distribution tool and artist’s publication it thus exemplifies the use of the magazine or text-based practice as medium in conceptual art, which is

²⁶ Ursula Meyer, *Conceptual Art* (New York E.P. Dutton, 1972), VIII

²⁷ Lucy R. Lippard, *Six Years: the dematerialisation of the art object from 1966 to 1972* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1973), 3

problematic as the book deserves to be read critically in relation to other documents from the era. This might be best exemplified by the 2012 exhibition at the Brooklyn Museum in New York *Materializing Six Years*, which sought to stage an exhibition through the works listed in the publication.

The recent interest in conceptual art has coincided with revival of interest in artists' magazines. This is due to the use of the magazine and text by conceptual artists as a medium. As a result of this there have been re-productions, facsimiles and digital versions made of certain magazines from my research including *Art-Language*, *The Fox* and *Silâns* magazine. Subsequently, a number of books and articles on artists' publications and magazines have widened the area of research and as such, it has increasingly been taken more seriously as an area of study within the field of art history. Examples of these include Clive Phillpot's 2013 publication *Booktrek* and Gwen Allen's, *Artist's Magazines: An Alternative Space for Art* (2011). Although Phillpot and Allen's approaches to this area are very different, they are both worth mentioning as significant contributions to the study of artists' magazines and publications. Allen's publication describes the importance of the 1960s and 1970s as a time when magazines became an important new site of artistic practice, 'functioning as an alternative exhibition space for the dematerialized practices of conceptual art.'²⁸ She explains the importance of the magazine as a space to document art as well as a medium in its own right and explores the significance of artists' magazines in art of the 1960s through the 1980s. This book is one of the most comprehensive histories of art magazines to date and thus provided an invaluable resource for research.

Other texts and publications have explored text or discourse as medium in conceptual art: a theme I explore in my first chapter. For example, Margaret Iversen's 'Auto-Maticity: Ruscha and Performative Photography', published in the December 2009 special issue of *Art History* magazine.²⁹ In this article, Iversen makes the link between Ed Ruscha's books and earlier performance-based pieces

²⁸ Gwen Allen, *Artist's Magazines* (London and Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2011), 1

²⁹ Margaret Iversen, 'Auto-Maticity: Ruscha and Performative Photography' in Diarmuid Costello and Margaret Iversen (eds.) *Art History: Photography After Conceptual Art* 32, No. 5 (December 2009)

which were ‘governed by a notational system or “score”’, arguing that the stress conceptual artists put on language had its roots ‘in a practice in which a verbal score or set of instructions was performed.’³⁰ Iversen references Liz Kotz’s then recently published, *Words to Be Looked At: Language in 1960s Art* (2007), which explores the use of language in art by returning to its usage in the early 1960s. Kotz asks why, despite the resources and richness of language ‘when this country [the USA] was undergoing some of its most violent and productive upheavals, should artists working in the United States deliberately choose not to make statements?’³¹ She continues, ‘Why should they choose to examine the materiality and activity of language in such a reduced, inexpressive, and to many eyes, seemingly depoliticized forms?’³² Kotz describes the difficulty for her in attempting to grasp the political claims of minimalism and conceptual art. Arriving ‘late on the scene’ writing, ‘these projects can only be a reconstruction.’³³ Yet despite this, she continues, ‘we are still left with its objects, and in particular with the rich, radical, and odd array of works with language.’³⁴ Kotz also acknowledges that despite centering her book on New York City, the turn to language in 1960s art was an international phenomenon. The question of text-based art and its social and political context are, however, yet to be addressed within a British context.

National and International Conceptual Art Exhibitions

³⁰ Ibid, 14

³¹ Liz Kotz, *Words to Be Looked At: Language in 1960s Art* (London, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2007), 1

³² Ibid, 1-2

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

As I mentioned above, the reception of art exhibitions both at the time and more recently has contributed to the legacy of conceptual art. Upon its opening in April 2016 the exhibition *Conceptual Art in Britain 1964-1979* at Tate Britain, to which this thesis is linked through a Collaborative Doctoral Award, received multiple negative reviews from the press. These reviews raised questions which were integral to the reevaluation of conceptual art and its definition during this period and more recently and as such, this exhibition has provided an invaluable starting point for this thesis. The exhibition and its reception put forward questions of how one should display artworks which might never have been intended to be exhibited in a gallery, and whose premise is neither spectacle nor easy consumption but work, time, reading and reflection. How does one display art made of text when its premise was to question divisions between looking and reading, questions integral to conceptual art, and how does one present a sub-strand of a retroactively named period in art to a public who are largely unaccustomed to what conceptual art looks like and even less accustomed to the ‘British’ strain of conceptual art? In this thesis I will seek to re-position the history of artists practicing text-based conceptual art in Britain in the late 1960s through to the 1970s from the perspective of its production, distribution and reception and in doing so I intend to explore artists’ writing and publishing practices, and their relationship to national and international institutions or sites. In turn, I will demonstrate how the format of the magazine was an integral instrument for understanding why this important and influential history of conceptual art practice has been marginalised in favour of an American and European narrative and why it continues to be such a queried and overlooked area of art history. Thus, alongside conceptual art’s historiography, in order to understand its current definition, it has been necessary to explore exhibitions of conceptual or text-based art in order to demonstrate how they have helped to frame and define current legacies and trends of conceptual art. Furthermore, as mentioned above, it is evident that there has been a recent surge of interest and investment in this area, which is worth exploring further in relation to its exhibition history.

Some of the main exhibitions to address conceptual art from 1980 to the present might include the following: *Minimal Art I* at CAPC Bordeaux (1985); *Conceptual Art I* at CAPC Bordeaux (1988); *L'Art conceptuel, une perspective* at the Musée d'Art Moderne, Paris (1989); *Reconsidering the Object of Art: 1965–1975* (1995) at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, curated by Ann Goldstein and Anne Rorimer; *Circa '68* (1999) at Museu de Serralves, Porto, curated by Vicente Todolí and João Fernandes, (1999); and *Global Conceptualism: Points of Origin 1950s–1980s* (1999) at Queens Museum of Art, New York, curated by Luis Camnitzer, Jane Farver and Rachel Weiss; *Conceptual Art in the Netherlands and Belgium 1965-1975* at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam in 2002; *Open Systems: Rethinking Art c.1970* (2005) exhibition, curated by Donna DeSalvo at Tate Modern; *Art After Conceptual Art* at the Generali Foundation, Venice (2006). In addition to this, institutions and dealers have changed how conceptual art is categorised and valued with text-based practices changing status from libraries and archives to art collections. Lastly, there have been a number of exhibitions centred on archival revisitations of exhibitions. For example, *Materializing "Six Years"* at the Brooklyn Museum of Art in 2012, *Cybernetic Serendipity* and *Art into Society: Society into Art* at the ICA in 2014 and 2016 respectively; *When Attitudes Become Form* at the Fondazione Prada, Venice in 2013; *This Way Out of England: Gallery House in Retrospect* at Raven Row, London in 2017; *Control. Stephen Willats. Work 1962-69* at Raven Row, London in 2014 as well as the *Documenta 5* exhibition at Specific Object in New York in 2007 and *Art & Project Bulletin* at the Musée d'art Moderne et Contemporain (MAMCO) in Geneva in 2003-4; *In and Out of Amsterdam* at the Museum of Modern Art, New York in 2009; *Live in your Head: Concept and Experiment in Britain 1965-1975* at the Whitechapel Gallery in London in 2000 and *1965-1972 – when attitudes became form* at Kettles Yard Gallery, Cambridge and The Fruitmarket Gallery in Edinburgh in 1984. These and related re-presentations, however, have not always followed the original form and contents of the exhibitions they purport to reconstruct. Other exhibitions appropriate the title of the original exhibition but have little, if anything at all, in common with the original. The name being reflecting a desire to associate with a particular moment in exhibition history rather than to replicate that exhibition.

For example, the exhibition *Live In Your Head: When Attitudes Become Form* in the year 2000 at the Whitechapel Gallery, was only loosely connected to the original exhibition of 1969 in terms of dates and artists included. The original, *When Attitudes Become Form* took place in 1969 and was curated by Harald Szeemann at the Kunsthalle Berne in Switzerland, travelling to the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London later that year where it was curated by assistant editor to *Studio International* magazine and member of Art & Language, Charles Harrison. The exhibition centred on an international survey of artists whose work focused on processes and systems of producing work rather than physical outcomes. It featured artists including Carl Andre, Robert Barry, Victor Burgin, Hanne Darboven, Eva Hesse and Bruce McLean, amongst others. Writing in the catalogue, which resembled an office ring binder, Szeemann described the exhibition as follows:

Works, concepts, processes, situations, information (we consciously avoided the expressions object and experiment) are the ‘forms’ through which these artistic positions are expressed. They are ‘forms’ derived not from pre-formed pictorial opinions, but from the experience of the artistic process itself. This dictates both the choice of material and the form of the work as the extension of gesture. This gesture can be private, intimate, or public and expansive. But the process itself always remains vital; it is ‘handwriting and style’ simultaneously.³⁵

Likewise, Harrison contributed an essay to the catalogue, ‘Against Precedents’, which described the contributors as follows: ‘No one over-riding theme has been imposed upon the exhibition “When Attitudes become Form”, but virtually all the artists represented would appear to share a dissatisfaction with the status of art work as a particular object in a finite state, and a rejection of the notion of form as a specific and other identity to be imposed upon material.’³⁶ Despite the implications of associating an exhibition with such a significant namesake, the 2000 ‘version’ of the exhibition focused on a British perspective of conceptual art (rather than an international one) and included such artists as: Michael Craig-Martin; Rose Finn-Kelcey; David Hall; Gilbert & George; Art & Language and Kay Fido Hunt amongst others. Its focus and content differs considerably to that of the original – more expansive in its

³⁵ Harald Szeemann, ‘Introduction’, *Live in your Head* (London: ICA, 1969), unpaginated

³⁶ Charles Harrison, ‘Against Precedents’, *Live in your Head*, unpaginated

outlook and defining conceptual art in relation to an increased experimentalism in the era. Andrew Wilson succinctly defines the issues of this approach in his review of the 2000 show in *Art Monthly* magazine:

[...]no structure (thematic or otherwise), nor does it offer much in the way of explanation either for its title (beyond its derivation from an earlier exhibition or for the terms of its subtitle, 'concept and experiment'). Even though this period can quite legitimately be characterised as one where boundaries of and between activities were broken down, this was difficult to achieve and such moves placed significance on a higher order and content. The disorder created by the show's curatorial openness results in content being exchanged for anything goes experimentalism.³⁷

Thus, the 'open' themes of the original became diluted into several other art practices and movements by the 2000 exhibition, demonstrating that in borrowing the 1969 title, it aimed to revive a past exhibition through the retroactive lens of conceptualism rather than with its original aims and intentions. In contrast, the 2013 exhibition *Live in Your Head* at the Fondazione Prada in Venice was curated by Germano Celant with artist Thomas Demand and architect Rem Koolhaas attempted to remake the 1969 exhibition in the baroque Ca' Corner della Regina in Venice, which was a far remove from the white cube functionalism of the Kunsthalle Bern. Thus the transition – spatially and temporally – resulted in an experimental art project in itself rather than an exact replication of the original exhibition. Yet these exhibitions demonstrate a surge in interest in conceptual art which occurred in the year 2000, and more recently. As such, I explore large scale exhibitions such as *Conceptual Art in Britain 1964-1979* at Tate Britain (2016) and *Art & Language Uncompleted* at MACBA in Barcelona (2014-15) in my second chapter.

This surge in interest also coincided with changing trends of critical analysis. The writer, Paul O'Neill describes how by the end of the 1970s, the role of the exhibition maker had changed from an activity primarily involving the organisation of discrete artworks to an 'extended organisational and discursive practice' where there was a greater emphasis on the framing and mediation of art rather

³⁷ Andrew Wilson, 'Everything and Nothing', *Art Monthly* 234, March 2000, 5

than its production.³⁸ This involved a ‘demystification’ of the role of the curator where their processes and decisions were made visible and they became a ‘proactive agent in the communication chain’ from artist to audience, increasingly named alongside the artists whereas before they were largely invisible. By the 1990s, the boundaries of what constituted the role of the curator had been extended to one of ‘supervisibility’ so that we now assume rather than question that an exhibition has been curated. This has coincided with the emergence of international meetings, curatorial summits and biennials in the mid- to late 1990s. In addition to this the ‘Archival Impulse’ described by Hal Foster in his 2004 essay of the same name, saw artists in the 1990s utilise the archive as a ‘gesture of alternative knowledge or counter-memory’.³⁹ Foster describes how work of contemporary artists such as Tacita Dean, Sam Durant and Thomas Hirschhorn ‘assumes anomic fragmentation as a condition not only to represent but to work through, and proposes new orders of affective association, however partial or provisional.’⁴⁰ Thus the re-display of conceptual art from the 1960s and 1970s accompanies a general trend towards the use of archival material in exhibitions and the move since the 1970s to a more discursive practice in curating where the curator takes on the role of creator and mediator. Lastly, there has been an emergence of ‘exhibition histories’ as an area of study, which examined curatorial innovations and models from the past. These changes deserve further analysis and for this reason, I argue that it is more useful to look at the framing and definition of the artwork that is included in these exhibitions rather than at the individual artworks or the artists involved. This is not to say I will ignore an analysis of individual artworks but rather that exhibition histories are of equal importance. In addition to this, it is also evident that exhibition titles and trends in curating have reflected the themes and agendas of contemporary art.

Examples of the change in agenda in contemporary art include the exhibition, *Open Systems: Rethinking Art c. 1970*, curated by Donna DeSalvo at Tate Modern in 2005. In this exhibition, one can

³⁸ Paul O’Neill, *The Culture of Curating and the Curating of Culture(s)* (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2012), 22

³⁹ Hal Foster, ‘The Archival Impulse’, *October* 110 (Fall 2004): 4

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 5

see how the period is utilised to demonstrate connections with the contemporary. The show incorporated works by Carl Andre, John Baldessari, Lygia Clark, Gilbert & George, Dan Graham, VALIE EXPORT and Robert Smithson, amongst others, and its accompanying catalogue featured essays by Mark Godfrey, Boris Groys and Johanna Burton. This was interesting as it avoided defining conceptual practice by geography or temporality and instead approached the exhibition thematically, using systems and networks as connecting factors. Its themes related instead to contemporaneous ideas of the network and cybernetics, yet at the same time, by centering the exhibition around the date 1970 and focusing primarily on major, known artists using systems theory suggests a re-presentation rather than a re-evaluation of what encapsulated conceptual art. At the back of the catalogue is an 'Archive' where the writings of Mel Bochner, Jack Burnham, Dick Higgins, Donald Judd, Thomas Kuhn, Sol LeWitt, Mario Pedrosa, are reproduced – all of these texts are on media and systems theory ranging from 1962 to 1968. Thus, this exhibition demonstrated a recent trend for exploring technological and media histories of the 1960s and in particular of cybernetics, networks and behavioural theory .

Other recent publications which revisit technological and media histories of the 1960s include Eve Meltzer's 2015 book *Systems That We Have Loved: Conceptual Art, Affect, and the Antihumanist Turn*, which considers conceptual art in relation to affect theory and to structuralism, and Pamela M. Lee's *Chronophobia* in which she describes the 'chronophobic impulse' popular in surveying art and art criticism in the sixties as an obsessional uneasiness with time and its measure. As such, *Chronophobia* attempts to reconstitute the question of time to that of the 1960s by exploring the emergence of new communications and information technologies in the postwar era. These attempts at restitution and demarcation of art in the 1960s sit alongside a question of locus of origins - a theme which chapters three and four of this thesis will explore more fully by tracing the various art colleges and teachers across Britain who were encouraging or transmitting ideas of conceptual art practice.

Other attempts to define conceptual art have also been made through looking at its geographical location. For example, in *Global Conceptualism: Points of Origin, 1950s-1980s* at Queens

Museum of Art, New York in 1999, the directors of Queens Museum, Luis Camnitzer, Jane Farver and Rachel Weiss, attempted to ‘document conceptualism in art as a worldwide phenomenon originating independently in many cases in response to specific local conditions.’⁴¹ The exhibition covered the period from the late 1950s to the early 1980s as the time of ‘conceptualism’ and thus set a broader parameter than other exhibitions, that have revisited this period. It differentiated ‘conceptual art’ as an essentially formalist practice in the wake of minimalism from ‘conceptualism’, which they argue, was a broader attitudinal expression that broke down the role of the art object and imagined the possibilities of art via the social, political and economic realities within which it was being made.⁴² This incorporation of conceptual art into post-minimalism is unclear and, I would argue, ambiguous territory. In other surveys, conceptualism is not purely contained to art but extends to literature, film and other disciplines as well as associated with more recent forms of conceptual art. The exhibition defined its purpose as to demonstrate that conceptualism was not just a product of Western society – America and Europe – but was occurring in Latin America, South and Southeast Asia and the Soviet Union, amongst other places. Although the reevaluation of conceptual art from a non-Western perspective is important, the designation of exhibition thematics following nations is problematic as it designates style upon geographic location thus reducing its complexities and downplaying the interplay which occurred between various locations. As Tony Godfrey wrote in *The Burlington Magazine*, ‘The final impression is of an exhibition that is correcting the old story rather than providing a new one.’⁴³

The demarcation of art under the nationality of ‘British’ as a means of definition therefore also deserves further explanation in relation to the title of this thesis in relation to its choice and necessity. The categorisations ‘Britain’ and ‘British’ are used throughout in order to describe those artists either born in Britain, or practicing for a large proportion of their career in Britain. When it was initially

⁴¹ Luis Camnitzer, Jane Farver and Rachel Weiss, *Global Conceptualism: Points of Origin, 1950s-1980s* (New York: Queens Museum of Art, 1999), VII

⁴² *Ibid*, VIII

⁴³ Tony Godfrey, ‘New York: Global Conceptualism’, *The Burlington Magazine*, volume CXLI, No. 1157, August 1999: 502

utilised, the concept of national identity was different to how it is now defined, used in the context of post-war Britain and pre-Globalisation thus its usage, or non-usage, needs to be redefined in relation to this thesis. Its usage is also complicated by conceptual art's internationalism: even if the artists covered in this thesis are considered 'British' or made Britain their home, 'Conceptual art drew much of its meaning from a social engagement that was often international in character.'⁴⁴ It may also refer to what is described as 'provincialism', a term I will discuss further in my fourth chapter but had a greater bearing on Britain and its art in this period.

Around 1972, there were a number of exhibitions which used 'Britain', 'British' or 'English' in their titles in order to define a particular style or ideology of art stemming from the UK. Examples of this are: *British Thing* at the Henie-Onstad Foundation in Hovikodden (1972); *A Survey of the Avant-Garde in Britain* at Gallery House in London (1972); *The British Avant Garde* at The New York Cultural Center in New York in 1971; and the British Council's *New English Enquiry: Road Show* (1971) at the Museo Nacional de Belles Artes in Argentina, which subsequently toured to Spain and the Netherlands. The William Blake quote at the beginning of the catalogue of the *New English Enquiry: Road Show* typifies how this 'Englishness' was viewed at the particular moment: 'The enquiry in England is not whether a man has talent and genius, but whether he is passive and polite and a virtuous ass and obedient to noblemen's opinions in art and science.'⁴⁵ In other words, a very quaint and polite form of art. Mirroring this in the introduction to *The New Art*, the curator, Anne Seymour writes: 'Britain is a quiet place to work, but New York, Dusseldorf, Paris and Turin are where they sell and display their ideas.'⁴⁶ Yet recently, Andrew Wilson has described the status of conceptual art in Britain as 'multifaceted and notably resistant to the historian's hand,' thus illustrating how incongruous the term 'Britain' has become within conceptual art practice.⁴⁷ Like the term 'conceptual' however, 'Britain' or

⁴⁴ Andrew Wilson, 'Everything and Nothing', 5

⁴⁵ *The New English Enquiry: Road Show*, (Argentina: Museo Nacional de Belles Artes, The British Council, 1971), 1

⁴⁶ Anne Seymour, 'Introduction', *The New Art* (London: Hayward Gallery, 1972), 5

⁴⁷ Andrew Wilson, 'Introduction', Wilson, A. (ed.), *Conceptual Art in Britain 1964-1979* (London: Tate Publishing, 2016), 11

‘British’ is used retroactively and as a historical term, which denoted a particular style at the time of the work’s original production. It therefore might now be used and understood differently.

Art & Language, *Art-Language*, and the ‘Verbal Impulse’

In chapter three of my thesis I utilise the term ‘verbalisation’ in connection to what theorists Charles Madge and Barbara Weinberger describe in their 1973 publication *Art Students Observed* as a ‘verbalising impulse’ in the art schools of the late 1960s and early 1970s.⁴⁸ In this section, I define why the concept of verbalisation is particularly important in relation to the group Art & Language by outlining the main components of their history, pedagogical context and output. As I return to Art & Language throughout my thesis – as a case study and as a hinge point for other case studies – I shall give a brief outline of the group’s history in this introduction.

Art & Language was started in Coventry in 1968 by Terry Atkinson, David Bainbridge, Michael Baldwin and Harold Hurrell. Though the four members had collaborated on various activities before this date, 1968 marked the moment when the group gave a formal identity to a discourse which had developed between them over the previous few years. At that time Atkinson was teaching at Coventry College of Art, Bainbridge was teaching at Birmingham College of Art (where Atkinson had also taught before moving to Coventry), Hurrell was a part-time lecturer in the sculpture department at St Martin’s College of Art, and then in the Fine Art department at Kingston-upon-Hull College of Art, and Baldwin had been Atkinson’s student at Coventry from 1964-67.

In 1967, Bainbridge and Hurrell had jointly staged an exhibition – *The Hardware Show* – at the Architectural Association in London, and continued to collaborate on other projects which orientated around a critique of modernised liberal culture when ‘Kinetic’ and ‘Cybernetic’ art had become

⁴⁸ Charles Madge and Barbara Weinberger, *Art Students Observed*, 209

fashionable in Europe and America. In the same year Baldwin was expelled from Coventry College of Art and Atkinson had met several American artists upon a trip to New York in the summer of 1967 including Joseph Kosuth, Robert Smithson, Carl Andre and Sol LeWitt, amongst others. Kosuth was, at the time, one of a group of artists associated with American dealer, Seth Siegelau, who are considered as foundational for conceptual art in New York. When Atkinson approached him to work with Art & Language he was seeking new collaborators as he felt the artists associated with Siegelau's group were not approaching conceptual art as he understood the term in their thinking and character.⁴⁹ Atkinson had also been interested and even influenced in Baldwin's student work and in May 1968 Baldwin joined the other three members in the formation of Art & Language and Precinct Publications, which published the first copies of *Art-Language*: the journal produced by the group from May 1969 to 1985. The intention of this journal was to give the discourse between the members a public platform in an artworld which was increasingly transatlantic.

The first issue of *Art-Language* thus reflected the influence of Atkinson's trip to the US by featuring three texts by prominent American conceptual artists: Sol LeWitt, Dan Graham and Lawrence Weiner. It was subtitled 'the journal of conceptual art', a title which was quickly dropped by the second issue when 'the collective quickly realised that its understanding of conceptual art was not compatible with what these American artists were doing'.⁵⁰ Yet Kosuth became increasingly involved in Art & Language and he appears as 'American Editor' on the masthead of the second and third issues of *Art-Language*.⁵¹ From 1969 to 1971, the four members of Art & Language produced texts which evolved from what Harrison and Orton have called a 'second order' discourse – a discourse which centred around the deconstruction of the specific circumstances of art at the time and to work

⁴⁹ Kosuth stated that he was looking for new colleagues in conceptual art in his text, 'Art after Philosophy' first published in *Studio International* in 1969, stating, 'artists often associated with me (through Seth Siegelau's projects) – Douglas Huebler, Robert Barry, and Lawrence Weiner – are not concerned with, I do not think, 'Conceptual Art.'

⁵⁰ Robert Bailey, *Art & Language International: Conceptual Art Between Art Worlds* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2016), 15

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

out a theory which would act as the art rather than as critical framework. Influenced by such philosophers as Thomas Kuhn and Ludwig Wittgenstein, conversation and discussion became their primary practice or media rather than professional or social aspects distinct from the work.

Other members of the group included Ian Burn and Mel Ramsden who had been working together since 1964 and had founded the Society for Theoretical Art and Analysis in New York with Roger Cutforth in 1967. Both Burn and Ramsden published texts in the second issue of *Art-Language* in February 1970. Another member was the then Assistant Editor of the magazine *Studio International*, Charles Harrison. Harrison had undertaken academic training as an art historian at Cambridge University and then at the Courtauld Institute of Art. In 1969, he met Atkinson and Hurrell and started to take responsibility for the preparation of Art & Language texts for publication. Although he continued to work for *Studio International* and attempted to integrate the group's texts into the magazine by 1972, he left London for Oxfordshire thus locating himself further from the London art world and closer to the Art & Language community. Around the same date the group expanded to the US and were exhibited in a number of national and international group and solo exhibitions including *Idea Structures* at the Camden Arts Centre in London (1970), *Information* at The Museum of Modern Art, New York (1970) and *The New Art* at the Hayward Gallery, London (1972).

At the same time, three of the members of Art & Language were employed at Coventry College of Art: Baldwin and Bainbridge part-time and Atkinson was made full-time. Harrison have written of this period from 1969 to 1972 that the 'need to sort out what was teachable in respect of art became practically indistinguishable within A & L from the project of theorising art itself.'⁵² This conflation of practice, theory and pedagogy resulted in the 'Art Theory' course at Coventry, taught by Atkinson and Baldwin, amongst others, which I will explore further in the third chapter of my thesis. In 1971, the 'Art Theory' course was dismantled and Baldwin and Bainbridge were dismissed.

⁵² Charles Harrison, and Fred Orton, *A Provisional History of Art & Language* (Paris: Galerie Eric Fabre, 1982), 26

Although Atkinson remained, the course by this point was largely non-existent. As a result, the group became increasingly dependent on the sale of their work in order to generate income rather than through teaching. Gallerists and dealers such as Daniel Templon, a Parisian art dealer; Swiss dealer Bruno Bischofberger; and Gian Enzo Sperone, an Italian art dealer, became interested and were responsible for launching their work into European and American markets. In addition to this, in 1972, they were included in major exhibitions such as *Documenta 5* and *The New Art* at the Hayward Gallery. However, this increasing artworld presence was accompanied by various attempts to bureaucratise Art & Language and an attempt to establish the group as a Limited Company. Harrison and Orton list these bureaucratisation attempts as follows:

Problems with Kosuth's entrepreneurship on his own behalf and at A & L's expense; with the distribution of funds (more often anticipated than received); with the self-curating functions required by participation(or non-participation) in exhibitions; with the need to curtail managerial aspirations on the part of some members at the expense of others; and so on.⁵³

The group continued to expand to the mid-1970s but by 1974-75, increasingly saw members leave or form side-organisations such as *The Fox* magazine in New York. However, the influence and presence of Art & Language from 1968 to 1975 is undoubtable with substantive contributions to the conceptual art movement and a wider conceptualist tendency in art, which has contributed to the contemporary practice of the present. Yet, despite their international presence in numerous exhibitions and publications from the late 1960s to the mid-1970s, their role and influence in both art pedagogy and conceptual art practice has been under-explored within a wider social and historical context.

I therefore use Art & Language to demonstrate how the expansiveness or openness of the definition of the avant-garde in this period contrasts with a more rigorous form of conceptual art practice in this era. In Britain, John Roberts writes, there was an limited development of modern art and therefore younger generations were critically revisiting the avant-garde to 'weigh up its merits and

⁵³ Ibid, 30

demerits for inclusion'.⁵⁴ For Art & Language as the art historian, Paul Wood, has written, 'the very openness of the avant-garde situation threatened to become its own confinement. Addressing this condition became the main preoccupation of the much expanded Art & Language group, active now on both sides of the Atlantic.'⁵⁵ This statement embodies many of the issues which my PhD explores, that is, this rigorous form might be labelled the 'discursive' or 'verbal' aspect, which aimed for a clearer interrogation of the production of art, its display, and circulation, as well as its relationship to a wider social context. It is therefore the collision of this 'expansiveness' of medium or inclusivity combined with a greater focus on social context and impact from the input of the wider humanities, which is at the base of my enquiry.

In addition to this, in this thesis I address how Art & Language relate to the wider problem of writing a history of conceptual art, which the art historian, Robert Bailey, has described as that of writing art history. Bailey argues that Art & Language were a group of artists who, 'prioritise the conceptual in art to an extreme degree', they therefore 'can be studied to better understand how art discloses (and conceals) ways of thinking.'⁵⁶ He continues that approaching their work with care provides reminders that 'like images, thoughts are materialised in art; that, like objects, ideas and theories get formed artistically; that like motifs and iconography, concepts become subject matter for works of art; and that, like art's visuality, its intellectuality needs to be squared with its own historical development as well as with the historical contexts that inform it and that it informs.'⁵⁷ He concludes, 'when art, conceptual or otherwise, is treated with these things in mind, much knowledge stands to be gained, particularly concerning the possibilities for thoughtful action that makes art possible.'⁵⁸

My thesis therefore uses Art & Language – their publication, *Art-Language* and their exhibition history – in order to address the issues inherent in conceptual art's definition. Through their output in

⁵⁴ Roberts, *Revolutionary Time and the Avant-Garde*, 126

⁵⁵ Wood, *Conceptual Art*, 49.

⁵⁶ Bailey, *Art & Language International: Conceptual Art Between Art Worlds*, 10

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

this period, I explore the changing status of text-based conceptual practice in national and international exhibitions as well as the history of art pedagogy in Britain from the mid-1960s to late 1970s. I propose that through their work, we can address the networks, legacies, inclusions and exclusions of this history and reflect on a wider definition of conceptual art as a particular moment within set dates as well as a point of rupture in an otherwise considered ‘continuum’ between modernist and postmodernist or contemporary art. For although I explore *Art-Language* extensively in the second chapter, in others, I use the magazine as a point of influence as well as rejection, looking to other artworks and magazines, which were produced prior or concurrently to *Art-Language*. These include, as mentioned above: *Studio International*, edited by Peter Townsend (1965-1975) and then Richard Cork (1975-1980); *Silans* magazine by Barry Flanagan, Rudy Leanders and Alistair Jackson; *Control* by artist Stephen Willats; *Women & Work* by Mary Kelly, Kay Fido Hunt and Margaret Harrison; and *Post-Partum Document* by Mary Kelly. In addition to this, I look at art-school magazines produced in the 1970s as the result of an Art & Language ‘diaspora’. These include *Ratcatcher*, *Issue*, *Ostrich* and *The Newport Group* in order to evaluate how issues of discursivity, recursivity and intersubjectivity were reflected in artist-produced publications and text-based artworks, reflecting a sociality in conceptual art from the 1960s through to the 1970s, which has thus far been largely ignored. Lastly, it is important to assert that my position towards Art & Language’s practice is not done without criticality. Rather, I see them as an important, even integral, component of the history of text-based practice in this era.

Chapter Breakdown

In my first chapter, I explore exhibitions and their reception by the press and the public in and around the year 1972. I do this in order to demonstrate that it was at this point, rather than in more recent exhibitions, that conceptual art became more defined with relation to its institutional contexts. This institutionalisation contributed towards the legacy of British conceptual art and its relationship to both an international art scene and a wider history of conceptual art. I argue, however, that the institutionalisation of conceptual art did not coincide with its ending, as some have implied, rather it took on different priorities and permutations. I use examples of major national and international exhibitions as a way to exemplify this theory including *The New Art* at the Hayward Gallery in London and *Documenta 5* in Kassel, Germany, *The English Avant-Garde* and *The Avant-Garde in Britain*, both in 1972 as well as the 1976 exhibition by Mary Kelly, Kay Fido Hunt and Margaret Harrison, *Women & Work*, at the South London Gallery and finally, Mary Kelly's *Post-Partum Document*. Within this, I look at how Art & Language's magazine *Art-Language*, evolved from a platform for the group's tautological explorations in the late 1960s to large-scale gallery installations which encouraged an intersubjectivity with the viewer in the early 1970s. By comparing this with *Women & Work*, I analyse how these large-scale exhibitions also enacted exclusions and how the collective authorship and intersubjectivity of both artworks further emphasised this exclusion. I look at the years 1972 through to 1976 as years in which conceptual art underwent a level of reflexivity and transformation towards more socially and politically open-ended projects and finally, towards the feminist movement at the end of the 1970s.

In my second chapter I address text-based conceptual art and artists' magazines with relation to its curatorial and institutional framing. I ask how these works should be interacted with – as objects to be looked at or as texts to be read – and how this effects their categorisation and definition via medium specificity. I explore the legacy and definition of conceptual art in Britain through its exhibition history and argue that the traditional formats of exhibition display have interacted with the format of the publication, making the work's reading both partial and fragmented. This, in turn,

reflects conceptual art's relationship to modernism: as the fragment relating to the whole. I therefore argue for a more active way of looking and reading, understanding conceptual art through its mediating exhibition history as way of creating a dialogue between frequently fragmented and abstracted elements rather than a coherent whole. By using the recent example of conceptual art's framing within the exhibition *Conceptual Art in Britain 1964-1979* at the Tate Britain (2016) and the 2014-15 exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Barcelona, *Art & Language Uncompleted*, I ask how recent exhibitions have explored these issues and what they reveal more widely about the history of conceptual art in Britain.

In the third chapter I explore the idea of the student magazine as a space of pedagogical discourse and critique due to what has been termed a 'verbal impulse' in the art colleges. This is in opposition to dominant narratives which centre on the development of the 'group crit' and the 'performance lecture' at St Martin's College of Art in the mid-1960s. Using the Advanced Sculpture Course at St Martin's as well as the Groundcourse at Ealing College of Art, which extended into Ipswich College of Art, as well as the 'Art Theory' course at Coventry in the mid to late 1960s, I explore how these experimental and discursive courses might have resulted from greater pedagogical freedom as well as changes to the art education system in 1960s Britain. Yet, I relate this greater freedom in experimentation and use of media to a 'liberal' art education, which was in turn criticised by artists working with texts and publications such as *Art-Language*. I argue that this verbalisation impulse, which is largely discounted in the major pedagogical histories, resulted from a crisis of the role of the art student when confronted with conflicting routes and roles: between of formalism and more avant-garde practices. Looking specifically at *Silans* magazine, produced at St Martin's College of Art in 1964-65 by Barry Flanders, Rudy Leanders and Alistair Jackson, *Control* magazine started by artist Stephen Willats at Ipswich College of Art (1965-ongoing) and at the early copies of *Art-Language* magazine produced at Coventry College of Art (1969-1985), I analyse how the printed page provided an alternative pedagogical space for discourse.

The fourth and final chapter connects these three chapters with the radical art school magazines produced in the mid-1970s in Britain as alternative sites for discourse as well as the critique of art and art pedagogy in the 1970s. It uses *Issue* magazine from Nottingham Trent Polytechnic, *Ostrich* magazine, from the Royal College of Art, *Ratcatcher* produced out of Hull College of Art and the publications produced by the Newport Group at Newport College of Art in South Wales from 1970 to 1973 as case studies in order to demonstrate the simultaneous continuation and split of analytical conceptual art of the late 1960s – from a limited social sphere into a more socially-engaged sphere. For although, as I argue, conceptual art was already verbal/discursive in the 1960s, post-1972 projects became more orientated around social and political research rather than the internal discussions of a group. By not focusing on a particular narrative or chronology, I demonstrate how legacies of conceptual art have been formed both at the time of its original dissemination and more recently, and how exhibition and institutional histories frame their participants and construct these narratives in an era when the intention was frequently the opposite. It also explores ideas of the ‘provincial’ in relation to London and Britain in this period, echoing the relationship of these small art school magazines to the prominence of *Studio International* magazine. I conclude with thinking through how these more radical and social publications opened up a space for both dialogue and deconstruction, as well as social practice by reflecting and transforming earlier forms of conceptual art practice.

Chapter 1: Public and Private Dialogues: Producing and Exhibiting Text-based Art in and around 1972 and the move to Research-based Practice

Introduction

This chapter takes as its theme the national and international reception of conceptual art from 1972 to 1976. By using a number of significant international exhibitions and publications, I explore the various attempts to define conceptual art around this date. In doing so, I argue that these exhibitions and publications circulated a prescriptive aesthetic of conceptual art which prioritised the experimentation of media and the documentation of process rather than more discursive approaches as typified by text-based practice and artists' publications. Thus, by placing conceptual art's definition within an expansive category of medium specificity and experimentalism rather than in its criticality, this exhibition history has largely ignored the social and contextual underpinnings of conceptual art practice, which although had already started in the 1960s, became increasingly important and evident in conceptual art produced in the 1970s.

In order to demonstrate my argument, I use *The New Art* at the Hayward Gallery in London and its accompanying archives as a case study. I also look to the following exhibitions; *The Survey of the Avant-Garde in Britain* at Gallery House in London (1972); *The British Avant-Garde* at the New York Cultural Center (1971) and *Documenta 5* at the Fridericianum, Kassel, Germany (1972). I then contrast these exhibitions with the display of Art & Language's first 'Indexing' projects, which began in 1972 at *Documenta 5* in order to argue that at the same time that conceptual art was being incorporated into the space of the gallery and publications, Art & Language were attempting to make their social, discursive and open-ended, yet largely introspective approach, more publicly accessible. The group's changing moniker and lack of concrete membership also suggested a fluidity of authorship with their temporary

name 'The Art & Language Institute', utilised for *Documenta 5*. Yet this change of title demonstrated a questioning of the function of a name as well as a form of art production based on collectivity and discussion between members of the group as well as their audience.

Lastly, I will explore two exhibitions from the early to mid-1970s in relation to Art & Language's Indexing projects: *Women & Work: A Document on the Division of Labour in Industry*, 1973–1975 at the South London Gallery in 1976 by Mary Kelly, Kay Fido Hunt and Margaret Harrison's and *Post-Partum Document* (1973-1978) by Mary Kelly at the Institute of Contemporary Art in London in 1976. These artworks and exhibitions, like Art & Language's Indexing projects, approached conceptual art practice through an intersubjectivity – via collective working and by the use of dialogue with and between participants. Yet, the orientation of these practices were more aligned with the contemporary understanding of socially-engaged practice, as defined by such theorists as Claire Bishop, and used the collection of data and texts from the sites of the work-place and the home rather than the internal dialogue of the group. I argue, however, that it is important to consider these artworks with the same ideological grounding as the art produced in the mid-1970s often enacted a discursive or recursive relationship with earlier forms of conceptual art practice. Both utilised forms of collectivity and collaboration to question the production of an art object, frequently using similar systems-based aesthetics as well as the collection of language and data for analysis by artist and audience. I conclude by stating that the reception which these artworks received at the time was integral to their subsequent impact and legacy and how we define conceptual art practice more generally. Thus, in order to explore the area in question, it is important that we return to the archives relating to their organisation and reception.

The New Art at the Hayward Gallery, London, 1972

The exhibition, *The New Art*, took place at the Hayward Gallery in London in late 1972. It was the first in what was intended to be a series of exhibitions on the theme of ‘new’ British art over a number of years and is understood to be a significant and defining moment in conceptual art’s exhibition history. Organised by Anne Seymour, who was also Keeper at the Tate Gallery, along with Art & Language’s editor and the former assistant editor of *Studio International*, Charles Harrison, these exhibitions would cumulatively present a running survey of new British art. Despite this, only one exhibition out of the intended series was produced in the end.

The New Art opened just a few months after *Documenta 5* and featured many of the same artists exhibited at Kassel with its original intention to survey British art every two years, presenting a selection of conceptually-defined artworks by British practitioners under the rubric of showcasing selections from current activity in art, thus mimicking *Documenta*’s more ambitious four-year international survey. In a letter from the Exhibitions Organiser at the Hayward, Nick Serota, to member of Art & Language and participating artist, Terry Atkinson, he wrote:

A brief note to thank you for helping us mount one of our most successful shows in recent years. It was seen by 17,000 people, but more than that, we were able to make a real contribution to a more widespread understanding of the art of today, thanks to Anne’s conviction and your active co-operation.⁵⁹

The letter demonstrated the exhibition’s success as well as its positive reception, defining its important role in contributing to an understanding of the ‘art of today’. Other letters from the Hayward Gallery archive, however, demonstrate a less favourable and more complex history of its organisation and reception, revealing instead the difficult position which the exhibition occupied in 1972: between the supposedly anti-aesthetic conceptual art being practiced by artists and that of the institutional space of

⁵⁹ The New Art, 1972, the Hayward Gallery Archive, Blythe House, Victoria & Albert Museum. ACGB/121/764 (1642): letters of organisation between Anne Seymour and Norbert Lynton; reviews of the exhibition; installation photographs, accessed November 2015

the museum or gallery with its history and bias towards painting and sculpture. Thus it demonstrated the tension inherent in exhibiting conceptual art in major institutions in Britain, where outdated modes of viewing and display still dominated, even as conceptually-oriented art was concurrently being accepted and positively reviewed elsewhere.

The exhibition brought together fourteen exhibitors under the rubric that the 'ideas and attitudes are equally if not more important than the media'.⁶⁰ Exhibited in *The New Art* were artists including Keith Arnatt, John Stezaker, Victor Burgin and Art-Language (noticeably they chose to be known under the name of the magazine rather than the group's name, Art & Language, in the catalogue), amongst others.⁶¹ The work of these artists was described by Seymour as 'often physically ephemeral or vestigial and thus presents special organisational difficulties and uncertainties'.⁶² She continued that the purpose of the exhibition was to 'inform and give pleasure to the public while providing a forum for as many artists as possible'.⁶³ The works on display were conceived and created specifically for the exhibition and Seymour stressed with recourse to the show's selection process that there had been very few exhibitions with 'mixed' artists rather than 'a particular type' of artist in London over the past decade.⁶⁴ The subtext of this statement implied that the old guard still dominated the institutions of art and that the 'new' British art, which had been developing over the last decade, had not as yet been represented or accepted in public exhibitions and, in particular, institutions in the UK. The use of the term 'mixed' also relates to definitions of media. For although the intention of the exhibition was to provide a survey of art whereby the ideas were as important as the media, I argue that media, as it was defined, still played an important aspect of the work's selection.

⁶⁰ Anne Seymour, 'Introduction', *The New Art*, 5

⁶¹ The full list of exhibitors were: Keith Arnatt, Art-Language, Victor Burgin, Michael Craig-Martin, David Dye, Barry Flanagan, Hamish Fulton, Gilbert and George, John Hilliard, Richard Long, Keith Milow, John Stezaker, David Tremlett

⁶² Seymour, 'Introduction' in *The New Art*, 4

⁶³ *Ibid*, 5

⁶⁴ *Ibid*.

The art historian William Wood has described how the tension between ‘Britishness’ and international conditions proved crucial to *The New Art*, writing that ‘no matter what identified or animated this global vision and these national characteristics, the implication was that the British audience had lost out on something.’⁶⁵ Despite Britain’s apparent lagging behind, Seymour faced difficulty convincing the Director of the Hayward Gallery, Norbert Lynton, to focus the show around work by new British artists. Archives of correspondence between Seymour and Lynton demonstrate that frequent compromises were made from each side in order to meet differing visions of what constituted ‘new British art’ or at least an idea of a British aesthetic toward which the exhibition aimed. An example of this is evident in another letter from Anne Seymour to Lynton in which Seymour makes clear her plans to execute an exhibition on a smaller scale than the original proposal of twenty-five to thirty artists. Seymour wrote that she was interested in showcasing a ‘generation’ of artists rather than conducting a wider survey of art in the period as she ‘felt that on balance greater punch could be packed and more publicity gained from emphasising the theme of new movements and possibilities than from making visually an academic point about the relationship between the new and the already established’.⁶⁶ She argued that if they decided to go with the originally conceived model of integrating new and more established artists in the exhibition ‘it would be extremely difficult to know where to draw the line – so many artists being relevant.’⁶⁷ She continues, ‘I felt this was probably a point which could be more usefully made in catalogue form.’⁶⁸ Seymour suggests that a mixture of artists of widely varying generations, as suggested by Lynton, would also ‘imply assumptions about their various merits in the context of art as a whole, whereas a narrow focus might prevent the unnecessary stigmatisation of that approach,’ writing that, ‘nothing could be more indigestible than a hurried rehash of the art history of the past few decades, but this would be extremely difficult to avoid

⁶⁵ William Wood, ‘Still you ask for More: Demand, Display and “The New Art”’ in Newman M., and Bird J. (eds.), *Rewriting Conceptual Art*, 66

⁶⁶ *The New Art*, 1972, ACGB/121/764 (1642); letters of organization between Anne Seymour and Norbert Lynton; reviews of the exhibition; installation photographs, accessed November 2015

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

in any show which tried to be representative.’⁶⁹ Finally, she argues that the alternative might mean ‘enlarging the range of the exhibition by including a special section of token examples of work by elderly heroes would be clumsy and not particularly helpful.’⁷⁰ She continues that conceptual art has become the ‘international cause celebre[...] of the period’, and that British conceptual artists have so far been mainly, ‘active underground or abroad’.⁷¹ The reasons for which, she states, are a failure to see that their ‘roots are in the right place’ and because, ‘their work has been hedged around the political attitudes’.⁷² In either case, she concludes, there is still much confusion surrounding this subject and as such she would like to use the show as an opportunity to clear such confusions.

Interestingly, despite Seymour’s insistence on presenting conceptual art to a British audience, she emphasised her reticence in defining it as a ‘conceptual’ art show as she suggests that the artists practicing ‘conceptual’ art would not define their practice as such. Rather, she was keen to stage a show which ‘examines the concepts which have led critics to dub the work of the artists who hold them “Conceptual”’, writing that the exhibition also intended to explore ‘other current ideas which seem to have been important during this period and potentially fruitful.’⁷³ Her requests were greeted with scepticism from Lynton who wrote back that the art exhibited in *The New Art* might have the problem of leaving the viewer with ‘not much to look at.’⁷⁴ Seymour rebuts Lynton’s doubt by listing the varieties of mediums and formats which the artists might work in:

Sculpture in various materials, permanent and transitory, wall and floor, (Long, Burgin, Tremlett, Craig-Martin, Brener, Stevens... live performance pieces (Gilbert & George, McLean, Breakwell); texts (Gilbert & George, Arnatt, Burgin, the Art & Language Group)... photographs by almost all artists and films and video tapes by a number of them.⁷⁵

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

She writes that she intends to include a special section on artists' films since they are hardly known at all in Britain and probably include 'some of the best abstract-figurative and surrealist work being done in this country.'⁷⁶ Lastly, and most significantly, Seymour responded to Lynton's fears that the exhibition will be 'shot down' by those 'invested in more traditional art forms,'⁷⁷ writing that this will no doubt happen and that there are 'plenty of established artists who will see this work as rubbish but their lack of comprehension seems to be to do with lack of familiarity with the subject', rather than its quality, arguing that critics and the public are in the 'same boat.'⁷⁸ She concludes however that, 'how can they really decide if the work stands or falls, if not by seeing it? At least such an exhibition should bring in qualified visitors from abroad, in that it seems generally to be held internationally that British artists are doing some of the best new work anywhere.'⁷⁹ Lynton's fear encapsulates a generational divide between artists who were practicing in formalist techniques and methodologies and those who had embraced the anti-art aesthetic of conceptual practice. In addition to this, Seymour's reply demonstrates an attempt to placate this fear by grounding conceptual art firmly in its visual and material elements thus defining it within the same paradigm as more traditional art practices.

Installation photographs of *The New Art* demonstrate that Norbert Lynton's fear of the lack of visual material in the show was unfounded: there was an abundance of sculpture, photography and large-scale installation with work by artists including works by artists Richard Long, Barry Flanagan and Keith Arnatt. Long's contribution, for example, *Three Circles of Stones* (1972) consisted of large concentric rings of monolithic stones of varying sizes, positioned one within another on the gallery floor. (Fig. 1) Having previously worked predominantly through the documentation of his walks in the English landscape, these works represent a transition of space for Long's practice – from external to internal – as the objects from these walks (stones, wood) were brought into the gallery space. Thus the viewer was forced to interact directly with these found objects rather than view them, mediated,

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

through photographic documentation. Their displacement from landscape to gallery also represented a larger shift in the incorporation of conceptual art into the institution.

In Flanagan's installation he revisited an earlier work, *Hayward I* (1969), which consisted of scattered ropes installed in a room, while his *Hayward II* consisted of 'a smaller room installation made up of lengths of wood (the same lengths as the ropes in the earlier installation), scaffolding, stuffed-cloth columns and a wall covered in a reflective and distorting mirror foil.'⁸⁰ (Fig. 2) Alongside this installation he also showed three films for three hours each Tuesday and Thursday of the exhibition: *Line on Holywell Beach*, *Atlantic Flight* and *Sand Girl*. Displayed around the walls of the gallery was Arnatt's artwork, *An Institutional Fact* (1972), which consisted of photographs which depicted the museum guards at the Hayward, thus providing reflection on the structure of the institution and the labour within them. (Fig. 3) The mundanity of these photographs questioned the purpose of art to entertain, to transform, or even to document. The potency or individuality of the subject is also diffused by staging each one in the same stance, same uniform and each of these works utilised the space of the gallery rather than producing objects which might be intended for a gallery. Furthermore, as the works on display were not simply presented but commissioned from the artists following studio visits their installation reflected Seymour's transformed role from Tate Keeper to Curator.

The accompanying catalogue acted as extension to the exhibition for while some of the installed works were reproduced in the catalogue, other artists wrote texts either specifically for this format or ones which had previously been published or exhibited elsewhere. For example, in Arnatt's catalogue essay he begins with the question, 'Is it reasonable to ask every speaker's utterance, "Is it serious?"' The essay is taken from a text written by Arnatt entitled 'ART AND EGOCENTRICITY – a perlocutionary act?', which was first exhibited by the Tate in 1972. It takes as its premise the field of linguistics and the deconstruction of language, as was a common tool in conceptual art in this period,

⁸⁰ Clarrie Wallis, and Andrew Wilson, (eds.) *Barry Flanagan: Early Works 1965-1982* (London: Tate Publishing, 2012), 143

and the assertion that meaning in language comes through the speaker's intention. The text demonstrates this in the following quote: 'how someone is identified as an artist, through their assertion that "they are an artist" or, producing 'artworks' in a currently acceptable style, providing they are 'successful' (within their own terms of reference)'.⁸¹ Arnatt continues with self-reflection and irony, 'I may even be asked, and agree, to exhibit these 'works' in a gallery', thus like Art & Language's and Bruce McLean's 'retrospectives', the institution is utilised but undermined.

The artwork Arnatt selects for the catalogue is the photograph of the words 'Keith Arnatt is an Artist' pasted directly across the wall of a gallery. Of this work he writes:

The intended effect of my telling you that I am an artist would be then, on Grice's modified definition, to get you to believe that *I* believe that I am an artist – *still* a perlocutionary effect.⁸²

While Arnatt's work explored the nature of art and its production through language which questions the primacy of the object and prioritises concept instead, Flanagan and Long created installations by juxtaposing a variety of media: found objects, film, photography and light, thus demonstrating the variety of media considered conceptual art in the early seventies and equally, its divergent pathways and lack of definition by this point. This is demonstrated further in the catalogue by Seymour writing that after six or seven years there was still a sort of 'mystification surrounding the kind of work which has recently extended the historical continuum of art a little further.'⁸³ She writes that the main characteristics of this kind of work is that it does not presuppose the traditional categories of painting and sculpture and instead, it might follow the format of such media as written material, philosophical ideas, photographs, film, sound, light, the earth itself, the artists themselves and actual objects. However, the main aspect of this work was that the ideas and attitudes are equally if not more important than the media concluding: 'I felt that if I could explore and collect together some of the criteria concerned I would be making a more useful contribution than I would by attempting an all-

⁸¹ Keith Arnatt, 'Excerpt from 'ART AND EGOCENTRICITY – a perlocutionary act?', *The New Art*, 11

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ Seymour, 'Introduction', *The New Art*, 5

over view of an incredibly diverse situation.⁸⁴ Lastly, she refers to the art exhibited as having made an uncomfortable bed for itself in art schools in Britain but she writes that there was a lack of representation in its more radical forms in public museums and art galleries. She emphasises the particular timing of the exhibition as necessary at this point writing that if they left it any longer it might mean seeing these ideas in a purely historical context. As it is she writes ‘it looks like we are catching things at a moment of rethinking, expansion and change.’⁸⁵ Thus, *The New Art* exemplified an attempt by a major exhibition to exhibit and reflect on new art produced in Britain in recent years but in doing so, simultaneously demonstrated the lack of clarity of what this art consisted of and how it should be displayed or received by audiences. Its importance however, lies with its context as one of multiple exhibitions which attempted to define conceptual art in and around 1972.

Reviews of the exhibition in the press were varied. While the critic, Richard Cork, described his pleasure at seeing these works in a public museum writing that for the first time ‘London is able to see the full range of radical development which still remains sadly undiscussed outside of the enclosed world of specialist magazines’, he writes of Art & Language’s theoretical contribution that it impinges directly upon his own function, as critic.⁸⁶ Writer Nigel Gosling, however, describes the work in the show as ‘slightly prim’, ‘austere’, ‘constrained’ and lastly ‘English’, complaining that the only artist to use colour in the show is Flanagan writing ‘We are in the black-and-white world of the classroom or laboratory.’ He concludes:

The layman may be puzzled by the technical terms and unimpressed by the experiments, some of which do appear rather childlike: and he may – as I do – doubt whether an art gallery is at all an appropriate place to demonstrate them.⁸⁷

Thus both Cork and Gosling question the suitability of placing art which utilises text, documentation and systems of data analysis in the location of a gallery. Yet, critic Rosetta Brooks argues that it is

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Richard Cork, ‘Brave New Voices at the Hayward’ in *The Evening Standard*, August 11, 1972

⁸⁷ Nigel Gosling, ‘British Brain-bashers’, *The Observer*, 20 August, 1972

precisely this rejection of the ‘problematic issues which in the past have confined art activity to lack of unified meaning and function’ which defines *The New Art*. The same year, Brooks co-curated another exhibition which focused on the new conceptual art being practiced in Britain: *A Survey of the Avant Garde in Britain* at Gallery House in London.

A Survey of the Avant-Garde in Britain at Gallery House, London, 1972

From August to October 1972, *A Survey of the Avant-Garde in Britain* at Gallery House in London attempted to define ‘new’ or avant-garde art practices in Britain. *A Survey of the Avant-Garde in Britain* was a three-part show consisting of a series of temporary and more permanent exhibitions of some of the most exciting practitioners working in British art in this period. Gallery House was located in a former abandoned mansion. Now owned by the Goethe Institute at 50 Princes Gate, South Kensington, London, Gallery House started in 1972 when the Institute’s Director, Klaus Schulz, turned to the German framer and gallerist, Sigi Krauss, to organise an exhibition and event programme for the space, which Krauss co-ran with Rosetta Brooks. (Fig. 4) Over the next year it ran a series of radical exhibitions, events and publications, eventually closing due to lack of funding. However, within this short timeframe its approach to exhibition and events programming as an artists-run space was both radical and significant. (Fig. 5)

In 2016, Raven Row Gallery in London staged an archival exhibition of *A Survey of the Avant-Garde in Britain* curated by Antony Hudek and Alex Sainsbury. The accompanying booklet for the show, *This Way Out of England: Gallery House in Retrospect*, describes Krauss and Brooks’ programme as marked by an embrace of heterogeneous styles and media. (Fig. 6, 7, 8, 9) Detailing these media as ‘from film and video to performance, installations, poetry and music’, the co-authors of the booklet, Hudek and Sainsbury, write that due to this unconformist, radical approach to exhibition-making it quickly became the ‘uncontested *enfant terrible* of the London art world’ continuing ‘in stark contrast to

established venues such as the Hayward Gallery, the Serpentine, the ICA and the Whitechapel, Gallery House hosted artists at the very start of their careers, or artists who worked out of the mainstream of the art market.⁸⁸ The large exhibition space at Gallery House was designed to accommodate three solo shows at any one time with the press release for the gallery describing how there will also be a bookshop for ‘art catalogues, books and magazines not readily available in London.’⁸⁹ In addition to this, the gallery aimed to hold lectures and discussions by visiting artists, writing that ‘the aim of the gallery is to remain flexible to the needs of both artists and public thereby fulfilling an important function as a focal point for art activities.’⁹⁰ Krauss and Brooks described the objectives of Gallery House as follows:

To be a FREE Gallery, without censorship, without commercial interests, without submission fees. This is so, because we want to give artists the best possible situation in which to demonstrate or show work. Also this gives the public a better chance to understand what the artists wish to communicate.⁹¹

Although *A Survey of the Avant-Garde in Britain* has been compared to *The New Art* due its similar intentions – to provide a recent survey of current art practice in Britain focusing largely on conceptually-orientated art – its contents and framing differed significantly. In the general notes for *A Survey of the Avant-Garde in Britain*, it describes how after each of the sections photographic documentation was to be mounted in the gallery so that by the end of all three there would be complete documentation of the entire exhibition. The contents of the exhibition, and accompanying catalogue, mirrored this temporal collapse with the introduction, written by Brooks, describing how the work would aim ‘towards achieving a grasp of the predicament of the *avant-garde* and understanding the situation I would take to be antecedent to changing the situation for any purposeful action in

⁸⁸ Antony Hudek and Alex Sainsbury, *This Way Out of England* catalogue (London: Raven Row, 2017), 3

⁸⁹ Gallery House Press Release, Back up material for John Blandy’s thesis on Gallery House, 1971-73, uncatalogued materials, Tate Archives, Box 1.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Material relating to the exhibition ‘The Avant-Garde in England’, 1972, Gallery House, accessed April 2017 at Raven Row Gallery, London.

contemporary art.⁹² She writes that the advent of analytical and theoretical art is perhaps the ‘outset of a more critical art activity’ concluding that perhaps it is too early to ‘decide whether art is capable of sustaining a singular function and of developing as a purely theoretical area of enquiry (*theoretical art*) or whether this is more simply a temporary ‘sorting out’ period (*analytical art*).’⁹³ She writes that this duality of opinion is perhaps ‘indicative of the persistence of the “myth of the *avant-garde*”, though I suspect that we are currently witnessing the last of the *avant-garde*.’⁹⁴ Thus, unlike *The New Art*, the exhibition title and Brooks’ comments suggests that this was the end to a particular era of conceptual art and the beginning of another rather than a representation of ‘new’ art and a closure of that particular period of conceptual art.

The exhibition featured works by artists John Latham, John Stezakar, Ian Breakwell, Victor Burgin, The Newport Group (Peter Berry, Paul Wood and Kevin Wright), amongst others, and attracted much attention from the Press. For example, the critic, Richard Cork, wrote in his article, ‘Last Stop for the Avant-Garde?’:

How can any generation of young artists think of themselves as innovators if they conform to a platform of self-conscious pioneering which sketches back uninterrupted over the last century... Only one consideration prevails us from doing so: the undeniable fact that the finest contemporary work actually does thrive on a concerted attempt to analyse the purpose and meaning of art itself.⁹⁵

Caroline Tisdall, also reviewing the show in the *Guardian*, wrote that it was ‘oddly housed under the wing of the German Government’s Goethe Institute’ with some money from the Arts Council and that it ‘provided a platform that was often messy but very much needed, and which could have grown into an essential collection of activities under one umbrella.’⁹⁶ It is therefore evident that the critics acknowledged its disruptive and sometimes incoherent nature but also recognised its importance at this

⁹² Rosetta Brooks, *A Survey of the Avant-Garde in Britain Vol. 2* (London: Gallery House, 1972), 1

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ Richard Cork, ‘Last Stop for the Avant-Garde’, *Evening Standard* (21 September 1972)

⁹⁶ Caroline Tisdall, ‘Avant-garde to all intents’, *The Guardian*, 25 August, 1972, 8

particular time. Comparisons of the two shows however, were also made at the time. One example of this is Brook's article, published in *Studio International* in October 1972 entitled 'The New Art', where she compared *The New Art* and *A Survey of the Avant-Garde in Britain*, describing both exhibitions as addressing the 'problematic issues, which in the past have confined art activity to lack of unified meaning and function'.⁹⁷ Thus, Brooks described the common interest of these two exhibitions as attempting to define a function for art within a conceptual framework inherited for a 'more sophisticated area of enquiry (be it logic, semantics, ideology, praxeology, behaviourism, politics, or whatever)', writing that this sort of art was the first attempt at conducting art practice in a completely rational way.⁹⁸

Gallery House's attempt to analyse what was understood as the current avant-garde might be considered more effective than *The New Art*. For while *The New Art* had more institutional backing and recognition, *A Survey of the Avant-Garde in Britain* took an inclusive rather than objective approach to exhibiting the work of conceptually-defined artists. An example of this is the priority given to work by artists which engaged in open-ended research projects, social and political issues and time-based practice, including Ian Breakwell, Stephen Willats and John Latham. These artists' practices sought to attempt to redefine art's function in terms of a societal value 'of use'.⁹⁹ Bishop describes how the post-'68 period in Britain saw attempts to rethink the artist's role in society. She writes how artists began to work directly in industry, documenting their time within these contexts or alternatively by utilising art for social and educational functions, like Willats' community projects where he would work in various residential areas. In these 'neighbourhood projects' Willats would work with participants in social problem areas and the inhospitable tower block complexes on the peripheries, he 'sifts through, discusses and arranges the materials that each group identifies as being especially meaningful for their

⁹⁷ Rosetta Brooks, 'The New Art', *Studio International* 184 (October 1972): 152

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

lives, assembling them in various documentation procedures.¹⁰⁰ Thus the artists selected often used open-ended projects which was reflected in the format of the exhibition.

By not replicating the model of exhibiting an object in a gallery space but rather through the approach of an ongoing discussion and through both individual and collective research, *A Survey of the Avant-Garde in Britain* took a short-lived yet accretive format, which evolved as an active archive. The format thus traced the point where conceptual art was in terms of its relationship to the institution. That is, not fully accepted, resolved, incorporated or integrated but nonetheless acknowledged as a relevant art format and presented at least as an anomaly or as an ‘in-between’ period in contemporary art. Brooks makes this evident in her review of the two exhibitions when she writes that various forms of conceptual art: Analytical, as practiced by Art & Language and the Newport Group (Peter Berry, Paul Wood and Kevin Wright); Theoretical, demonstrated in the work of artists John Stezaker, David Holmescroft and Jon Bird; and social and political conceptual art as demonstrated by Stephen Willats ‘perhaps represent the phase of readjusting the framework of art with the intention finally of giving to art some definitive function.’¹⁰¹ She concludes that *A Survey of the Avant Garde* attempted to ‘recover (or perhaps discover)’ some meaning in an activity ‘whose ultimate aim since the *avant-garde* first developed has been *meaningless*.’¹⁰² Thus, the term ‘avant garde’ is repurposed in order to align it to new art which was created through discourse with its participants, audience and surroundings rather than through a unidirectional aesthetic dissemination where an art object’s meaning was created through its circulation and critical response.

¹⁰⁰ Anja Casser and Philipp Ziegler, ‘Preface’, *Stephen Willats: Art Society Feedback* (Nürnberg: Badischer Kunstverein, 2010), 11

¹⁰¹ Brooks, ‘The New Art’, *Studio International*: 153

¹⁰² Brooks, ‘Introduction’, *A Survey of the Avant-Garde in Britain*, 2

The British Avant-Garde at the New York Cultural Center, New York, 1971

In another exhibition, a year earlier, the organisers also adopted the term ‘avant-garde’ in their title. *A Survey of the Avant-Garde in Britain*, curated by Charles Harrison (assistant editor of *Studio International* and member of Art & Language), in 1971 at the New York Cultural Center featured many of the artists in *The New Art* and *A Survey of the Avant-Garde in Britain* including Keith Arnatt, Barry Flanagan, Richard Long, as well as Terry Atkinson and Michael Baldwin from Art & Language, amongst others.¹⁰³ (Fig. 10) It was conceived following conversations between the Director of the New York Cultural Center, Donald Karshan, Charles Harrison from *Studio International* and artist Joseph Kosuth during a weekend spent at Karshan’s country house in upstate New York. Due to Harrison’s involvement the exhibition was a joint venture with the May 1971 edition of *Studio International* magazine, which consisted of specially commissioned work by artists ‘direct for the printed page.’¹⁰⁴ (Fig. 11) As a result, the work produced would be treated as an extension as well as a documentation of the exhibition and an extra edition of the magazine was printed as the catalogue, minus the magazine’s masthead. (Fig. 12)

The introduction to the magazine/catalogue is introduced by Karshan who writes how new and important art activity in America is frequently surveyed by several US museums but there is little effort to deal with art from other countries. He continues that an international exhibition of this calibre enables the American art enthusiast, critic and artist to ‘develop an increased understanding of avant-garde activities beyond his own borders at a period when art from America, and in particular from New York, has developed a certain position of international leadership.’¹⁰⁵ This introduction was followed by an essay by Harrison ‘Virgin soils and old land’ in which he questions the use of the term

¹⁰³ The featured artists were: Bruce McLean, Keith Arnatt, David Dye, David Tremlett, Roelof Louw, Barry Flanagan, Gilbert & George, Gerald Newman, Richard Long, Terry Atkinson and Michael Baldwin, Sue Arrowsmith, Colin Crumplin, Andrew Dipper, Victor Burgin.

¹⁰⁴ Tate Archives, Charles Harrison letters to Keith Arnatt and Sue Arrowsmith, Sept. 17, 1970, NYCC planning file, Harrison papers (1950s–1979) TGA 839/1/3/3.

¹⁰⁵ Donald Kashan, ‘The British Avant Garde’, *The British Avant Garde* (cat.) (London: Studio International, 1972), iv. The exhibition was the second in a series of exhibitions focused on the the ‘Avant Garde’ from countries outside of America, the first was ‘The Swiss Avant Garde’, 1971.

‘avant garde’, writing that in recent times a lot of ‘bad art’ has been allowed to hide behind this ‘sophisticated means of presentation.’¹⁰⁶ He continues that this is more apparent in the US as the ‘rewards and opportunities are greater’ compared to Britain where the majority of the artists derive the majority of their income from teaching in art colleges.¹⁰⁷ He writes that as well as a subsidy, teaching is considered by some artists to not only be a necessary function but an integral aspect of their work and uses Art & Language as an example of this: ‘in consciousness of the fact that those implications may/will have relevance in the long term in the cultural/political context.’¹⁰⁸

Notes for the exhibition relay the importance of the inclusion of Art & Language who were given their own room on the third floor of the New York Cultural Center with a number of their works exhibited including, *De Legibus Naturae* and text-based works, *Theories of Ethics* and *Handbook to Ingot*. In a letter from Harrison to Karshan dated 20th April 1971 he writes that *Handbook for Ingot* will be published jointly by the New York Cultural Center and the Art & Language Press. He continues ‘the AL boys suggest you sell as many as possible at a low price to be divided’ and emphasises that it’s a handbook rather than a work, writing that the ‘work’ is *Ingot*, which will also be included in the show but if anyone buys *Ingot*, they get a free handbook ‘of course.’¹⁰⁹ *Theories for Ethics*, Harrison writes, will be printed, signed and numbered out of an edition of 200 and continues that he will send this work in the container ‘which closes tomorrow’ but ‘in any case I will send a good Xerox copy as soon as possible, emphasising that it is a ‘very strong work: in my opinion the best thing that Atkinson & Baldwin have yet done.’¹¹⁰ He concludes that he has done everything possible to ensure that the final typescript is free of error or stylistic consistency thus indicating his own role as interlocutor in the

¹⁰⁶ Harrison, ‘Virgin Soils and Old Land’, *The British Avant Garde*, 4

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Tate Archives, Charles Harrison, Correspondence between Donald Karshan and Charles Harrison, April 20th 1971, TGA839/1/5/1/9

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

group and writes that the publication of this work will be ‘both unprecedented and highly prestigious (for NYCC of course!)’¹¹¹

In a letter from Amy L. Walsh to Charles Harrison dated June 8th 1971, she writes that Donald Karshan, the Director of the New York Cultural Center, has lent the Xerox copy of *Theories of Ethics* (due to be published in edition of two hundred) to the writer, Jack Burnham ‘a well-known critic of conceptual art’ for reference.¹¹² She continues that although Harrison requested the handbook’s ‘immediate return’, Mr Karshan felt that dealers and critics should have a portable version of the work without having to personally purchase the original work, concluding:

We would like your suggestions as to the solution of future situations with dealers and critics, something which he feels could be facilitated by the availability of Xerox copies to them.¹¹³

However, the suggestion by Karshan to reproduce works by Art & Language calls into question the issue of authenticity as well as the reception of the work, its categorisation and its circulation. If critics and dealers were happy to receive a duplicated copy of the work and did not see the value in an ‘original’, what did this mean more generally for the status of conceptual art in this period? Harrison, reacted strongly to the circulation of this Xerox, writing that he had told the members of Art & Language (Atkinson and Baldwin) about this incident and they were ‘equally alarmed’. Therefore, the question of value and categorisation is brought to light with those who circulated the work seeing it as lesser value than by those whom it was initially produced.

In another letter from Harrison to Karshan he detailed the anxiety that he had heard rumours that the ‘British show’ might be slotted into a ‘number of minor-country avant-garde shows’. This fear also related to the title of the show, ‘The British Avant-Garde’, which he says sounds ‘a bit like

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Tate Archives, Charles Harrison, Correspondence between Donald Karshan and Charles Harrison, June 23, 1970, TGA839/1/5/1/2

¹¹³ Ibid.

swinging London in a bowler hat’, indicating how out of date the ‘avant-garde’ sounded by this point.

A review by David L. Shirey reflected this fear:

The idea is basically a good one. Unfortunately, because of the poor quality of the art, its realisation has not been so good.

What looks avant-garde to Mr Harrison in England looks manifestly derriere-garde to some observers in the United States. Indeed, the exhibition looks sadly like a ho-hum re-run of this year’s Guggenheim International and it was generally agreed that that too looked musty.¹¹⁴

The difficulty of its organisation and institutional-positioning is further elucidated by letters where Harrison defends the exhibition in response to Shirey’s review, writing that “Minimal’, ‘Conceptual’ and ‘Earth Art’ are terms of American origin’ and that Mr Shirey ‘assumes that I ‘predicated’ the exhibition at the NYCC upon ‘English version’ of such manifestations.’ Harrison argues that these are not terms which he is ‘accustomed to use in relation to current art in England but insofar as they are applicable, the notion that the English have ‘assimilated them’ (whatever ‘they’ are) to ‘their’ detriment is, in the context of the exhibition at the NYCC, both absurd and inaccurate.’ He concludes that there is ‘no single work in the exhibition to which the term ‘minimal’ can reasonably be applied (in any historically credible use of the term).’¹¹⁵

The definition of this exhibition, and others, as ‘Avant-Garde’ is not insignificant. In Peter Bürger’s *Theory of the Avant Garde* he writes that by using the term ‘avant-garde’, ‘fragments of earlier theories are detached from their original context and fitted into a new one but the change in function and meaning which that fragment undergoes is not adequately reflected.’¹¹⁶ Thus by utilising this term, exhibition organisers and institutions simultaneously sought to frame new work while also relating it to an earlier period of art connected to modernism and as Brooks wrote in the introduction to *A Survey of the Avant Garde in Britain* catalogue, they were perhaps witnessing the last of the avant-garde. She argues,

¹¹⁴ David L. Shirey, ‘British Avant-Garde in 100-Work Show’, *The New York Times*, May 21st, 1971: 22

¹¹⁵ Tate Archives, Charles Harrison, Letter from Charles Harrison regarding David L. Shirey’s review of ‘The British Avant-Garde’ at The New York Cultural Center, 1971, TGA 839/1/5/4

¹¹⁶ Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), 15

that the broad definition and generalisation associated with the avant-garde ‘All is permitted as art’, condemns this term to be inconsequential to a critical development of contemporary art practice in the early 1970s.¹¹⁷ This, she argues, is accompanied by a public rejection of the notion of the avant-garde which has gained even more currency recently.

It is this inconsequentiality which I explore in the next section through artists attempting to give their work social and political purpose and thus distancing themselves from the label or concept of the ‘avant-garde’. Harrison himself described the show as, ‘largely an embarrassment’.¹¹⁸ The reason for which, he described, was that the selection looked incoherent, which he writes was ‘partly copied in *The New Art*, staged at the Hayward Gallery eighteen months later.’¹¹⁹ Harrison argued that by the time of *Documenta 5*, virtually all the artists invited had found dealers and as a result, in the late 1960s, there seemed to be an ideal constituency of potential participants and collaborators in ‘forms of art which signified opposition to authority... through a breach of formal and aesthetic decorum.’¹²⁰ Furthermore, although the exhibition at the New York Cultural Center was intended to act as a showcase for British conceptual art in an American institution with the eventual plan of its touring elsewhere, like *The New Art*, the show never ran past its first permutation.

Exhibiting Dialogue: Art & Language’s Indexing Projects

The presence of Art & Language in *The New Art*, *Documenta 5* and *The British Avant-Garde*, as well as their public reception, is relevant in exploring the ‘rethinking, expansion and change’ of conceptual art around 1972.¹²¹ Art & Language have said that the use of the name, ‘The Art & Language Institute’, which they used to exhibit their work, *Index 01* at *Documenta 5* in 1972 was ‘somewhat of a nine-day

¹¹⁷ Brooks, ‘Introduction’ in *A Survey of the Avant Garde in Britain*, 2

¹¹⁸ Charles Harrison, ‘The Late Sixties in London and elsewhere’ in *1965 to 1972 – when attitudes became form*, 9

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Brooks, ‘Introduction’, *A Survey of the Avant-Garde in Britain*, 2

wonder' at which they 'weren't very good at the formally constructed demands of such an enterprise.'¹²² The enterprise to which they refer related to their ever-growing international presence with, the 'ranks of the Art-Language group swelling' as evermore participants become involved with the group.¹²³

By 1972, Art & Language had expanded to over fifty international participants (this is a loose term and refers to contributors as well as meeting attendees rather than members) and thus the name, 'The Art & Language Institute', acted as both a brand to exhibit their work in *Documenta 5* and as an extension and self-institutionalising after the dismissal of Baldwin and Bainbridge from the 'Art Theory' course at Coventry College of Art in 1971. (Fig. 13) However, aside from this particular choice of name and their institutional context, the idea of an artists' group as an 'enterprise', or brand, calls into question the notion of authorship, how the group collaborated, as well as the public presentation of that collaboration in the context of a major international exhibition and lastly, what this meant for their practice.

Art & Language's 'Indexes', simultaneously acted as a means to contain and document the expanding group, as well as to actively search for readers and audiences outside of the growing collective, which consisted of a burgeoning international mass of participants. Yet this international expansion simultaneously took on the concerns of a wider art world and the exhibition of conceptual art practice. It attempted to make the increasingly sprawling internal dialogue of the group accessible and interactive with an external audience. Harrison has written of this:

So far as Art & Language were concerned, the ideal of an activity pursued in common was not to be realised in terms of the merely 'internal' relations of some democratically constituted group, any more than the suppression of the beholder was undertaken as a mere avant-garde necessity.¹²⁴

¹²² From personal interview between Louisa Lee and Mel Ramsden and Michael Baldwin from Art & Language over email, 22/08/2016

¹²³ 'Theoretical Art in Britain' in TGA 201719 Blandy Box 3 9, Uncatalogued Archives, Tate Archives. at this particular moment, writing that 'the entire approach represented by the work of 'analytical' artists is being institutionalised in the Art-Language Institute which is at this moment under formation'.

¹²⁴ Harrison, *Essays on Art & Language*, 60

The expansion of Art & Language at the beginning of the 1970s, Harrison writes, meant that by the summer of 1972, an ‘editorial board’ of ten were listed on the masthead of *Art-Language* magazine, and as a result it required a negotiable identity. By this point, the group included members in the USA, Australia and Yugoslavia and it was therefore a necessity to define their activity under a negotiable identity. This identity took various forms including the promotion of an ‘imaginary “Art & Language Institute” to which the *Documenta Index* was briefly and strategically attributed.’¹²⁵ This incident, however, was not in isolation and this choice of name at *Documenta 5* can be seen in relation to the formation in England of a limited company by Art & Language, which ‘never traded’ and the constitution in America of an ‘Art & Language Foundation Inc’.

After 1972, the expanded circle of participants embarked on collaborative ventures that generally involved spoken or written conversations with a group. Yet the collective enterprise which comprised Art & Language UK (A & LUK) and the American component, Art & Language New York (A & LNY), had become compromised by its own expansion, mutating from a functioning collaborative, (even if based on disagreement), to an organisation of a sprawling mass of voices and geographies with ties to various institutional contexts. A & LNY attracted grants and published *The Fox* and *Red Herring* magazine. *The Fox* only ran for three issues from 1975 to 1976 and was conceived of as a ‘forum for conversation about how best to organise artistic practice relative to the current state of the art world and was intended to welcome disagreement as part of a “robust collaboration” and called into question the relevance of conceptual art by focusing on art’s relationship to politics.’¹²⁶ (Fig. 19). Its contributors included, amongst others, Sarah Charlesworth, Kathryn Bigelow and Lizzie Borden, thus demonstrating an increase in the amount of women writers and editors in the expanding group. In Charlesworth’s article, published in issue three in 1976, ‘For Artists Meeting’, she writes:

¹²⁵ Ibid, 64

¹²⁶ Bailey, *Art & Language International: Conceptual Art Between Art Worlds*, 109

I suspect, and it is indeed one of the major points which I wish to stress in this paper, that rather than being 'non productive' in terms of arriving at clear-cut 'solutions', such discussions and collective struggle toward understanding are not only valuable and healthy in terms of personal growth and change, through a process of social interaction which occurs *outside of* (but not independent of) specific institutional forms. Perhaps *one* of the major factors which continually inhabits such natural and human processes of change is the very mode in which we are socially conditioned to think in such abstract and often ideologically separable terms as 'problems' and 'solutions'.¹²⁷

Thus, the American extension of the group expressed some of the concerns of collaborative practice which had been excluded by members in the UK.

In addition to the structures of the group and their dynamics, Bailey has written about the problems of Art & Language's installed texts at *Documenta 5*: that these texts were intended to open up dialogue with the public, blurring distinctions between its inside and outside and the collective and the art worlds in which they were situated.¹²⁸ Substantiating this, Paul Wood has written that by the time of the production of the Indexes the concept of Art & Language's practice had changed from a proposition or questioning of what constituted art and its accompanying structures to a conversation between its participants. This was reflected in the journal, *Art-Language*. He writes that the journal became a forum for those 'Proceedings' i.e. that wide-ranging conversation.¹²⁹ Hence, the content of the Indexes was the presentation of a 'body of work' by the participants of Art & Language up to that point, which allowed the viewer to read the work as a whole.

However, a conversation is always fragmentary and therefore the apparent contained unity of Art & Language's texts, displayed in the context of the institution is illusory. Supporting this, Harrison has argued that the 'effective identity of an enlarged Art & Language was discovered in the indexing-project itself, not as a kind of bureaucracy, but as an open set of ways and means of learning.'¹³⁰ He insisted that this learning was not through a dissemination of knowledge or information but via a

¹²⁷ Sarah Charlesworth, 'For Artists Meeting', *The Fox*, Issue 3 (1975), 40

¹²⁸ Bailey, *Art & Language International: Conceptual Art Between Art Worlds*, 51

¹²⁹ Paul Wood, 'Art & Language: wrestling with the angel', *Art & Language 1967 - 1993*, 17

¹³⁰ Charles Harrison, *Essays on Art & Language*, 64

means of contributing and sharing work, of 'going-on' as the group would term their practice. Similarly, Michael Baldwin has written on the subject of collaborative writing in *Art & Language* that it was not a kind of 'working-together-ism' but instead a 'matter of destroying the silence of beholding with talk and with puzzles and of forcing any and every piece of artistic 'work' out of its need for incorrigibility and into the form of an essay.'¹³¹ Thus, their collaboration constituted talking with each other, group discussion, a form of intersubjectivity and a dialogue.

Art & Language's works were from the start based on conversations rather than writing, thus they are open-ended, fragmentary, opposed to the linear form of modernism and without a designated ending. I argue, however, that although the intention and purpose of this work was situated in dialogue and learning, as proposed by Harrison and Baldwin, the attempt to contain and disseminate this dialogue through the Indexing format was misguided. For as we shall see in a moment, rather than encourage a wider audience and an increasing number of readers through conversation, the installation of the complex texts in such austere display units within the space of a gallery or museum only further increased the exclusivity and incomprehensibility of their work. The Indexing projects by *Art & Language* therefore reflect both the act of collaborative writing and of collective reading and therefore the changing role of the spectator. Reading the texts via a set of instructions on the wall implies a transference of labour from artist to audience which produces a collective dispersal of voices in authorship and audience as well as its reading and interaction. Writing and reading are usually understood as singular, solitary acts but as Ede and Lunsford have written, because the hierarchical mode of single authorship is dominant in our culture, dialogic collaboration can at least sometimes take the form of resistance and subversion.¹³² By this they mean that transferring labour to the audience and refusing the singular author, the work enacts a radical move to collective labour. This collective production and particularly, collective textual production, is important in understanding the

¹³¹ *Ibid*, 60

¹³² Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford, *Singular Texts/Plural Authors* (Carbondale & Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1990), 121

changing positions of artists and audiences and relates to a debate of privateness and publicness. Yet, I argue that this approach to intersubjectivity was largely lost upon its exhibition due to the traditional structures of display and viewing instructed by the gallery context and understood by the viewer. In addition to this, the complex and introspective language used by the group only further alienated audiences.

The idea of an artistic community, its internal relations and dialogue and its external public, is one which was also relevant to collaborative practices in conceptual art due to their often process-orientated approach. Harrison writes that Baldwin's idea of the public for conceptual art was that of an intellectually, not just culturally enfranchised one and that it was the dream of this public that 'sustained the critical enterprise of conceptual art, and it was to this wide and still largely imaginary community of participants that Art & Language addressed its *Documenta Index*, or *Index 01*, in 1972.'¹³³ Therefore, that *Index 01* was a means 'to map and to represent relations within a conversational world was in part consequence of the enlargement of Art & Language itself.'¹³⁴ The expansion of Art & Language thus resulted in the necessity of mapping this dialogue and its potential audience. Yet the public or audience to which it was addressing itself was ill-defined, ideal and even imaginary, and while critical feedback garnered from press reviews gives some idea of the Indexes' critical reception, an understanding of how visitors interacted with them would be useful in assessing the aims and intentions of this work.

Now in a private collection, *Index 01* was documented in Jef Cornelis' 1972 documentary film *Documenta 5*: covering the exhibition of the same title. (Fig 14, 15) This film uses original footage of the installed exhibition as well as interviews with the participating artists, contextualising the planning of the exhibition as well and giving a rare opportunity to see the artists in the space of *Documenta 5*, discussing their installed artworks, including the presenter interacting with *Index 01*. It is evident from

¹³³ Harrison, *Essays on Art & Language*, 61

¹³⁴ *Ibid*, 63

the film that the different artists involved in *Documenta 5* did not all agree on the format and purpose of ‘conceptual’ art. For instance, there is an interview with the American artist Lawrence Weiner who criticises Art & Language for only dealing with their own internal issues when he argues that instead they should be dealing with the issue of ‘communication’ and derides the installation’s lack of purpose thus identifying different priorities of artists during this period. The presenter, Georges Ade, who takes the viewer around the exhibition, spends some time in the ‘Art & Language Reading Room’ and announces that the work:

Gives the Art & Language people the chance to research whether there is such a thing as a basic opinion, a basic theory on art.¹³⁵

Presenting the artwork as a study room, or a place for public research rather than an art installation, Ade leads the camera through the artwork, demonstrating how the texts in the filing cabinets relate to the wall-texts. He demonstrates this by pulling out one of the drawers from the filing cabinets and says to the camera ‘you can see that under ‘A’, a text has been filed. This text is an introduction. Under the subsequent letters, there are texts on art, art philosophy, and very generally, on art theory.’¹³⁶ He observes that the texts filed under different letters are by different authors, mostly from Art & Language. In the files there are also explanations of the ‘schemes’ on the walls – symbols, letters and numbers and continues ‘the objective is to see whether all these texts, by different people, can be fused into one whole. Whether or not you can forge a sort of basic language or common language about art from these texts.’¹³⁷

Ade then interviews the then members of Art & Language (Terry Atkinson, Charles Harrison, Mel Ramsden, Joseph Kosuth and Michael Baldwin). One of the first members to be addressed, Atkinson, replies to Ade’s question of what the purpose of the artwork is: ‘To try to work out what are the basic common denominators of each individual within the group.’¹³⁸ In a different shot, Ade

¹³⁵ Jef Cornelis, *Documenta 5, 1972*

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

interviews Ramsden who talks more explicitly about the nature of the work in relation to what a work of art is, stating that the question of whether the work of art is something that can be clarified by etymology, philosophy and cultural anthropology ‘is not immediately going to be clarified by us’.¹³⁹ He states that the intention of the artwork is more to do with the group talking amongst themselves, about communication, comparing art to science and arguing that science has moved on from a monotheoretical viewpoint to one of interrelated viewpoints and indeterminacy and suggesting that art should do the same. Therefore, the work demonstrates a move to intersubjectivity by the group which by doing so sought to create wider societal change. Acting as both a way to contain and exhibit this expanding group, the Indexing projects also demonstrated the continuation of analytical conceptual art of the late 1960s through a collective discursivity and the format that this took when positioned in the context of an art gallery.

The Filing Cabinet as Conceptual Display Unit

The second Index by Art & Language, *Index 02*, was produced the same year (1972) and exhibited at *The New Art* exhibition at the Hayward Gallery, London, a few months after the first iteration of their artwork was exhibited at *Documenta 5*. (Fig. 17, 18) In *The New Art’s* accompanying catalogue the group introduces their work as characterised by the desire and ability of its members to talk to each other, writing ‘It is important that there should not be any subjects we tacitly agree not to talk about.’¹⁴⁰ They describe the Index as serving to exemplify a certain developing set of concerns (among the Art & Language community) at different levels of ‘depth’ and ‘generality’ and write that the structure of talking to each other presupposes that we are all standing on common ground ‘Keeping each other in line should be the least of our concerns. We ‘look across’ – talk to each other – to share information

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ ‘Art-Language’, *The New Art* catalogue, 15

which will assist in mapping the area below.¹⁴¹ (Fig. 16) Thus, the use of a filing system to access a body of work which was intended to be an incomplete process indicates a way of temporarily placing texts which will be retrieved in future. The filing system usually orders or temporarily stores documents, usually alphabetically or numerically. In the case of the Indexing projects, filing systems make reference to a body of work or text which is written out of conversations. These conversations were originally produced through collaboration, open-ended and fragmentary and therefore totally opposed to the linear form of modernism. Their collation within the structure of a filing cabinet in order to understand these processes, however, remains fragmentary.

The work closely resembled *Index 01* in both its concept and formal characteristics: grey utilitarian filing cabinets were again used to house their texts. In the catalogue, these are described by the group as a, ‘mimetic means of retrieval of the “talking-to-each-other” modus operandi as seen over a period of time’.¹⁴² They write that this means of organisation of the system serves to differentiate between surface-relationship and common instantiation of ‘deep’ structure, writing that the filing cabinets offer a means of information and process retrieval for the spectator and a means to an ‘internal reflexive consciousness among Art-Language community.’¹⁴³ They conclude that they seem to be avoiding Robert Morris pseudo-existentialist ‘men at work’ connotations whereby the artist, Robert Morris, would hire a team of ‘forklift drivers, crane operators, and building engineers, as well as a small army of professional art fabricators’, in order to install huge installations in the space of the gallery.¹⁴⁴ Julia Bryan-Wilson writes that instead of a traditional opening, viewers were invited to watch the progress of the work being installed. In the case of Art & Language, however, they wrote that rather than seeing the work as an incomplete process in which the viewer could observe the mechanics of the group’s working methods, the filing system should instead be seen as an ‘appropriate

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Julia Bryan-Wilson, *Art Workers: Radical Practice and the Vietnam War Era* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2009), 83

vehicle' which was 'internally coherent and does not (should not) 'exhibit' any incompleteness in any dramatic way.' Finally, the group writes that '[T]here shouldn't be any internal dissatisfaction about its inclusiveness or lack of it. The 'Institute' itself is presumably similarly extensible.'¹⁴⁵ The open-ended nature of the project was 'incomplete' and the texts inside the cabinets had multiple ways of being rearranged and read. Therefore, the cabinets which house them are solely structures or vehicles for exhibition rather than objects which should be contemplated or from which any meaning should be extracted.

A filing cabinet as a display device is symbolic of a professionalism which has come to characterise conceptual art practice in this period. Its choice, like the use of a magazine in conceptual art, is a chosen medium of display and dissemination which also suggests a professionalism. This 'professionalism' in conceptual art was theorised by Benjamin H.D. Buchloh in his essay, 'The Aesthetics of Administration', where he writes that conceptual art 'came to displace even that image of the mass-produced object and its aestheticized forms in Pop Art, replacing an aesthetic of industrial production and consumption with an aesthetic of administrative and legal organization and institutional validation.'¹⁴⁶ Harrison has described the appearance of the Indexes as 'bland (or as slick) as it could be made in its form of presentation' and writes that the principle decision in its exhibition appearance was that the indexing system should be made compatible with that of other indexing-systems such as office furniture or filing units rather than with other works of art as it is closer in visibility to a, 'library or office than the art gallery or the museum.'¹⁴⁷ In a letter from the finance department at the Hayward from Nick Serota dated 24th August 1972 regarding the use of filing cabinets, Serota wrote:

We were unable to hire suitable cabinets and therefore decided to purchase new equipment at a cost of £348.60. The Art-Language Group have offered £200 for the cabinets, and since this

¹⁴⁵ 'Art-Language', *The New Art* catalogue, 15

¹⁴⁶ Benjamin Buchloh, 'Conceptual Art 1962–1969: from the Aesthetic of Administration to the critique of Institutions', 119

¹⁴⁷ Harrison, *Essays on Art & Language*, 65

is slightly more than two other offers which I have received from Office Equipment Firms, I hope that you will agree that we sell the cabinets to Art-Language.¹⁴⁸

Thus, the Indexes materiality is grounded in this industrial, mass-produced object, made for an administered and systematised society and workplace.

Writers on *Index 01*, have alluded to the bibliographic nature of the filing cabinets, referring to them as library card catalogues, while critic John Russell wrote in *The Sunday Times* of the work:

[The] approved thing is to go ‘beyond the object barrier’ and to think about art so intently and so cogently that you no longer need to make it: the thinking is the making in other words. It is this that we owe to spectacle, familiar to veterans of the international exhibition circuit, of the Stalinist reading-room, in which only one publication, ‘Art-Language’ can be consulted. This reappears at the Hayward, together with large rooms devoted to printed matter of one kind or another, much of it intimidatory in intention. ‘Play our game’, the message runs, ‘or else...’.¹⁴⁹

This ominous critique of the artwork as a ‘Stalinist Reading Room’ mirrors that of Lawrence Weiner’s assessment of *Index 01* in the film *Documenta 5* as a ‘Christian Science Reading Room’ whereby the audience is given the opportunity to read anything they like so long as it is the complex and alienating philosophical texts of Art & Language. There is also a closure suggested by such a medium of display which contains the group’s practice inside, therefore acting as a sort of monument to themselves.

Despite this, the work was intended to operate as a way to open up the group’s dialogue and their internal workings with an audience and as such, it operated as an interactive learning device where visitors or readers could utilise the work in order to take away a means to analyse the artworld and a larger sociality. Yet, the device suggests a very private discourse operating within the confines of an increasingly professionalised group. Bailey has written that despite its original intentions the work ‘was not exactly a critical smash.’¹⁵⁰ He discusses Art & Language’s inclusion in *Documenta 5* in the context of a change in personnel where their New York counterpart ‘began to take on a properly communal size and shape to match the group in England and model a more robust alternative to the

¹⁴⁸ Hayward Archives of *The New Art*, ACGB/121/764 (1642), 1972

¹⁴⁹ John Russell, ‘Objecting to Objects’, *The Sunday Times*, August 20, 1972

¹⁵⁰ Bailey, *Art & Language International: Conceptual Art between Art Worlds*, 47

art world in which it found itself.¹⁵¹ He argues however, that despite the hope that new audiences would engage with the work they instead refused the ‘exhaustive and rigorous’ terms demanded of them by this installation. I would argue that although the general reception of this work in the press dismisses the work as too dry and complex, it is difficult to assess how broader audiences interacted with the work at the time i.e. whether they spent time reading the texts, making connections and discussing the texts between themselves.¹⁵² As was evidenced by the critical responses to the 2016 exhibition at the Tate, *Conceptual Art in Britain 1964-1979*, although a review often frames the legacy of an exhibition, it does not always reflect a wider public reception.

Despite the choice to be known as ‘The Art & Language Institute’ the names of the ‘editorial board’ were listed at the entrance to the *Documenta* installation with some names printed in larger font than others. Harrison writes that this adoption of a principle of collective responsibility ‘was not a matter of strategy in the face of public exposure.’¹⁵³ Instead, it ‘had been an informal assumption of Art & Language interchanges from the start that the materials of discourse were open to being differentiated on more powerful grounds than those of authorship.’¹⁵⁴ By placing these texts in filing cabinets within the space of *Documenta 5* the way we access private texts in a public space and what the work’s boundaries are was called into question – are we supposed to just look at the cabinets or to use them, to touch them, even? And is the reading that we enact a private or public act? The idea of a ‘Reading Room’, as already addressed by critics of Art & Language’s Indexes, also implies a location for reading where conversation is not allowed but the usually private act of reading is conducted in a public space, often where the literature is onsite and ready-framed rather than selected by the visitor. In simultaneously directing its own resistance, rupture and inclusion, the texts and their lack of

¹⁵¹ Ibid, 49

¹⁵² Ibid, 44

¹⁵³ Harrison, *Essays on Art & Language*, 65

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

connection to a larger sociality and political awareness, the intention of the Indexing projects may have therefore been lost.

The dialogue that these works attempted to command from the audience relates to Jürgen Habermas' theory that participants in a public sphere must adhere to certain performative rules that 'insulate this discursive space from the coercion of inequality that constrain human communication in normal daily life' suggesting that everyone is allowed to take part in discourse but that it is the conventions of the public sphere that restrict that discourse rather than the hierarchies of power and knowledge.¹⁵⁵ Grant Kester writes that this 'egalitarian interaction cultivates a sense of 'solidarity' among discursive co-participants' who are as a result 'intimately linked in an inter-subjectively shared form of life' concluding that 'while there is no guarantee that these interactions will form a consensus, we nonetheless endow them with a provisional authority that influences us toward mutual understanding and reconciliation.'¹⁵⁶ Kester believes that Habermas' discourse theory can provide a component of a larger analytic system by replacing claims of authority and universality, objectivity with local consensuality at a grounded level of collective interaction.¹⁵⁷ However, he argues that Habermas did not fully account for the nature of the participants in this public sphere by assuming that as 'rational subjects we respond only to illocutionary force of the better argument, or "good reasons"' – that we respond to reason and rationality and 'the better argument' as well as the force of 'superior' speakers over others.¹⁵⁸

Bakhtin, writing earlier than Habermas, argued that the speaker always directs his language towards a listener: 'I give myself verbal shape from another's point of view of the community to which I belong. A word is a bridge thrown between myself and another... it is territory shared by both

¹⁵⁵ Grant H. Kester, *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art* (Berkeley: Los Angeles, 2004), 108

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid, 113

¹⁵⁸ Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action: Reason and the Rationalisation of Society* (Boston: Polity Press, 1984),

addresser and addressee'— the word is a 'two-sided act'.¹⁵⁹ Thus by presenting their dialogue as local consensuality, Art & Language were attempting to present their practice externally as a matter of having themselves overlooked: 'The maximum likely gain is to be seen in terms of contact with people who may realise that they're standing in the same ground and thus in a position to help with the mapping; the more there are, the faster it can progress and/or the more ground we can cover.'¹⁶⁰ In doing so, the Indexing projects still situate themselves in relation to an ideal speaker or reader and therefore assume a certain degree of intelligibility or understanding. Their work, however, is not always intelligible or understood, neither, I argue was it intended to be intelligible or understood.

It is this internal, introspective dialogue within the group as well as the intended audience as a defined and versed in both conceptual art practice and philosophy, which is relevant to the group's work. The art historian, Christopher Gilbert, in his draft for 'The Lumpen Headache' at the Getty Institute Archives, argues that it was this point of expansion that the group also underwent 'a process of "implosion"', writing that a new form of collectivity occurred after the Second World War which focused around the 'institution' rather than the individuals involved, which in turn related to Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer's concept of the 'totally administered' world and bureaucratization.¹⁶¹ Art & Language, he argues, emerged in the late 1960s as a group which parodied as well as instantiated the 'non-instrumental character of institutions' but in the process, the group could be described as an institution themselves.¹⁶² He continues that in a culture of individuals, it is understandable that histories of collectives would be tumultuous and that much of Art & Language's ongoing dialogues were concerned with the operation of their group and their own internal conflict concerning their search for an autonomous legitimacy from the institution, writing:

¹⁵⁹ Kitty Clark and Michael Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin* (Cambridge, Mass. And London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1984), 214-215

¹⁶⁰ Art & Language, 'Mapping & Filing', *The New Art*, 5

¹⁶¹ Christopher Gilbert, 'Art & Language and the Institutional Form' in Stimson B. and Sholette G. (eds.) *Collectivism after Modernism: The Art of Social Imagination after 1945*, 78

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

Perhaps a more accurate way of wording this is to say that the group's key purpose, however 'solipsistic,' was to assert its own institutional character as an ongoing resistance to a larger sociality within which would otherwise be, and was to a large extent, inscribed.¹⁶³

Thus this simultaneously self-institutionalising and resistance to a larger sociality created a more introspective, reflexive form of collaboration, which although was based on shared-learning as a basis for production and dissemination, was equally disconnected from some of the concerns of conceptual art in the 1970s: sociality and research projects.

At this time, Gregory Sholette writes that the Arts Council began to funnel support to muralists, photographers, theatre troupes and other cultural and media workers operating outside the studio in urban and rural public settings. He argues that this support helped establish artists working within 'labour unions, impoverished inner city neighbourhoods, prisons, geriatric facilities and other non-art settings.'¹⁶⁴ He writes of Art & Language's relationship to this context that when a group of artists 'self institutionalise' in order to produce a collaborative or collective the responding art critical narrative will often respond by using the art collective to discuss the evolution of a stellar solo career, such as Joseph Kosuth's as former member of Art & Language. This this form of self-institutionalising, collaboration and intersubjectivity can usefully be contrasted with other works of open-ended dialogue and research from 1972 to 1976, in particular, Mary Kelly, Kay Fido Hunt and Margaret Harrison's, *Women & Work: A Document in the Division of Labour in Industry* (1973-1975) and Mary Kelly's *Post-Partum Document* (1976). Lucy Lippard had written that artists involved with outreach have to learn to work with others before they can hope to be effective in larger contexts, arguing that women artists have all been exhibited and discussed within the current system but each has kept an eye outside of it:

Their art gains from the resulting tensions. For instance, a large number of them have chosen potentially populist, mass produced mediums such as posters, books, magazine pieces and

¹⁶³ Ibid, 79

¹⁶⁴ Gregory Sholette, 'Delirium and Resistance After the Social Turn' in Kim Charnley (ed.), *Delirium and Resistance: Activist Art and the Crisis of Capitalism* (London: Pluto Press, 2017), 215

video as a means by which to extend control of their own art and its distribution, in the process of choosing their audience, or at least not having their audience chosen for them.¹⁶⁵

It is this idea of choosing your media and audience when excluded from a larger conceptual art scene, which my final section will explore.

Inclusion in/and Exclusion from the International Network of Conceptual Art

Juli Carson to Mary Kelly in interview: Around the same time you leave St. Martin's, *Art & Language* show their famous index piece at the Hayward Gallery's *The New Art* exhibition. There's a section you've underlined in the catalogue here where *Art & Language* talk about their version of intersubjectivity. I'd always overlooked that before. People have noted your reference to their notion of the index. But I was hoping you'd reflect on their approach to intersubjectivity because for *Art & Language* this simply meant speaking to each other and documenting it as a system.¹⁶⁶

In 1972, the same year that the first of the Indexes was produced, Mary Kelly was made Chairwoman of the Artists' Union. The aims of the Artists' Union were to look after the institutional and commercial interests of artists. Realising that these aims were relatable to that of *The New Art* exhibition at the Hayward Gallery, Kelly wrote to its director, Norbert Lynton, asking him for a 'space' in the forthcoming exhibition because 'it is an attempt to bring contemporary British art to the public which has a direct interest for our members.'¹⁶⁷ She continued that rather than recruit or publicise the Union, however, they would like the facilities to 'carry out some research on the various concerns of our policy and study workshops' on the themes of Government Policy for the Arts, Patronage and Public Exhibitions.¹⁶⁸ This, she wrote, could be done by means of a questionnaire and tape recorded interviews.

¹⁶⁵ Lucy R. Lippard, *Issue: Social Strategy by Women Artists* (London: Institute of Contemporary Art, 1980), unpaginated.

¹⁶⁶ 'Excavating Post-Partum Document: Mary Kelly in conversation with Juli Carson' in Breitweiser S., *Re-reading Post-Partum Document Mary Kelly* Vienna: Generali Foundation, 1999), 185

¹⁶⁷ Women & Work (1973-6) at the South London Gallery, 1976: letters of organisation; reviews of the exhibition; installation photographs, accessed June 2017

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

Lynton declined Kelly's request citing the reason as encouraging rival groups with the same aim to come forward as well as several of the included artists in the exhibition objecting to the Union's presence. This interaction, however, pinpoints 1972 as a year of divergence for conceptual art practice in Britain: at the point when it was being incorporated into institutions it was also increasingly directed towards social and political research-based aims. Kelly's desire to bring research relating to 'Government Policy for the Arts, Patronage and Public Exhibitions' to *The New Art*, where Art & Language were exhibiting their second 'Index' is not insignificant. The last section of this chapter will argue that artists, such as Kelly, and curators, such as Lippard, responded to the intersubjectivity proposed by group's like Art & Language by utilising the formal look of text-based conceptual artworks in order to bring attention to early feminist practice in Britain. While Art & Language's form of collectivity was introspective, self-reflexive and used the dynamics of the group and their internal discussions in order to demonstrate an inconclusive questioning of production and display. The conceptual art produced by women in this period also questioned the conditions of production and display. It did this, however, through the structure and sociality of a male-orientated art world which saw women subjugated through education, law and representation. Thus from the start, women's conceptual art was required to question and fight the structures which might allow them to make art.

The absence of women in conceptual art practice and in the artworld more generally was increasingly highlighted in artwork and in magazine articles in the early 1970s. In an interview between the artists Faith Ringgold and Lil Picard published in the Winter 1973 issue of *The Feminist Art Journal*, Picard wrote how she had counted the number of women artists included in the international *Documenta* exhibitions since it had started in 1955. Her findings revealed that there were just ten women included in the 1969 version and only fourteen in the following 1972 *Documenta*. In addition to this, there were no black women included and only two black men. She also counted the number of women writers in the accompanying catalogue and discovered that very few of the contributors were women:

I also counted up the people who wrote in the catalogue because I consider the Documenta catalogue a work of art – you buy it in a plastic cover and it costs \$28.50. It weighs about ten pounds. In this time of conceptual art, the professors and artists and philosophers who write in the catalogue are very important – out of 25 writers in the ‘72 catalogue, 2 are women.¹⁶⁹

Picard went on to describe more fully her problems with the culture of conceptual art writing that when she goes to conceptual art exhibitions she sees ‘a little name printed on a big white page’ which she says ‘I can’t even see it without strong glasses – and there is nothing else there. I want to know what it is all about.’¹⁷⁰ She argues that what this demonstrates is that ‘the artists want to kill art. Western man wants to kill art because he feels that our situation in the world is in despair.’¹⁷¹ She suggests that maybe they want to ‘kill art’ because theirs is declining, ‘The men who say it is dead, want it to be dead for everybody’, but the rest of us are, ‘ready to go’.¹⁷² Although *The Feminist Art Journal*, Picard and Ringold were all American rather than British, Picard’s outrage at the dominance of white men producing conceptual art is clearly applicable to the situation in Britain.

Similarly, Lucy Lippard encountered problems when she suggested to the curator of *Documenta 5*, Harald Szeemann, that he visit a number of women artist’s studios in New York for his research for the exhibition. Partly in response to this she organised the last of her ‘Numbers Shows’, *c.7,500*, as an intersection of conceptual art and feminist practice. The exhibition was staged at CalArts in 1973, and travelled to seven other venues in the US, and one other in London; 48 Earlham Street, Covent Garden, featuring the artists, Hanne Darboven, Christine Kozlov, Adrian Piper and Martha Wilson, amongst others.¹⁷³ It is significant that the show was mounted at 48 Earlham Street rather than for example, the ICA as Earlham Street had a precedent in activities related to the women’s movement. A

¹⁶⁹ Interview between Lil Picard and Faith Ringold in the *Feminist Art Journal* (Winter 1973): 15

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ The 25 artists or artist’s groups who participated in *c.7,500* were: Renate Altenrath, Laurie Anderson, Elenor Antin, Jacki Apple, Alice Aycock, Jennifer Bartlett, Hanne Darboven, Agnes Denes, Doree Dunlap, Nancy Holt, Poppy Johnson, Nancy Kitchel, Christine Kozlov, Suzanne Kuffler, Pat Lasch, Bernadette Mayer, Christine Möbus, Rita Myers, Renee Nahum, N.E. Thing Co., Ulrike Nolden, Adrian Piper, Judith Stein, Athena Tacha, Mierle Laderman Ukeles and Martha Wilson.

year earlier, the Education Workshop had met at Earlham Street and proposed the idea of the women's working party in relation to the Artists' Union.¹⁷⁴ Although the ICA were to stage a series of exhibitions themed around conceptual art, their inclusion of female conceptual artists did not take place until 1976 with Mary Kelly's *Post-Partum Document*:

The March 1977 issue of *Studio International* 'Women's Art' gives a good general context to some of the main issues and events of women artists working in Britain in the 1970s. In the introduction to the issue, the editor Richard Cork writes that unlike their US equivalents, British women artists 'have not yet succeeded in organising themselves into effective pressure groups, dedicated to eradicating the prejudice which still militates against their acceptance within the art system.'¹⁷⁵ He writes that apart from the newly-published *Mama* magazine, there are no UK magazines wholly devoted to women's art. Thus, he emphasises that this issue of *Studio International* will act as a platform for women artists working in Britain. However, it becomes evident from Margaret Harrison's contribution to the magazine 'Notes on Feminist Art in Britain 1970-77' that there was already extensive activity by women artists during this period. Harrison writes that she hopes her list of significant events, exhibitions and social and political actions 'charts the beginnings of a feminist consciousness of these concepts and of a forceful and progressive struggle to write ourselves back into history.'¹⁷⁶ Among some of the most important events and exhibitions she lists: The Equal Pay Act of 1970; the first Women's Liberation Art Group exhibition at Woodstock Gallery, London in 1971; the publication of the first issues of the magazines *Spare Rib*, *Women's Report*, *Women's Voice* and *Red Flag* in 1972; *Five Women Artists* exhibition at Swiss Cottage Library, London in 1973; the *Sexuality and*

¹⁷⁴ The Artists' Union was formed in summer 1971 following the Art Spectrum exhibition at Alexandra Palace, London. Discussions on the shared problems concerning minimal survival and the inevitably divisive effect of competition for limited funds, with women artists in a particularly vulnerable position led to the formation of the Artists' Union, culminating in an open meeting at the Camden Studios at which working parties were formed.

¹⁷⁵ Richard Cork, 'Editorial', *Studio International: Women's Art* 193, No. 987 (March 1977), 164

¹⁷⁶ Margaret Harrison, 'Notes on Feminist Art in Britain 1970-77', *Studio International: Women's Art*, 212

Socialisation exhibition at the Northern Arts Gallery, Newcastle in 1975; the formation of ‘The Hackney Flashers’ in February 1975 and the *Feministo* postal art exhibition at the ICA in June 1977, writing:

Around 1970 the Women’s Movement was one of the most dynamic, progressive and creative areas of activity in Britain. Women’s culture, in the broadest sense, was suddenly alive and kicking. Women artists responded in a number of ways and many of the themes explored by them were only later taken up in male mainstream art activities... It was the Women’s Movement which drew attention to the repressive and discriminatory nature of advertising, recognizing the mis-use of female images and the need for a public statement about it... Prints, drawings and posters all served the cause, alternately ignoring, using, tricking, avoiding or mocking the media.¹⁷⁷

Harrison continues that during this period, women have been forced to attempt to change the structure of the oppressive, male-orientated society in order to be able to work and says that this was not simply a matter of presenting a counterculture but that women have been forced to sacrifice their art practice in order to help ‘establish those services which enable them, and other women, to work.’¹⁷⁸ She gives examples of the fight for nurseries and basic civil rights and concludes ‘although the struggle is far from over many women now feel able to return to their work as artists.’¹⁷⁹ It is within this context of a burgeoning feminist movement in Britain, a focus on the social and political aspects of being a woman and a woman artist in Britain and the increasing number of women involved in conceptual art, that I compare Art & Language’s ‘Indexing’ projects to Mary Kelly, Kay Fido Hunt and Margaret Harrison’s artwork, *Women & Work: A Document in the Division of Labour in Industry*. (Fig. 21) By making such a comparison, I demonstrate the changing agendas of conceptual art around 1972: as both retrospective and recursive, as well as more collaborative and socially engaged than previous permutations of conceptual art, thus demonstrating the inward and outward-looking trajectories of this practice.

Women & Work was a large-scale installation produced between 1973 and 1975 in collaboration by Hunt, Kelly and Harrison and was first displayed at the South London Gallery in

¹⁷⁷ Ibid, 220

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

1976. It consisted of the collection of data and statistics of working routines, pay, labour divisions and male and female labourer's roles following a two-year study by Hunt, Kelly and Harrison documenting the division of labour in a metal box factory in Bermondsey, South London. Bermondsey had been a thriving industrial area in London in the nineteenth century with the riverside lined with warehouses and wharves including its best known site, Butler's Wharf: a former biscuit factory and then a shipping port. Following major bomb damage in the second world war, the area was largely in decline yet was still well-known for many manufacturing trades including that of metal boxes, such as tins for holding baked beans and for biscuits, amongst other products. (Fig. 22)

The accompanying catalogue to the exhibition named all of the women workers at the metal box factory in the first two pages therefore grounding the work in its subjects. Following this, a description of the work is given detailing how more than 150 women participated in this 'documentation', writing that the findings have been presented graphically in the following sections¹⁸⁰ The artists firstly describe the general distribution of male and female labour within the entire factory and secondly, describe those specifically concerned with the job definitions, hours, wages, and working conditions of the hourly paid women employees. Each section, they write, consists of photographic records of the work process, statistical tables, photocopied factory documents and narratives on relevant Parliamentary Acts. Finally, there is a reference system of films, tapes and display books for additional information on the subjects introduced in these sections. They conclude, 'Although the show focuses on the present status of women, 1970-1975, with special reference to the implementation of equal pay, it is also intended to provide a basis for general inquiry into the changing role of women in society.'¹⁸¹ This statement contrasts with the work's description in its press release where it is described as 'intending to provide a basis for general inquiry into the changing role of women in

¹⁸⁰ Women and Work catalogue (London: South London Gallery, 1976), 3

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

industry.¹⁸² The differing descriptions might indicate the two audiences for the work – one as an art audience, the other as the local community. (Fig. 23, 24)

The work followed from an Artist's Fellowship from the Greater London Arts Association Thames Television Fund which was given for a project that would be of benefit to lower-paid sections of the Greater London Community. As part of the study, the three artists were allowed access to the factory, this enabled them to collect important data which they said 'when exhibited, charted the ways in which the management were restructuring the work force to keep profits intact.'¹⁸³ The work was connected to the recently passed Equal Pay Act which was intended 'to prevent discrimination as regards terms and conditions of employment between men and women' and was passed in 1970 and implemented in 1976. The Equal Pay Act made it unlawful for employers to discriminate between women and men in terms of their pay and conditions where they are doing the same or similar work: 'work rate as equivalent; or work equal value.'¹⁸⁴ The material on display resembled official documents relating to this such as the 'Equal Pay First Report' which even contained a chapter called 'Women at Work'. In addition to this, it highlighted the discrepancies between male and female labour which made visible the fact that women's labour was not solely contained to the workplace but continued, unpaid, at home through the labour of cooking, cleaning and child rearing. (Fig. 20)

It is worth noting that Silvia Federici's *Wages against Housework* was published in 1975. Here Federici put forward the argument that if women were to demand wages for the extra labour which they performed in their homes, it would undermine the expectations which society had on women. *Wages against Housework*, Federici writes, is a revolutionary demand not because it attacks capital but because it forces it to restructure social relations in terms more favourable for women. Two passages from the publication give examples of this:

¹⁸² *Women & Work* (1973-6) at the South London Gallery, 1976: letters of organization; reviews of the exhibition; installation photographs, accessed June 2017

¹⁸³ Jane Kelly "Mary Kelly" in *Studio International: Women's Art*, 186

¹⁸⁴ *Equal Pay Act 1970*, booklet published by the Department for Communities and Local Government, 2007

To say that we want money for housework is the first step towards refusing to do it, because the demand for a wage makes our work visible, which is the most indispensable condition to begin to struggle against it, both in its immediate aspect as housework and its more insidious character as femininity.¹⁸⁵

And we don't have to prove that we can 'break the blue collar barrier'. A lot of us broke that barrier a long time ago and have discovered that the overalls did not give us more power than the apron; if possible even less, because now we had to wear both and had less time and energy to struggle against them. *The things we have to prove are our capacity to expose what we are already doing, what capital is doing to us and our power in the struggle against it.*¹⁸⁶

In a collective statement for *Women & Work* the group wrote that the area was selected because it had been the centre of workshop industries employing women for over a century. The resulting artwork was described in a press release for the artwork dated 1973, which detailed the forthcoming event at the South London Gallery and emphasised a personal element to the exhibition: Hunt, who initiated the project, grew up in Bermondsey. Between them, the artists obtained all the materials that they needed from the metal box factory – nurses' reports, clocking-in cards, labour turnover, figures – and the artists stated that they think the factory gave the documents to them 'not knowing what the hell artists were going to do with them,' doubting that they would have been shown all of what they did had they been a journalist.¹⁸⁷ Through various media including text on paper, film, photography and sound recording, the artists communicated this material to the audience.

For example, in section one a table of the worker's employment and summary of training was exhibited as well as an Employment and Summary of Training chart from 1973-74, which gives a clear depiction of the inequality of labour in various sectors – managerial positions are all occupied by men whereas there are over double the amount of women to men in positions including: Clerks, Office Machine Operators, Secretaries and Typists. In another section, the average hourly rates of wages of all manual workers were recorded. Divided into males on the left and females on the right, the chart

¹⁸⁵ Silvia Federici, *Wages against Housework* (Bristol: Falling Wall Press, 1975), 5

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

demonstrates the significant difference in wages between gender. There are also reproductions of laws such as:

Factories Act, 1961: Part VI, Employment of Women and young persons. Sec. 86. States that 'the period of employment shall not begin earlier than seven o'clock in the morning nor end later than eight o'clock in the evening.

It states the hours permissible as a 'Double-Day Shift' – from 6:00 am to 2:00 pm and 1:00 pm to 10 pm – of course, this does not take into account any additional labour by the women workers in the home. In addition to this, a copy of the 'Health and Safety Work Act' from 1974 was included as well as further tables of the distribution of male and female labour into full and part-time work by grades. Texts depicting job titles and descriptions in another display as well as a large list of all of the women worker's names. (Fig. 2.5) Finally, a section detailing the 'Implementation of the Equal Pay' gives details of Increases in Grade Rate from 1973 to 1975. The document demonstrates that there was a gradual increase so they did not receive equal pay until the end of 1975 yet the Equal Pay Act was passed in 1970. Male and female workers working at the same pay scale consistently received unequal pay in this period. There was some incremental change, for example in January 1973, women workers were earning 85% of the rate for male workers, in October 1974 it was 95% and in December 1975, five years after the Act, women were finally receiving 100%. However, this was only one example and was a 'Result of Independent Agreement Between the Metal Box Co. and the Transport & General Workers Union and the General & Municipal Workers Union (Outside the Joint Industrial Council for the Tin Box Factory.'

Photographs on display depict workers at machinery, sometimes with their head cut out of the frame so the body in labour is just depicted, in others the workers are wearing gloves with the stacked pile of finished goods behind them. Some depict workers holding operating machinery, smiling to the camera. (Fig. 36) It is noticeable in these photos that while the male worker wears a shirt and tie, the female worker has a work overall, pinafore, overcoat over her own clothes. In the folders on the tables, reproductions of various labour acts as well as historical documents and articles relating to Trade

Unions and inequality of pay. This data, mainly consisting of texts, requires time, reading and reflection. Yet the media which is used to document is not limited to text but also utilises film, photography and sound thus text also becomes language and language describes images. As Craig Dworkin writes ‘one can never locate media in isolation. Media – if there are such things – are only recognizable as collectives.’¹⁸⁸ The work’s status is dependent upon its context in the gallery as much as its interrelation between fragments of the installation which make up a whole.

Photographs from the work’s original installation demonstrate visitors interacting with the work. School children are photographed walking around the artwork and interacting with the objects on show on what looks like a class trip – sitting on chairs and reading the work. In one photo a school girl poses in a bubble-shaped telephone booth, grinning and clutching a phone headset to her ear while listening to the recorded narratives of these factory workers. In another image, we get a fuller picture of the display with visitors walking around the display and scanning the walls, others sat down and reading the texts positioned on the tables. At the entrance to the display is some large wall text spelling out ‘Women & Work’, in industrial, stencil-type lettering pasted onto the wall – the exhibition’s only form of ‘branding’ which is also reproduced in the catalogue. The exhibition mimicked some of the methods of displaying conceptual art practice with small sheets of paper framed simply on the walls, giving statistics of women and their working condition. The listening devices replicated telephone booths with handsets, indicating a two-way communication between artist and gallery attendee while the table and chairs were again like library set-ups – the antithesis of the silent presence of a sculpture or painting. Thus, the viewer is asked to interact, to listen, to read, to watch and the work is a collection of data as well as a dialogue with the audience. (Fig. 2.6)

Upon its opening in 1976 (the same year as Victor Burgin’s work *Possession*), an open meeting was held at the South London Gallery around the issues raised in the show with an emphasis on the

¹⁸⁸ Craig Dworkin, *No Medium* (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2013), 30

Equal Pay Act and protective legislation in relation to shift work. Speakers included: Judith Hunt, the Women's Officer at Technical Administrative and Supervisory Section; Rosalind Delmar from the National Council of Civil Liberties; and May Hobbs, leader of the night cleaners action campaign for Union Recognition and in attendance was Mrs Jean Alexander, the Women's Shop Steward from the South London Metal Box factory. Kelly, Hunt and Harrison actively encouraged audiences who would not normally attend galleries to visit the exhibition. These included local residents and school children as is described in a letter addressed to all of the secondary schools in the Southwark area where the Borough Librarian and Curator of the South London Gallery wrote that it would be encouraging and rewarding to see as many local residents as possible visiting the gallery and that the exhibition marked something of a departure from the pattern of shows recently held as it has 'a strong local flavor.'¹⁸⁹ The statement continued 'although the show focuses on the present status of women, 1970-75, with the special implementation of equal pay, it is also intended to provide a basis for general enquiry into the changing role of women in industry.'¹⁹⁰ In a letter from G.S. Jones at King's College, Cambridge to the South London Gallery in 1975, they congratulate the gallery on the exhibition writing that what they found most impressive was the way in which the artists (Hunt, Kelly and Harrison), were able to break with 'the normally very superficial artistic concepts of industry, to pose objective questions about the division of labour, and to present the problems in ways which would not have occurred to economists or sociologists.'¹⁹¹ The letter concludes with the statement:

In what way this can be called 'art', or whether this is the way forward with artists, I will leave others to argue over. But what is clear, is that in this case the showing of this project in an art gallery was a happy solution of exciting possibilities for similar experiments in the future.¹⁹²

This question is raised again in numerous letters from visitors to the show, congratulating the group on the exhibition while also raising the question of how the exhibition should be defined. In one letter

¹⁸⁹ Women & Work (1973-6) at the South London Gallery, 1976: letters of organisation; reviews of the exhibition; installation photographs, accessed June 2017

¹⁹⁰ Ibid

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Ibid.

from a visitor, Naomi Richman, she writes that she found the show to be a very interesting experience and an important event because ‘so few of the art shows are concerned with the people who live near the art gallery.’¹⁹³ In another visitor letter the unnamed author writes: ‘To me it was one of the best exhibitions I have ever seen. Often you get documentaries on television but the difference in this one was that one had to make a very definite attempt to read and assimilate the information, not just sit back and watch.’ They continue that they found it not only informative but that the ‘layout of the actual room was an artwork in its own right, indeed visually very effective.’¹⁹⁴ In another letter, the Borough Librarian and Curator, Kenneth Sharpe points out the number of people who attended *Women & Work* did not ‘break any records statistically.’¹⁹⁵ However, he writes that a large number of the attendees seem to have been absorbed by the work and the ‘response from the public has been encouraging.’¹⁹⁶ Like Art & Language’s Indexing projects, comparisons were made between the artwork and a library or reading room with a letter from Janet Hill at Lambeth Library saying that she was delighted that ‘such a relevant and contemporary exhibition was mounted under the auspices of a library service.’¹⁹⁷ The reception of the work in the press, although largely positive, also struggled with its categorisation: between artwork and research project/reading room/library.

In a review of the work, the critic and lecturer Jane Kelly writes that artist Mary Kelly wanted to work with other women as she believed ‘that the structure demanded by an exhibition situation could be used politically.’¹⁹⁸ She wrote that an awareness of the political situation was important for this work and resulted from Kelly’s previous work on the film *Night Cleaners* (1970), writing that it had

¹⁹³ Letter from Naomi Richman to the South London Gallery, 10/06/1976, *Women & Work* (1973-6) at the South London Gallery, 1976: letters of organisation; reviews of the exhibition; installation photographs, accessed June 2017

¹⁹⁴ *Women & Work* (1973-6) at the South London Gallery, 1976: letters of organisation; reviews of the exhibition; installation photographs, accessed June 2017

¹⁹⁵ Letter from Kenneth Sharpe to Mr Frustone, 30/05/1975, *Women & Work* (1973-6) at the South London Gallery, 1976: letters of organization; reviews of the exhibition; installation photographs, accessed June 2017

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁷ Letter from Janet Hill to the South London Gallery, *Women & Work* (1973-6) at the South London Gallery, 1976: letters of organization; reviews of the exhibition; installation photographs, accessed June 2017

¹⁹⁸ Jane Kelly “Mary Kelly” in *Studio International: Women’s Art*, 186

made evident the need for unionisation for one's own area and involvement with the Women's Movement and 'suggested an area of analysis in the relation between the exploitation of female labour and the oppression of women.'¹⁹⁹ Jane Kelly continues that the results of this investigation demonstrated that the female work-force was not just 'simply downgraded' but instead 'a much more complicated reshuffling process was introduced, including token female representation in the top grades, automatic machinery and therefore redundancies in the second, and eventually the phasing out of all part-time work (traditionally a married women's province) and the introduction of a double-day shift with the concomitant anti-social hours.'²⁰⁰ She writes how the exhibition documented a labour force on its way out 'showing the way which industry copes with problematic, liberal legislation by either restructuring or ignoring its stipulations.'²⁰¹

Not everyone saw the social relevance of the exhibition. For example, Margaret Richards, writing in *The Tribune* compared the work to Conrad Atkinson's *Strike at Brannan's* (1972).²⁰² However, she wrote that this exhibition was much less interesting as it had too many statements and 'not enough visual, despite a good film that made a point in next to no time.'²⁰³ She concludes 'I can't see many people ploughing on beyond boredom point once they've got the message.'²⁰⁴ Like the accusations levelled at the art on display in *The New Art*, questions were raised of what constitutes an artwork and whether it was visually appealing – i.e. why this is art rather than journalism or sociology or economics and what is the effect of putting this work in a gallery. In addition to this, *Women & Work*, like Art & Language's printed publications, is yet another example of the difficulty of categorising conceptual art upon its original production and circulation. Thus, *Women & Work* followed the conventions of text-based conceptual art in this period but by utilising statistics of women workers – their names, ages,

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Margaret Richards, 'Women Showing Us Women', *The Tribune*, May 23, 1975

²⁰² The exhibition also coincided with The Grunwick Dispute: an industrial dispute involving trade union recognition at the Grunwick Film Processing Laboratories in Willesden, London that led to a two year strike between 1976 and 1978.

²⁰³ Margaret Richards, 'Women Showing Us Women'

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

types of labour, pay, work-related illnesses and injuries, and the percentage of women in this type of labour in comparison to that of men in the same industry – they inserted issues of gender and labour into a formula consisting largely of introspection and self-reflexive practices.

Kelly has compared *Women & Work* to Hans Haacke's, 'Shapolsky piece' (*Shapolsky et al. Manhattan Real Estate Holdings, A Real-Time Social System, as of May 1, 1971*) writing that in the display of the documents, the time taken to investigate the factory working conditions and the display of the information that would 'give the viewer a way of weaving through and understanding the problem of that factory and its means of implementing equal pay.'²⁰⁵ Kelly, however, critiques Haacke's work by arguing that working in this strategy of objectively recording working conditions is not possible and gives the example of when they were in the factory trying to record the conditions. She writes that the women involved told the artists everything that happened but they would not even talk about what they did on the job. Instead, they would just answer 'Went to work, came back' and then would talk about what they did at home – their children and housework. Thus, Kelly said that at the same time there was this question of domestic labour emerging in the women's movement alongside her own experience of being pregnant writing:

I thought: well, I'm going to see what really is going on in the home. What kind of labour is this? At first I looked at it very sociologically but it became more and more obvious that you couldn't get rid of the irrationality of this event. The question of desire and questions of the social and psychic constructions of maternal femininity. But in the installation itself, regarding the impossibility of conforming to what might be the limits of a site-specific project, we weren't even getting information at the centre of it that referred us back to that site. The site shifted to the domestic space, and once again, when we got there, we found that it was even more radically dispersed at a psychic level. It was the specificity of *debate*, or discursive sites that became increasingly important to me.²⁰⁶

It is the shifting of the debate from the site of the factory to the private sphere of the home which further highlights the omissions of Art & Language's Indexing projects. The Indexes, while presenting

²⁰⁵ 'Interview between Douglas Crimp and Mary Kelly', Bhabha, Douglas Crimp and Iversen, *Mary Kelly*, 15

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

debate and discourse in the site of the gallery, simultaneously alienated audiences by creating an impenetrable and coded language and thus excluded them from the political dimension of their work.

In the catalogue to *The New Art*, Art & Language describe the Indexing projects as related to that of 'sharing' and 'learning', which they say, may lead to transformations:

It is required of the indices that they be rich enough to catch transformations in a given space and transformation of given spaces... Whatever we want to have, there is some point in looking diachronically for possible relations in such spaces. The interesting thing, however, is that we are dealing with transformations of 'logical space' – not just transformations of a logical space.²⁰⁷

Yet, this idea of learning and transformations of logical space, diachronically, via reflection, is complicated when the language of the work was largely impenetrable to anyone but the group or audiences who were already familiar with the work of Art & Language. As the art historian Siona Wilson has argued, Art & Language were the best known collective in Britain at this time and 'acted like a Marxist-Leninist political cell with ideological purges and rigorous (intellectual) self – examination'.²⁰⁸ She writes that feminist collectives tended to follow the anti-hierarchical structure of the groups in the London Women's Liberation Workshop, adopting consensus based models but argues, however, that what these collectives had in common was broadly understood in socialist terms: 'this was a political rejection of the idea of bourgeois individuality that had come to define the modern artist and an embrace of art practice as either modelled after activism or following the model of unionised labour.'²⁰⁹ *Women & Work*, like the Indexing projects, carries collective authorship between the three women but relates to another body of women outside of the collaboration: those of the workers from where the statistics are taken. There is no prerequisite for a knowledge of the language used instead the work objectively presents facts or data to the audience.

²⁰⁷ 'Art-Language', *The New Art*, 17

²⁰⁸ Siona Wilson, *Art Labor, Sex Politics: Feminist Effects in 1970s British Art and Performance* (Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), 102

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

Women & Work explores contemporaneous social issues and by doing so asks the audience rather than the participant to analyse the language used. Thus, the intersubjectivity addresses the artists, the audience and the factory workers who participated in the survey. Siona Wilson, writes of this work in relation to the group, The Hackney Flashers, who also produced a work entitled, *Women and Work*. The Hackney Flashers were the first female photography collective in Britain. In this work, they also presented photographs of women in the workplace, unemployment lines, and working in the home, with, 'brief handwritten descriptive captions.'²¹⁰ (Figs. 37, 38) Wilson writes how it is significant that a direct comparison has never been made between these two works seeing as their exhibition was in the same city, in the same year and proposes that the reason for this may be because of the marked aesthetic contrasts in approach between each project writing:

While feminist art historians are typically leery of making evaluative aesthetic judgements, the most striking difference between the exhibitions is that the Hackney Flashers appear uncomfortably amateurish. With documentary images of various sizes irregularly arranged and attached bulletin-board-style to plain backing card, the Hackney Flashers' *Women and Work* contrasts markedly with the cool sophistication of Harrison, Hunt and Kelly's mixed-media conceptual art aesthetic.²¹¹

She concludes that the latter exhibition by Harrison, Hunt and Kelly might be seen as a prefiguration of the smooth conceptual aesthetic of political installation art that is familiar in the world's biennials to this day.²¹²

Despite understanding the work in terms of its smooth, conceptual aesthetic, *Women & Work* has been exhibited in various configurations and has been reproduced, reorganised and even retitled as *Women at Work*. This lack of adherence to means of distribution or aesthetic coherence might be seen in contrast to Art & Language's branded and regulatory practice focused on the topic of dialogue and work around the same period. Furthermore, the idea of text as artwork for both *Women & Work* and the *Documenta Index* is interesting to compare. While one is the dialogue between a group exhibited in

²¹⁰ Ibid, 139

²¹¹ Ibid, 139-140

²¹² Ibid.

filing cabinets, the other are statistics of women in laboring and domestic positions accompanied by visual and audio documentary. One is the document of actual physical work, the other is the philosophical theorising of labour relations. Both, however, attempted to create discursive and socially engaged art practice, which requires the audience's reading through their own collaborative labour. While the Indexes were conferred to museums and private collections after their initial display, *Women & Work* was initially held in the National Museum of Labour History, thus conferring on it the status of social document rather than artwork. It is now in the Tate's collection and archives but despite its recent display at both Tate Britain and Tate Modern, it still occupies an ambiguous status.

The way that this work has subsequently been displayed, as with Art & Language's work, is also relevant for its framing and legacy within conceptual art's history. *Women & Work* has been exhibited twice in recent years at the Tate. First, as a Spotlight Display at Tate Britain in 2016, and secondly, as part of a larger display at Tate Modern from 2016-17 called 'Performer and Participant'. In the 2016 display at Tate Britain, the work was exhibited as part of an attempt to shine light on industrial issues of the 1970s from an overtly feminist perspective thus relating more closely to the work's original intentions. (Fig. 27, 28) The exhibition blurb defined it as both subjective and objective in its approach as well as personal and political, public and private. Photographs of its installation demonstrate a smaller display with an interactive component in the centre of the room, contained to a desk space of four with the audio-element integrated into this seating area. The photographic and text elements of the artwork were situated around the walls with two small televisions screening the film element of the work discretely positioned alongside. (Fig. 29, 30)

The display was situated alongside a room dedicated to the art and activism of Suffragette, Sylvia Pankhurst. The blurb for this exhibition on the Tate's website states that in 1907 Pankhurst spent several months touring industrial communities, documenting the working and living conditions of women workers and that her combination of artworks with written accounts provided a vivid picture of the lives of these workers. It also makes a powerful argument for an improvement in working

conditions and pay equality with men: ‘her studies of women at work were unusual for the time in their unsentimental observation and focus on individual workers.’²¹³ Detailing that Pankhurst’s research and artwork were published in an illustrated article in the *London Magazine* in 1908, and as a series of articles on individual trades in the WSPU journal, *Votes for Women* in 1908 and 1911, the work provided a neat comparison as well as historical counterpoint to *Women & Work*, aligning it in both the history of the women’s movement and to the conditions of women working in industry.

The exhibition of *Women & Work* a year or so later in Tate Modern from 2016-17, demonstrates the recursive nature of conceptual artwork from this period – the tendency to attempt to place it through a backwards or forward-looking lineage indicating the difficulty of placing conceptual art practice in a firm definition or timeframe. *Women & Work* was temporarily exhibited in the new extension at Tate Modern with a quite different approach to that at Tate Britain, fitting more closely with contemporary objectives of art history and the site in which it was exhibited. (Fig. 31, 32) The 2016 Blavatnik extension of the Tate Modern was intended to transform the Tate to ‘redefine the museum for the twenty first century, placing artists and their art at its centre while fully integrating the display, learning and social functions of the museum, and strengthening links between the museum, its community and the City.’²¹⁴ (Fig. 33, 34, 35) Its location, in Southwark, not far from Bermondsey, where the statistics for *Women & Work* were originally collected, is now heavily gentrified with a definable artworld presence.²¹⁵ It also demonstrates a reversal of industry – Tate Modern was converted from a disused power station to a gallery in 2000. Here, like in its original display at the South London Gallery and the Spotlight Display at Tate Britain, the work inhabited a whole room as an installation with only slight alterations in the technology used to display the material. For example, the plastic listening booths in the original installation were replaced with plain black telephone headsets attached to a white box. (Fig. 34) As in the original installation, seating was provided for

²¹³ <http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-britain/display/bp-spotlight-sylvia-pankhurst>, accessed 04/03/2018

²¹⁴ <http://www.tate.org.uk/about-us/projects/tate-modern-project/vision>, accessed 01/03/2018

²¹⁵ Numerous art galleries are now present in this area including White Cube Bermondsey.

visitors where dossiers could be read detailing archival research into the history of women's rights/equal pay for women. The wall label for the work lists the individual components of the work: Daily Schedules; Names of women employees; Portraits of Women Employees; Rate Cards; Medical Reports; Grades 2-4: Women; Labour Process: gender comparison (chart); Labour Process: gender comparison (two films, on monitors); Interviews: Medical Officer, Shop Steward, Manager. However, the work was exhibited in the 'Performer and Participant' section of Tate suggesting its removal from the categorisation of 'conceptual' art and instead retrospectively positioning it to fit into a more recent definition of art as defined by Claire Bishop as 'Participatory Art'.

Bishop defines Participatory Art as follows in her book, *Artificial Hells*:

Expanded field of post-studio practices currently going under a variety of names: socially engaged art, community-based art, experimental communities, dialogic art, littoral art?, interventionist art, participatory art, collaborative art, contextual art and (most recently) social practice.²¹⁶

Bishop argued for the use of the term 'participatory' as it connotes the 'involvement of many people (as opposed to the one-to-one relationship of 'interactivity') and avoids the ambiguities of 'social engagement'. She writes that as it might be asked 'what art isn't socially engaged?' Her book is organised around a definition of participation in which 'people constitute the central artistic medium and material'.²¹⁷ Thus, like art and language as a definition of medium, this Tate display is equally defined by its mediums. The two categorisations of this work by Tate exemplify different approaches to defining conceptual art – while the display at Tate Britain looked at sociological method as a conceptual strategy, aligning itself more closely to the work's original intention, its most recent designation as 'Participatory Art' is a retroactive definition which does not attest to the complexities and radical nature of some of the earlier form of socially-engaged practice which, like early conceptual art, was not easily defined by its medium or concept. However, its usage indicates the production of

²¹⁶ Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London: Verso, 2012), 1

²¹⁷ Ibid.

conceptual art through social research and its display, using the subject as its material through a statistical format, collecting facts, figures, photography and sound recordings as its entities.

Bishop describes participatory art as having ‘a relatively weak profile in the commercial art world,’ which, she writes might be because collective projects are more difficult to market than work by individual artists: ‘to put it simply: the artist is conceived less as an individual producer of discrete objects than as a collaborator and producer of *situations*; the work of art as a finite, portable, commodifiable product is reconceived as an ongoing or long-term *project* with an unclear beginning and end; while the audience previously conceived as a ‘viewer’ or ‘beholder’ is now repositioned as a co-producer or *participant*.’²¹⁸ However, the application of this definition of ‘participatory art’ to *Women & Work* is retroactive.

In order to explore this retroactive definition further, it is necessary to explore the wider exhibition context of conceptual art from 1972 to 1976 and other ‘socially-engaged practices’, or ‘participatory art’. In March/April 1976, *Studio International*, under the editorship of Richard Cork published a special issue subtitled ‘Art & Social Purpose’, which I will cover further in later chapters. During this period, Barry Barker was briefly the director of the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London. Barker coordinated a number of art exhibitions which pursued art based on research and industry including two exhibitions by the artist Conrad Atkinson in 1972 and 1974 respectively: *Strike at Brannan’s* and *Work, Wages and Prices*. *Strike at Brannan’s* dealt with the long strike by the women worker’s of Brannan’s factory at Cleator Moor, Cumberland while ‘Work’ formed part of the ‘Alienation’ programme at the ICA.²¹⁹ (Fig. 41) This artwork tackled a more general issue: the working

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ In ‘Art of Work’, *Guardian*, 23 April 1974, 14, Caroline Tisdall describes ‘Alienation at the ICA as ‘the latest in the ICA’s periodic series of long, cool looks at contemporary cultural issues. It follows lecture programmes over the past few years that have examined linguistics, ecology, and the body as a means of expression’. It was designed by Jonathan Benthall.

conditions at the time and the division of wealth that existed around those conditions. In notes towards *Strike at Brannan's* form and contents, Atkinson describes it as follows:

[the] exhibition will consist of a documentation of work in a conceptual and structural approach which will attempt to explain the background structures and the context of the mechanisms affecting and affected by work in our society. Technically this will be a simpler exhibition than 'STRIKE AT BRANNANS' but much broader in the implications and approach. The exhibition will consist of slides, photographs, documents and sound recordings.²²⁰

A press release from the ICA describes Atkinson as an artist who, for the past few years, has worked on a range of social subjects, 'not usually considered very interesting by the art world'.²²¹ They write that Atkinson hopes that his work is not disconnected or on a higher plane than politics but that it should relay the thoughts and opinions of ordinary people and that art should be an effective analytical and critical mechanism which does not just result in a pretty art object. Caroline Tisdall, in her *Guardian* article, 'Art of Work', describes how the work had a direct impact on the working circumstances for the workers at Brannan's with one of the departments at Brannan's London factory becoming 100 per cent unionised after seeing the exhibition about the strike at the ICA.²²²

Another artwork which similarly addressed the trajectory of social and political concerns as well as ordinary working lives was Ian Breakwell's *The Institution* (1971). (Fig. 39, 40) This consisted of a two-man performance/dialogue between Breakwell and Kevin Coyne intended for the Spectrum exhibition at Alexandra Palace, London in 1973. The performance is described as:

revolving around a script on institutions, which were typified by a 'mental' hospital, and in particular, Whittingham Hospital Lancashire. It was intended as the first in a continuous and growing body of inquiry which would grow to include tape-recordings, music, interviews, films, slides, photography and written documentation, discussions, printed material around the subject of 'the institution'.²²³

²²⁰ Conrad Atkinson, 'Strike at Brennan's' Press Release in ICA Institutional Records, Tate Archives, TGA 955/7/8/35

²²¹ Ian Breakwell, 'The Institution' in ICA Institutional Records, Tate Archives, TGA 20054/4/3/1

²²² Caroline Tisdall, 'Art of Work', *Arts Guardian*, 23 April, 1974, 14

²²³ Ian Breakwell, 'The Institution' in ICA Institutional Records, Tate Archives, TGA 20054/4/3/1

A variety of media is specified in the communication of Breakwell's idea which is performed by two artists rather than simply presented as documentation. Staged as a narrative around Breakwell and Coyne, with Coyne as the narrator who used improvised speech, song, dance and mime, attempts a personal impression of the Institution and Breakwell as the secretary, seated at a desk, surrounded by books, telephone files, correspondence and a tape-recorder. In the performance the secretary manipulates the Narrator's performance: interrupting verbally and interjecting with prepared tape-recordings thus the performance develops into a dialogue between the Narrator, the Secretary, the tape-recorder and the audience. This performance was then filmed and photographed and exhibited at the ICA. This framing of labour within the context of a museum by artists using participants, their work, their social context as their materials leaves the question of where the medium is – is it through context, through the collective – the interrelating aspects of media which make up this work which by themselves would just be documentation or just 'work'? The context of the exhibition space as well as its subsequent circulation gives the material or media meaning. This attempt to integrate life as art relates to a revival of the avant-garde or a neo-avant-garde which proposes the sublation of art as against Aestheticism and a dissociation from the praxis of life as the dominant characteristics of art in bourgeois society.

Conceptual Art's references to everyday contexts were evident in other performances or events including Gilbert & George's *Living Sculptures* which began in the early 1970s. In this series, the duo produced a series of staged photographs and paintings with scenes from everyday life, making themselves the subject – sat in their house on Fournier Street or on the side of the River Thames, overlooking the Palace of Westminster.²²⁴ The slogan of the works, 'Art for All' with George writing of the works 'The basis of our inspiration is the fact that there are all these people all over the world alive. It's

²²⁴ This series was reproduced in the May 1970 issue of *Studio International* magazine.

the best thing about everything. And sometimes art ignores that. Art ignores the viewer.’²²⁵ Despite what appeared to be a documentation of a series of performances, Gilbert & George insisted on calling the medium of all their work ‘sculpture’ but by making themselves the sculptures and thus collapsing life with art, the project was ongoing rather than closed or finished.

Alongside these artworks, the series of exhibitions at the ICA also featured work by all male, conceptually-defined, mainly American artists including Dan Graham, Lawrence Weiner, Douglas Huebler and Victor Burgin. In 1976, at the very end of this series, Mary Kelly’s *Post-Partum Document* was exhibited.²²⁶ Kelly has said of this period, ‘there were no other women, of course, at that time.’²²⁷ She says that her interest in conceptual art practice stemmed back to art school when from 1968 to 1971 she attended St Martin’s College of Art in London and writes that people like Gilbert & George, Richard Long, Charles Harrison and Art & Language were of interest to her. However, ‘from the moment that this imposition of social issues occurred, there was also something very inadequate about the systematic approach to art, something wrong with the formula, “art interrogating the conditions of the existence of the object”, and then going on to the second stage and interrogating the conditions of the interrogation itself, but refusing to include subjectivity or sexual difference in that interrogation.’²²⁸ In conversation with art historian and curator, Juli Carson, Kelly has said that her interest in conceptual art was in the work of Joseph Kosuth and Terry Atkinson and others who ‘were part of that group at the time’ (Art & Language) and writes that her work was ‘absolutely polemically related to their work [the Indexing Projects] of 1972.’²²⁹ She argued that their interrogation of intersubjectivity

²²⁵ Carter Ratcliff, ‘GILBERT & GEORGE: The Fabric of Their World’, *Gilbert & George: The Complete Pictures 1971-1985* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1986), XI

²²⁶ *Post-Partum Document* was completed from 1973 to 1979 but exhibited at various points during the process. *Post-Partum Document: Documents I-III* was first exhibited at the ICA in London in 1976, *Documents I-V* were exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art, Oxford in 1977. The final part of the work, *Post-Partum Document VI*, was completed in 1979. The whole project was exhibited at the Generali Foundation, Vienna in 1998: *Post-Partum Document, The Complete Work 1973-79*.

²²⁷ ‘Excavating Post-Partum Document: Mary Kelly in conversation with Juli Carson’, 187

²²⁸ Mary Kelly in interview with Douglas Crimp in Iverson M., Crimp D., and Bhaba H.K., *Mary Kelly* (London: Phaidon, 1997), 11

²²⁹ ‘Excavating Post-Partum Document: Mary Kelly in conversation with Juli Carson’, 185

was very literal, empirical and very hermetic, ‘since the examination doesn’t really move outside of the confines of the aesthetic paradigm.’²³⁰ This approach is exemplified best by Kelly’s work, *Post-Partum Document*, which was completed from 1973 to 1979.

Mary Kelly’s *Post-Partum Document*, 1973-1979

In Eve Meltzer’s 2015 publication, *Systems We Have Loved: Conceptual Art, Affect, and the Antihumanist Turn*, she writes that the book’s aim is to reveal conceptual art’s ‘affective and visual dimensions’ and ‘the slips and chiasms of subjectivity that structuralism can’t account for.’²³¹ Meltzer’s book starts with a study of Kelly’s, *Antepartum*, 1973 – a work which preceded *Post-Partum Document* and consists of a dual-screen, silent, ninety-second Super 8 film-loop installation of Kelly’s pregnant stomach. The art historian, Siona Wilson gives a detailed account of *Antepartum* which takes into account its original dual-screen construct as it is now usually presented as a single screen. Wilson describes how the two 8mm projectors with continuous loop attachments were placed side by side and in the same place as the spectators in its original presentation at Portsmouth Polytechnic in 1974. She argues that ‘the spectator’s position “within” the work, alongside this filmic apparatus, interpolates her [the spectator] as part of the ongoing process of the work’s production.’²³² The two films are silent, on one screen is a woman’s hands operating an industrial machine, on the other is the cropped torso of a heavily pregnant woman (Kelly’s torso), thus comparing reproductive labour with productive labour. Wilson writes that the work connects the question of social reproduction by analogy to value-producing labour: ‘Here the activities of care, love, and affection, as well as the impositions of

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ Eve Meltzer, *Systems We Have Loved: Conceptual Art, Affect, and the Antihumanist Turn* (MIT Press, 2015), 10

²³² Wilson, *Art Labor, Sex Politics: Feminist Effects in 1970s British Art and Performance*, 72

sanctions and punishment, would be part of a mother's work.'²³³ The footage of the factory worker became part of Kelly, Harrison and Hunt's *Women & Work*,

Meltzer writes that while *Post-Partum Document* is 'resolutely progressive in its development from the child's first fecal traces to his inscription of his own name', this earlier work, *Antepartum*, 'is recursive, suspended – although not quite *waiting* for the subject to appear as one would say of other important works of the period.'²³⁴ Kelly made *Post-Partum Document* over six years (1973-1978) a documentation of the first five years of her son's life. (Fig. 47, 48, 49) Via charts, found objects and recordings alongside Lacanian commentary, she traced her child's development through to the male symbolic order of language. The work consisted of 135 units broken into six sections. Each section began with an indexical 'residue' of the child's subjective development up to the age of five – speech, drawing, writing – each was labelled as 'documentation', the residue forming the works index, its media or substrate between the child and communication with the audience. (Fig. 42, 43) Now well known, the work sits between conceptual art and psychoanalysis and has occupied this territory ever since its production. As such, it demonstrates an intersubjectivity and relationship to context which Art & Language's Indexes failed to address. Carson writes that the work 'was founded upon the very notion of 'debate-specificity' at a time when specialised models of interrogating a site were still dominant.'²³⁵ She writes:

In general, most Conceptualists were unconcerned with the Document's investigation of the subject, let alone its positions of domestic labour or 'femininity' as a viable site of 'systems analysis'. Those interested in psychoanalytically informed feminism, on the other hand, were generally unaware of the visual strategies of representation simultaneously being innovated by an aspect of Conceptualism (put into service of what later became Institutional Critique).²³⁶

²³³ Ibid, 74.

²³⁴ Meltzer, *Systems We Have Loved: Conceptual Art, Affect, and the Antihumanist Turn*, 7

²³⁵ Juli Carson, "Excavating Discursivity: Post-Partum Document in the Conceptualist, Feminist, and Psychoanalytic Fields" (PhD dis., MIT, 2000), 24

²³⁶ Ibid, 29

Like *Women & Work*, however, *Post-Partum Document* consists of a variety of media and simultaneously addressed questions of aesthetics, semiotics, film, psychoanalysis and feminist art. The work thus acted as an ongoing documentation or analysis of her child's acquisition of language during this period and like Art & Language's Indexes, it used discourse to avoid the singular author function. It is therefore worth exploring Kelly's work further within the context of male conceptual artists and her relationship to this landscape. (Fig. 43, 44, 46)

Kelly's interaction with the work of male conceptual artists involved processes of mimicry, reaction and response rather than direct collaboration. For example, Kelly discusses how the interests of artist Stephen Willats were broader than that of Art & Language's: Willats being interested in information and systems theory. She says in interview with Carson that Willats wanted to encompass the 'riff raff' in his projects 'meaning women, working class artists, and the Situationists'.²³⁷ She writes how the 'net was spread' around his magazine, *Control* (1965-ongoing), which was 'much wider than people like Art & Language would be interested in and he 'solicited the first writing that I did on the *Document* for his magazine: 'Notes on Reading the Post-Partum Document'. Kelly describes how he followed her work very closely, writing how the structure of the project was not predetermined and she did it in stages – the first of three sections which she showed in 1976, at the ICA, at which point she wrote footnotes for the work. Willats subsequently invited her to write a commentary for the work in *Control* magazine. Kelly describes how when you look at the magazine's table of contents, the *Document* is unusually placed. She lists how the artists Dan Graham, Herve Fischer and Allan Sondheim, as well as John Stezakar, dominate the contents page of issue seven – artists who were making conceptual and sociological art and were also interested in discourse theory. (Fig. 45) She observes how the placement of her artwork alongside Willat's – a tall tower block on the front cover, which might also read as a phallic monument – is in dialogue with the use of Lacan's 'Schema R' in *Post-Partum*, writing 'not to reduce it to a conceptualist visual formula, but nonetheless, there's a level of aesthetic consideration

²³⁷ Ibid, 186

that overlaps between both your uses of the schematic square'.²³⁸ Kelly writes that she was visually very involved with the Schema diagrams as it was all part of her desire for a denoted language at the time and that what she liked in particular about the use of a psychoanalytic reference is that it undercut that utopian hope of rationality by attempting to 'diagram the utterly irrational process of the unconscious.'²³⁹ She continues, 'but what I really like was that it represented to me visually, as a comment to these other diagrams and my own desire... I mean my (own desire) for a kind of mastery that mimes what the guys were doing. And at the same time, it undercut their logic.'²⁴⁰ Thus, while *Post-Partum Document* was not collaborative in the way that *Women & Work* was, it nevertheless utilised platforms of conceptual art, therefore situating Kelly within this discourse while simultaneously disassembling this hierarchy, this order of language. Siona Wilson comments how there is only one image used in *Post-Partum Document* – an image of Kelly and her son which was used on the frontispiece for the 1985 book version of the book. In the work, the image sits between a mock-up of one of Lacan's diagrams of the subject – the schema for the Real. Wilson writes in Lacanian psychoanalysis the Real is that which cannot be represented through image or language and 'all sorts of representations are produced precisely to cover over this lack of representability', thus making *Post-Partum Document* an emblem for the unrepresentable. Wilson concludes: 'The poster could speak directly to a closed avant-garde milieu – a "closeted cult" as Kelly described it – that existed in 1970s London.'²⁴¹ It is between this unrepresentability which defines women's art in relation to conceptual art in the 1970s – excluded from major exhibitions and retrospectives partially through a male-dominated conceptual art scene but also through a lack of available images or words in that scene which could adequately represent women artists' experiences.

²³⁸ Lacan's Schema R relates to the mother, child and 'imaginary phallus' which precedes the child coming into through the subjectivity of language.

²³⁹ Juli Carson, "Excavating Discursivity: Post-Partum Document in the Conceptualist, Feminist, and Psychoanalytic Fields", 186

²⁴⁰ Ibid, 186-7

²⁴¹ Wilson, *Art Labor, Sex Politics: Feminist Effects in 1970s British Art and Performance*, 183

Summary

The numerous exhibitions and retrospectives of conceptual art in and around 1972, both nationally and internationally, demonstrate the acceptance of conceptual art within major galleries and museums by this point. Although Art & Language's self-reflexive, discursive practice and self-institutionalising was very prominent in major exhibitions around this point, it failed to adapt to different forms of intersubjectivity in text-based art practice. This was better demonstrated by the singular and collective projects of Mary Kelly, Margaret Harrison, Kay Fido Hunt, Conrad Atkinson and Ian Breakwell, amongst others. Conceptual art from 1972 to 1976 was increasingly orientated around utilising the documentation of labour, unions and strikes as their material or media in open-ended projects, mirroring aspects of Britain's social and political context at the time. However, in this chapter I demonstrated how the press, as well as the general public, found the status and categorisation of these works confusing: as artwork or research project. Yet, I argued, that early forms of socially-engaged art practice differed from more recent permutations of 'participatory' art and from 'Relational Aesthetics' as they were seeking to present social and political research as art in a paradigm which did not yet accommodate this media. As such, like conceptual art, they cannot be read through this retroactive lens. However, I demonstrated how the work by these artists in the seventies represented a continuum of the interrogatory practices of the late 1960s, which asked what the media of art should be, how should it be looked and and how should it be read. I will explore this further in the following chapters by placing the reading and viewing of this artwork within the context of the exhibition as well as within educational contexts.

Chapter 2: Between Looking and Reading: Exhibiting Text-Based Conceptual Art

Introduction

And things, what is the correct attitude to adopt towards things? And, to begin with, are they necessary? What a question. But I have few illusions, things are to be expected. The best is not to decide anything in advance. If a thing turns up, for some reason or another, take it into consideration. Where there are people, it is said, there are things. Does this mean that when you admit the former, you admit the latter? Time will tell. The thing to avoid, I don't know why, is the system. People with things, people without things, things without people, what does it matter, I flatter myself it will not take me long to scatter them, whenever I choose, to the winds. I don't see how. The best would be not to begin.²⁴²

It is an archive of archives – the relic of long ago events primly filed in glass cases. The relatively small body of actual art is eked out with numerous periodicals telling of performances we will never see and shows practically nobody saw even then.²⁴³

The term 'medium' has recently undergone much investigation yet deserves further clarification still in relation to conceptual art.²⁴⁴ It has frequently been used in conjunction with the term 'dematerialization' in order to describe conceptual art as anti-objecthood, ephemeral and prioritising ideas and concepts over 'finished' art objects. Thus, it is defined in relation to its lack, or as the invert to a 'materialized' artwork, such as painting and sculpture. Originally coined by Lucy R. Lippard and John Chandler in their 1968 essay, 'The Dematerialization of Art,' the initial intention of a work which was 'dematerialized', was to allow a more democratic approach to art's distribution, enabling its seriality and portability outside of the institution of the art gallery, which a more traditional art object

²⁴² Samuel Beckett, *The Unnamable, The Beckett Trilogy* (London: Picador, 1959), 268

²⁴³ Laura Cummings, 'Conceptual Art in Britain 1964-1979 – An Antiseptic Archive of Archives' in *The Guardian* (17 April 2016)

²⁴⁴ One of the more recent interpretations of medium is by Craig Dworkin in his 2013 book *No Medium* defines the term 'medium' as misleading as when we think of media, we think of objects. 'Indeed, the closer one looks at the materiality of a work – at the brute fact of its physical composition – the more sharply a social context is put into focus. To begin with, materials can only be legible as media under certain circumstances; they only make sense in specific circumstances; they only make sense in specific contexts.'

might not allow.²⁴⁵ In specifying such attributes, it also moved the production of art from the sphere of the studio to sites which were traditionally reserved for study, research, political activity, labour or domesticity: the library, the classroom, the laboratory, the factory, the university, the home. Thus, work was made collectively and collaboratively through learning, discussion and through the collection of data, grounding the artwork in its social and political context. As a result, its media became the act of production, the ideology of the work, the participants of the project and the audience's interaction with the work. Yet, due to the lack of clarity in the defining characteristics of conceptual art, its media remains unclear. Furthermore, the format of artists' magazines and text-based artworks, which sought to transcend the boundaries of curating and criticism, were swiftly incorporated into this object-orientated narrative of viewing an artwork in a gallery or museum either at its point of original production and distribution or shortly after, affiliating it with the institutions which it initially sought to critique. Conceptual art was not, however, a rejection of the visual but rather a rejection of 'its unthinking historicisation as 'truth', 'pleasure' and 'beauty'.²⁴⁶ The media associated with conceptual art are considered within this historical western paradigm of viewing and display where art is judged against bodily needs and desires and upon its sensual appearance. John Roberts clarifies this when he writes that it was these "new spectator requirements" that provide analytic conceptual art 'with its self-esteem and binds it to the future.'²⁴⁷ He continues that 'the whole point of shifting attention away from art-as-nomination to art-as-stating was to release the spectator from what was seen as the 'sleep' of Modernist spectatorship.' Concluding that to think about the artwork in terms of the premises that govern its propositional content is 'to reawaken the viewer as intellectually attentive.'²⁴⁸ In the

²⁴⁵ Terry Atkinson contested the term 'dematerialization' in a letter written to Lippard and Chandler in response to the essay, 'The Dematerialization of Art' (1968). Atkinson argued that as 'dematerialization' meant 'to deprive of material qualities', artworks could only be metaphorically dematerialized. Terry Atkinson, 'Concerning the article 'the dematerialization of art', reprinted in Alberro and Stimson (eds.), *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology* (1999)

²⁴⁶ John Roberts, 'Photography, Iconophobia and the Ruins of Conceptual Art' in *The Impossible Document: Photography and Conceptual Art in Britain 1966-1976* (London: Camerawork, 1997), 17

²⁴⁷ Ibid, 13

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

conceptual art practice of the late 1960s, knowledge and cognition were therefore put forward as necessary prerequisites of viewing an artwork.

In this chapter, I explore the history of the display of text-based artwork with relation to changing definitions of media in order to challenge Peter Osborne's argument that conceptual art's most decisive, collective and important act of the 1960s was its critical destruction of the medium as ontological category. For while the definition of conceptual art's medium is difficult to define within traditional confines of viewing and medium-specificity, it is crucial to explore this work in terms of its critical framing in light of various debates in this area in order to understand its legacy. Starting with the critical reception of the 2016 exhibition at Tate Britain, *Conceptual Art in Britain 1964-1979*, I explore the categorisation of text-based art practice and its display, by asking the following questions: how should one display artworks which are suspended between objecthood and anti-objecthood and whose premise is neither spectacle nor easy consumption but work, time and reflection? How is one supposed to display art where its meaning might come through audience interaction but where that particular audience was so specifically contextually and temporally-bound, and or with assumed prior knowledge, that the meaning might now be lost? How does one display art made of text when its original premise was to question divisions between looking and reading, questions integral to analytical conceptual art and lastly, how do we define the media of such work when its premise and ideology is not based in constructing an object for display but rather to communicate and interact with an audience in order to question art's purpose and larger sociality?

Within this, I will explore the notion of 'fragmentation' as integral for understanding both the display and reproduction of text-based art, and the relationship of conceptual art to modernism. For although the history of conceptual art has been largely dominated by American and European histories, and the medium of text-based practice and artists' publications has been extensively discussed, the artist's text or publication has rarely been addressed as a discursive, active and political tool, where the medium arises from the act of reading rather than from the examination of the text

and pages on which it is printed as ‘material’. The production of these texts, through conversation, entail a plurality of voices and are open-ended, their reading is similarly discursive in that another critical voice is brought into the existing dialogue. As the art historian Hans Belting has written on the act of reading and the distinction of a medium:

The spoken language is linked to the body, which as a living medium, speaks it, while the written language withdraws from the body and retreats to a book or monitor, where we do not listen to a voice but read a text. The act of reading depends on our acquired distinction of word and medium - which, in a way, also applies to the act of viewing images, though we are usually unaware of those mechanisms.²⁴⁹

Thus, the question of what constitutes the artwork is put forward – its material components and its perception, or the reading of the text and the mental and physical activity which this involves.

In conclusion to the chapter, I look to the exhibition and publication of text-based art in relation to the idea of ‘translation’ and how its literal, temporal and contextual translation can effect how we read the work of art. I demonstrate how the re-exhibiting of these works confronts a difficult issue, which is not limited to text-based work but more generally, to the re-performance or re-exhibition of any artwork or artefact. I ask what happens if we consider text-based artwork not as immaterial or static but as materialised and gestural, and dependent on its exhibition context and its interpretation by the reader, as well as that of the artist? For while it is easy to blame the loss of meaning through the de/re-contextualisation of these texts, it is also important to analyse how these re-positionings can create alternative and new readings and meanings.

Conceptual Art in Britain 1964-1979 at the Tate Britain

Upon its opening in April 2016, the exhibition, *Conceptual Art in Britain 1964-1979* at Tate Britain (Fig. 50 and 51) encountered widespread criticism from the press. Its intention was to convey a history of

²⁴⁹ Hans Belting, ‘Image, Medium, Body: A New Approach to Iconology’, *Critical Inquiry* 31, No. 2 (Winter 2005), 306

conceptual art in Britain which differentiated itself from, yet accounted for, the international context in which artists in this period were operating. The exhibition featured work by various artists including Art & Language, Victor Burgin, Richard Long, Susan Hiller and Stephen Willats, amongst others, and was the first retrospective covering conceptual art in Britain during this period. Yet almost immediately, criticism from the press defined the contents and display of the show as anti-populist and intellectually demanding due to its emphasis on text-heavy artworks.

For example, Laura Cummings of *The Observer* wrote of the show as the ‘uptight, often nerdish strain’²⁵⁰ of conceptual art and Adrian Searle, writing for *The Guardian*, described it as a ‘trainspotter’s shuffle through difficult and complex times and acres of printed ephemera.’²⁵¹ These views were mirrored by Martin Coomer in *Time Out* who wrote of the exhibition:

And, everywhere, words to read: in treatises, tracts and manifestos in display cases and on the walls as artworks in their own right. You know you’re on to a losing game when a piece of text art needs another – way longer text to explain it.²⁵²

These accounts underlined an integral question of exhibiting many of the text-based works which constituted conceptual art during the late 1960s and early 1970s. They also reveal the bias in art criticism against conceptual art which rather than critically review the show, presents their prejudices.

An antidote to this reading came in Anne Wagner’s review in the *London Review of Books* where she identified the difficulty that such work faces when it attempts to address large issues such as, ‘forms of knowledge, distinction, difference, power and communication that shape their world.’²⁵³ In another review, Stephen Moonie in *The Burlington Magazine* acknowledged that the extensive amount of printed material in vitrines would ‘make the viewer work’ but that this is a ‘welcome corrective to the often

²⁵⁰ Laura Cummings, ‘Conceptual Art in Britain 1964-1979 review – an antiseptic archive of archives

²⁵¹ Adrian Searle, ‘Conceptual Art in Britain review – a Trainspotter’s Guide’, *The Guardian*, 12 April, 2016

²⁵² Martin Coomer, ‘Conceptual Art in Britain 1964-1979’ in *Time Out*, 29 August, 2016

²⁵³ Anne Wagner, ‘At Tate Britain’, *London Review of Books* (14 July 2016), www.lrb.co.uk/v38/n14/anne-wagner/at-tate-britain

easy appeal of the blockbuster exhibition.²⁵⁴ The readership of the *London Review of Books* and of *The Burlington Magazine* is of course different to that of *The Guardian*, or of *Time Out*, and newspaper and journal contents are led by their readership. Therefore while Wagner argued that the show whether visited by novice or expert deserved attention and contemplation and she reminded her readers that ‘lists, schemes, systems and graphs’, were the medium of conceptual art, her view already assumes a certain level of knowledge of both conceptual and contemporary art. Wagner is also presumptive of the acceptance of language or text as the ‘medium’ of conceptual art when she writes:

These were artists more at home at a desk than an easel, more likely to wield a camera than a paintbrush.²⁵⁵

In referring to the medium of this particular type of conceptual art, ‘words’, it is important to question whether, as Wagner suggests, the words were the ‘medium’ of the artwork or whether they were the supporting structure to the embodied act of looking and reading. In order to explore the concept of looking and reading in the context of an exhibition further, I will compare the installation as well as the intentions, execution and reception of the 2016 Tate exhibition, *Conceptual Art in Britain 1964-1979*, to the large-scale retrospective of Art & Language’s work at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Barcelona (MACBA) in 2014-15: *Art & Language Uncompleted: The Philippe Méaille Collection*.

In the Tate’s 2016 exhibition, vitrines housed the majority of the text-based artwork and artists’ publications. In the first room, Gallery 61, were a long row of glass vitrines filled with artists’ publications and texts situated along a timeline of the period in question, thus foregrounding the exhibition in the importance of the printed page. (Fig. 52) In the main galleries, more vitrines were situated in a row down the centre of the room. They were positioned at waist height and acted as a point of focus to the surrounding, largely wall-based works. (Fig. 53). The magazines and printed matter in these central vitrines were considered both art and archival material thus constituting a

²⁵⁴ Stephen Moonie, ‘Conceptual Art in Britain 1964-1979’ in *The Burlington Magazine*, no.158 (July 2016): 572-3

²⁵⁵ Anne Wagner, ‘At Tate Britain’, *London Review of Books*, 14 July, 2016, www.lrb.co.uk/v38/n14/anne-wagner/at-tate-britain

double role. Their presence provided a narrativising structure to the show, which demonstrated to the viewer the development of ideas and the growth of voices.

The curator of the exhibition, Andrew Wilson, has said that he was careful to guard against making more of the publications than was needed, or to make them obviously different from the other artworks on display. He gives the example of the pages of a magazine – that if its pages were enlarged and printed on a wall, the magazine’s status would be changed as it would go against what such publications essentially are – a collection of sheets of paper in a particular sequence, bound in a cover. Some of Art & Language’s publications were only loosely bound with a plastic clip, which were then dismantled and displayed on the gallery wall. This, however, followed a historical precedent of their display rather than Wilson’s choice as curator. Wilson says he sees the artist’s magazine as without great intrinsic value but with great artistic value, continuing, that even if their display seemed too orthodox, placing them in a vitrine was as close as one could get to their original purpose and form.²⁵⁶ Through the exhibition, he wanted to make the viewer aware of the difference between the qualities of a publication and the qualities of something that hung on a wall, and to signpost that context accordingly. He felt the wall texts and the publications in the exhibition were hugely important as they were a means of trying to understand what conceptual art was when an audience was largely unaccustomed to viewing work this way. He says that he did not want the work to be viewed as something which was purposefully difficult, convoluted or elitist, as the reviews suggested, instead, as art which came out of a reaction to modernist sculpture and painting, and which was also bound to the context of post-war Britain. Lastly, he wanted the visitor to have the realisation that you could have work that didn't hang on the wall of the gallery but rather could be placed flat in a vitrine and read as text, therefore questioning the prioritisation of the visual – to see that art could be intellectual, analytical and visual.²⁵⁷

²⁵⁶ Interview between Louisa Lee and Andrew Wilson, 02/10/2017

²⁵⁷ Interview between Louisa Lee and Carles Guerra, 15/05/2017

The large-scale retrospective of Art & Language's work at MACBA, *Art & Language Uncompleted*, contrasted in purpose and layout to the later exhibition at Tate Britain. (Fig. 54 and 55) While the Tate exhibition centred largely around the public collection of an institution, the MACBA exhibition was based around the private collection of Philippe Méaille. This had been on long term loan to the museum since 2009 and following five years dedicated to 'the restoration, study, documentation and ordering of this extraordinary body of works', a selection of works and documents were put on display.²⁵⁸ Curated by the former Chief Curator at MACBA, Carles Guerra, the exhibition catalogue described it as 'one of the most exceptional artistic productions of the second half of the twentieth century', calling for 'a thorough review of what we consider to be work.'²⁵⁹ The work was displayed in a mass of glass vitrines with little space to read or contemplate the work: there were 50 glass vitrines in the main upstairs gallery space. These were aligned closely to one another and framed the room by curving neatly around the gallery wall. The black trestle tables upon which the large amount of publications and printed texts were sat mirrored the polished black floors of MACBA's gallery and as such acted as an installation or as a seamless extension of the gallery space. Each vitrine was filled with typed and written texts and copies of *Art-Language*, thus making the texts into installations rather than readable objects, which sometimes followed a narrative and were originally intended to be handled and touched. (Fig. 56, 57)

Guerra has said of the layout in interview that although 'the museum is a very unlikely space for the visitors to spend time reading', its display was not entirely about the work 'being read', but he felt it important to present the work as a whole so that the visitor could make their own connections.²⁶⁰ He designed the room to be full with paper, not with the intention that the visitor could read all of this paper but for the visitor to remember that at some point in history 'art looked like this'.²⁶¹ He places

²⁵⁸ Bartomeu Mari and Fabrice Hergott, 'Radically Uncompleted, Radically Inconclusive' in *Art & Language Uncompleted: The Philippe Méaille Collection* (Barcelona: MACBA, 2014), 7

²⁵⁹ Carles Guerra, 'Art & Language's Afterlife in The Philippe Méaille Collection' in *Art & Language Uncompleted*, 12

²⁶⁰ Interview between Louisa Lee and Carles Guerra, 15/05/2017

²⁶¹ Ibid.

emphasis on seeing the group's output as a whole, and argues that if you have had the time to read and understand the whole of Art & Language's output then you pretty much understand the history of art. In the accompanying catalogue for the exhibition, Guerra writes that the, 'connections, contextualisations and comparisons within in the universe of Art & Language', would prevent anyone taking a privileged position over its contents and therefore we might expect the contemporary reader to attempt the opposite.²⁶² The display of this collection at MACBA was overwhelming in its extensiveness and display and it potentially alienated audiences and formed a barrier between the work as artwork and texts which were meant to be read. According to Guerra, however, he saw the design of this exhibition as uncluttered. He says the works were installed so the viewer was forced to walk around them and look at them from every angle so that when they entered the exhibition, they were entering an 'environment'.²⁶³ (Fig. 58, 59)

There are a number of factors which contributed to the way the exhibition was organised which are worth considering in relation to its reception. For example, the fact that it took place in a Catalan-language institution is significant for how the majority of the visitors would have encountered the work – through a second language, thus forcing them either to see the text visually or to translate the work. Yet, Art & Language's exhibition history encompasses a number of shows abroad from point of the work's original conception and display – at Daniel Templon Gallery in Paris as well as through German dealer Paul Maenz and Swiss dealer, Bruno Bischofberger.²⁶⁴ In these exhibitions, the texts were sometimes translated into French or German but usually left in English, therefore its translatability or untranslatability has always been an aspect of its exhibition history. Furthermore, looking at and reading conceptual art is always an act of translation therefore the viewer is always at

²⁶² Carles Guerra, 'Art & Language's Afterlife in The Philippe Méaille Collection' in *Art & Language Uncompleted*, 12

²⁶³ Interview between Louisa Lee and Carles Guerra, 15/05/2017

²⁶⁴ I refer to exhibitions including 'Analytical Art' and 'The Art & Language Institute' at Galerie Daniel Templon in 1972 and an exhibition of Art & Language's work at Galerie Paul Maenz in 1973, amongst others.

some partial remove so its recent display at MACBA was not without precedent and the visibility of the work remained prioritized over its textual qualities.

In addition to this, by calling the exhibition, *Art & Language Uncompleted*, Guerra acknowledged that the group's history was not easily defined both within conceptual art as a movement and within a wider context of the history of art. Despite the suggestion of the title – that it was not yet finished, or that this dialogue was ongoing – the flaws in the exhibition were evident. For example, the display of these journals was seen as unproblematic and the viewer was unable to handle the works thus not considering that they were once 'living' documents – portable, readable from start to finish, and in circulation. In addition to this, looking to the catalogue for clues on the exhibition's intentions, the directors of MACBA, Bartomeu Mari and Fabrice Hergott, wrote:

A huge range of written and typed documents, notes, microfilms, layouts and publications make us reconsider the marginal role of writing in Modern art practice.²⁶⁵

This recognises the role of text in Art & Language but places them in a history of modern art rather than contemporary practice or even conceptual art. Guerra has said of the exhibition that he sought to present the totality of Art & Language's output so readers could make their own links, or dialogues between the works on display, and much like some of Art & Language's own exhibitions in the 1970s, the gallery space was understood as a space for reflection. In addition to this, the fact that this retrospective was based around the temporary housing of Phillippe Méaille's collection at MACBA is significant. By basing the exhibition around this private collection, Guerra was forced to work with its selections and its omissions as Méaille's collection is fragmented in nature – missing parts of sets, parts of wholes – and therefore Guerra's desire for the viewer to see the work 'as a whole', which was not possible from the outset, was mitigated further by this fact. Furthermore, the display of a private

²⁶⁵ Bartomeu Mari and Fabrice Hergott, 'Radically Uncomplicated, Radically Inconclusive' in *Art & Language Uncompleted*, 7

collection demands certain conditions and therefore avoids certain critical curatorial choices and decisions as it is dictated by the collection's contents.

A fundamental difference between Wilson and Guerra's curatorial approaches thus relates to selection and display for while Guerra seeks to display the whole of this (incomplete) collection, Wilson selected specific artworks which he felt best demonstrated the narrative of conceptual art in Britain. However, these works were largely drawn from the Tate's public collection and therefore limitations were still imposed on this selection. Furthermore, how the work is read and whether this is essential to its understanding is integral to their two approaches, for while Guerra understood the work's meaning as evident through its reading as a totality, Wilson sees the fragment of a text in a display case as more representative of the group and, more widely, of conceptual art.

It is interesting to analyse the critical reception which the show at MACBA received in comparison to that of the group exhibition at Tate Britain. The reviews of the MACBA show are largely descriptive rather than critical and give history and context to Art & Language's practice. However, like those of the exhibition at Tate Britain, they sidestepped any extensive critical analysis of the group's history. Guerra describes how one review in the national newspaper, *El Pais*, appeared near the end of the exhibition's six-month duration and took up just half a column of the newspaper page. It described the group as 'poststructuralist', writing of the show, 'the good news is that the collection of Phillippe Méaille will stay at MACBA, the bad news is that the show and work is too tidy.'²⁶⁶ Despite the lack of interest in the show, its reviews were still more favourable than those of *Conceptual Art in Britain*. One review of the show in *Artforum* by Franz Thalmair stated:

²⁶⁶ This is summarised in the interview between Carles Guerra and Louisa Lee, 15/05/2017. In the interview Guerra says, 'the exhibition was up for six months, partly because it was big because at the moment there is a crisis and the programme slowed down... so I get a copy of the newspaper and the show is about to finish. Its not even a column, its half of a column and all it says is, 'these guys worked along the lines of post-structuralim' – first gross mistake! Art & Language were in total opposition to post-structuralism and it's a more quirky, provincial, analytical version of this but people cant really make a distinction and then it says, 'its great that tahis work is going to stay at MACBA , the bad news is that its too tidy' and I thought so much work, maybe I did it completely wrong, I would still do it the same and contrary to what we did here, we generated this new work by collapsing the whole history of Art & Language in one.'

Since the end of the 1960s, the collective's artistic practice has been based on discursive, theoretical and thus largely linguistic activities, such that only one can only reproduce, in fragments, the concepts that artwork by Art & Language – which locates art's foundations in the act of writing – expresses and persistently reopens to discussion.²⁶⁷

By locating their practice in the 'act of writing' rather than in language, Thalmair expresses the difficulty in 'understanding' their practice of ongoing dialogue through exhibition contexts as, he says, one can only reproduce the work 'in fragments'. The idea of reading the work through fragments is thus integral to the work's formation through discourse and its display, both at the time and more recently.

The exhibition at MACBA, and its subsequent reception, demonstrates an important example of how a retrospective of Art & Language's work can simultaneously frame and disrupt the work's legacy. Thus, its installation within a gallery space, and the act of translating this work can be done literally, temporally and culturally. As Walter Benjamin wrote in 'The Task of the Translator' (1963) of the act of translation:

Translation is a mode. To comprehend it as a mode one must go back to the original, for that contains the law governing the translation: its translatability... Just as manifestations of life are intimately connected with the phenomenon of life without being of importance to it, a translation issues from the original – not so much from its life but from its afterlife.²⁶⁸

It is in its afterlife, as Benjamin argues, where the paradox and tension in Art & Language's work is best understood. The critical responses to the exhibitions however give the impression that text-based art, or the art of Art & Language, might be better received within an institution where English is not the first language so the work is viewed as formally/graphically rather than through the act of reading. Yet at the same time looking at or reading conceptual art will always be a form of a 'second language' or, as mentioned before, an act of translation.

²⁶⁷ Franz Thalmair, translated by Diana Reese, 'Art & Language', *Artforum*, <https://www.artforum.com/index.php?pn=picks&id=49701&view=print>

²⁶⁸ Walter Benjamin, 'The Task of the Translator' in *Illuminations* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968), 70

Looking at *Art-Language*

The problems posed by the recent exhibition and retrospective, *Conceptual Art in Britain 1964-1979* at Tate Britain as well as *Art & Language Uncompleted* at MACBA, were not new to the display and reception of conceptual art. The display of these journals and texts, even at the time of their original production, has contributed to a wider legacy and reception of text-based art practice. It is therefore important to explore the format of the exhibition at the time of the work's original production as not just a neutral space to display, transmit or communicate ideas, but as a space which framed and mediated the work even at the time. The contemporary recontextualising of these artworks, as we saw with the exhibitions at Tate Britain and at MACBA, also seeks a certain authenticity or reproduction of an original and its display, both then and now, seeks to make material, or visible, a medium which is otherwise difficult to define. Starting with an exploration of Art & Language's 1975 early-career retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art in Oxford, *Retrospective Exhibitions and Current Practice*, I will explore the idea of how the framing of an artwork in a gallery mediated the work of Art & Language. (Fig. 60) Yet, I argue, that by 'self-institutionalising' their work in an early-career retrospective, the group sought to disrupt the construction of histories and legacies through the format of an artist's retrospective.

The exhibition, *Retrospective Exhibitions and Current Practice*, was suggested by Atkinson to the then director of The Museum of Modern Art in Oxford (now called Modern Art Oxford), Nick Serota. Directly after its installation at Oxford, it went on tour to the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, at the suggestion from Serota to the director of the Stedelijk, Rudi Fuchs.²⁶⁹ The exhibition questioned the concept of a retrospective format as marking the end of an artist's career, which like Bruce McLean's *King for a Day* in 1969, where the artist staged a one day early-career retrospective. McLean's

²⁶⁹ The Modern Art Oxford show took place in 1975 at a time when Art & Language were undergoing change. There were increasingly splits between A&L UK and A&L NY – From about six contributors in 1974, Art & Language had grown by the close of 1975 to about fifteen participants with *The Fox* magazine acting as a New York offshoot which only lasted three issues from 1975 to 1976.

retrospective consisted of a comprehensive compendium of proposals for sculpture; an imaginary retrospective catalogue which contained a thousand projected works. The titles of these works, writes Mel Gooding, parodied 'the nomenclature and categorisations of contemporary art world practice in a virtuosically sustained comic inventory of its obsessions, pretensions, vanities, fantasies, cynicisms, plagiarisms, appropriations, inveiglings, ingratiations, follies and fashions.'²⁷⁰ Initially shown at Nova Scotia College of Art in October 1970, it was exhibited again at the Tate in March 1972. For this version McLean prepared the work as a catalogue and arranged one thousand of these catalogues on the floor of the exhibition, selling copies of this catalogue throughout the day, 'indicating with perfect ironic economy that conceptual art-as-documentation was a saleable commodity.'²⁷¹ Thus, in doing so, the audience also participated in the work's deconstruction and were given a fragment of the artwork to take away, to read.

Normally a retrospective would simultaneously mark a closure of an artist's career and act as the formal recognition of their presence in an institution. Yet, like McLean's one-day exhibition, *Art & Language's* framing of their work in this format suggested a belittling or undermining of the idea of a retrospective. Furthermore, the accompanying catalogue mirrored the size and design of their *Art-Language* journals thus making reference to their own output and by using the museum's name and branding on the front cover of the booklet, *Art & Language* also signposted an institutional affiliation which defied their original purpose as a group. However, the essays inside undermined this gesture by following the same parodic nature as the idea of an early-career retrospective. For a group which consistently avoided such institutional affiliations, the title of an essay produced for the catalogue entitled 'Retrospective Exhibitions and Current Practice (A Recommendation for Optimistic Amnesia)', is only further evidence of this attitude (Fig. 61):

Conventionally a retrospective exhibition is taken as an occasion for the artist to present his work to date as a reified, 'logical' whole, and as an opportunity to demonstrate that he has progressed. That one should be offered such an opportunity at all suggests the achievement of

²⁷⁰ Mel Gooding, *Bruce McLean* (Oxford and New York: Phaidon, 1990), 57-8

²⁷¹ *Ibid*, 58.

a certain currency in art world chit-chat, usually based upon the journalistic acceptance of 'early work' rather than the significance of current activities. Consenting artists sit Jack Horner-ish in the corners of society, proudly exhibiting mouldy plums.²⁷²

The text then continues by writing that it is not customary to take the artist's retrospective as an occasion to reflect on their own practice, comparing this to a student challenging their teacher's performance. They write that to not challenge your teacher or education is 'to say that anyone who can present his own activity as if its production had not entailed transformation of his social/productive function (presumably because it hasn't) can have much to offer students as a basis for continuing dialectic.'²⁷³ It is evident that the exhibition is used as a point of reflection and transformation rather than closure as they write that it seems odd that they should hold an exhibition of old and new work but that the point of this is that there is no 'closure' to their activity:

You can't count the space between the work's 'exhibited' and come up with a guide that's been omitted. Also we're not consistent. We don't have any objective way to measure 'progress', and there's no assembly of objects/products which we can review with satisfaction. 'Practice' doesn't stop when you put your paintbrush/pen/spanner down; there's no clocking on and off; practice is a 'dimension of all one's existence' which can be internalized reciprocally; i.e., it's something to be developed and held in common.²⁷⁴

The text denigrates the idea of individual authorship, making clear that they see themselves as collaborators rather than competitors and positioning their work as an ongoing project. Thus, the contents of this booklet and the exhibition format demonstrate an educational purpose, further emphasising the group's move to a more socially orientated practice, centred around the transformations which were being enacted by a move to discourse rather than proposition, as well as the reflections on their own practice. This was reflected in their work more widely as by 1975 Art & Language's practice had developed from the proposition of artworks and the philosophising of the conditions of art production to the transcription of conversations between members of the group as the artwork. (Fig. 62, 63) Looking at the installation shots of this exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art

²⁷² Art & Language, *Art & Language 1966-1975* (Oxford: Museum of Modern Art Oxford, 1975), 1

²⁷³ Ibid.

²⁷⁴ Ibid, 2

in Oxford (Fig. 60), we see a minimal display with one single Marcel Breuer-style table in the centre of the room. Chairs are placed around the table and on the table-top copies of the journal are positioned – not under glass but available for the audience to handle and read, and the work *Dialectical Materialism* is pasted directly onto the surrounding walls. The installed table with publications on top appears prepared for the arrival of school pupils.

A year before this retrospective, the art critic and writer Lawrence Alloway published a two-part article on the subject of ‘Artist’s Writing’ in the March and April 1974 editions of *Artforum* magazine. The texts traced a rising popularity in the collapse of artwork, context and its distribution in relation to the mediums of writing and artists’ publications. By the late 1960s, text and publications as artistic medium had begun to proliferate and become widely accepted as a new site of artistic practice. This theme is discussed in Alloway’s article where he argued that it had evolved from the early twentieth century through to the 1970s from a greater articulation by artists of their practice. This, he writes, was due to a number of factors including a greater interdisciplinary approach in art education, and the social and political environment post-World War Two, as well as a push for information networks in an increasingly international context. He ended the article with a discussion of artists’ books as modes of distribution, making evident the rising popularity of both artists’ writing and the increasing critical awareness by artists towards traditional modes of distribution.

In retrospect, Alloway’s article might be considered belated for by 1974 artists’ publications were already becoming framed by the galleries and museums that they had originally intended to circumvent. However, as one of the earlier attempts to analyse the use of writing in conceptual art, Alloway’s article is important in understanding the wider historiography of how it has been framed both during and after the period in question. For example, Alloway’s text exemplifies a narrative which fits into an American historiography, covering such artists who support it rather than approaching the topic thematically through collaborations, networks, distribution and display. In order to understand how this dominant narrative of the artist’s publication as ‘site’ or repository for the

documentation of ephemeral practices rather than as a discursive space for multiple voices through multi-disciplinary engagement has prevailed, it is necessary to explore some of the numerous exhibitions and publications on the subject of artists' publications, which occurred in the late 1960s through to the mid-1970s.

Two years after Alloway's articles, in 1976, an exhibition at the Victoria & Albert Museum in London, *The Art Press: Two Centuries of Artists' Magazines*, traced a history of art periodicals. The exhibition was accompanied by a catalogue, which described the recent trend for a tendency to 'create or adapt artworks specifically for dissemination through periodicals, actively exploiting the medium.'²⁷⁵ (Fig 64) The editor of the accompanying catalogue, Clive Phillpot, reported an increase in the production and availability of artists' periodicals during this period as being due to various factors including: photomechanical process printing and the cultural and political turmoil from 1965-1975. In this exhibition, the art periodical is considered as a form of historical documentation for artworks and their exhibition with the introduction by Phillpot asking, 'How many more images of new works are deposited in an artist's mind through scanning periodicals than by experiencing them in a studio or collection or exhibition?'²⁷⁶ Its catalogue also featured an essay by art critic and historian John Walker, who addressed the problem of the aftermath or legacy of the artist's book and its re-instatement into objecthood via framing and display. In the essay he wrote:

[W]e must be careful of the temptation to reify the texts by regarding them as art objects (even though manuscripts of the texts have been marketed as such) because in the first place the medium of Art & Language is not writing... secondly the artworks are not discrete originals like paintings (they present the work – the discourse of a number of collaborators – which could equally be made public by sound recording, radio and conversation.)²⁷⁷

²⁷⁵ Trevor Fawcett and Clive Phillpot, 'Introduction', *The Art Press: Two Centuries of Art Magazines* (London: The Art Book Company, 1976), 2. Samuel Bibby has written extensively on this exhibition in his paper, 'The Magazine as Catalogue, or, The Assemblage of Specimens' given at the University of York, 2014. He is soon to publish a book on the same subject.

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

²⁷⁷ John A. Walker, 'Periodicals Since 1945' in Fawcett T., and Phillpot C., *The Art Press: Two Centuries of Art Magazines*, 51.

Thus, in this exhibition, the magazine is judged against traditional criteria of medium specificity – the words on the page, singular objects as artworks and the originality of the lone artist working in the studio. These are fragments of an ongoing enquiry using language and discourse as media, which also disrupts the paradigm of an art object produced and placed in a museum: the fragment disrupting the myth of the whole in modernist discourse.

It is evident, however, that the artist's magazine, even at the time of its production, was being incorporated into an object-based display currency. This does not mean that the artists producing these publications had no agency in their display and dissemination, nor that they were against their exhibition in general, but instead that the ways they were displayed and looked at, and even how they were touched, is not separate to how they were read. For example, it was evident that Art & Language were involved in the exhibition of their own work even at its original point of dissemination. In letters dated from 1974, now held in the Getty Institute in Los Angeles, member of the group, Mel Ramsden, writes to the gallerists and collectors, Paul Maenz, and Gerd De Vries, about a forthcoming exhibition of the group's work at Paul Maenz' gallery in Berlin:

The show itself will consist of rows + rows of posters – see enclosed example. These will stretch around the whole gallery, pasted to the wall. Michael Corris + Andrew Menard will do the text (keep in mind, in translating it, it will be hand-lettered.)

In another letter, Ramsden writes:

Meanwhile, would you be interested in writing a translation of a 9000 word text by us? This could be printed up into a small booklet (nothing fancy) and shown in your gallery. The booklet could be displayed in a magazine rack and sold cheaply. The 'show' could last a week or so? What do you think? I realise this may not be profitable.²⁷⁸

Ramsden therefore defines how his booklet will be displayed while simultaneously recognising the tension between the group's purpose and that of the gallerist's, suggesting that there was a level of self-consciousness to the work's production and its commodity value. Furthermore, it is evident that the

²⁷⁸ Paul Maenz Collection, Letters between Paul Maenz and Gerd De Vries and various members of Art & Language, 1972-5, Getty Institute Archives, accessed July 2016.

work's collection by institutions and its display in galleries, straddled a difficult position even at the time.

The 1972 exhibition, *Book as Artwork 1960/72*, at Nigel Greenwood gallery in London demonstrated this difficulty of categorisation and display even further again. (Fig 65, 66) In this exhibition, critic and curator Lynda Morris addressed the early years of the book art movement in a retrospective format by re-framing Germano Celant's publication 'Book as Artwork 1960-1970', as an exhibition. Andrew Wilson has written in the accompanying catalogue to the *Conceptual Art in Britain* exhibition at Tate Britain that in the installation a ledge around the walls of the gallery space was only partially covered with Perspex sheeting so that valuable books were protected from handling but book stock for sale, lying horizontally, could be picked up and read. Thus even in the idea that the artist's book should break down the dichotomy of looking and reading, or of value and lesser-value, the contradictions were inherent in its presentation from the start.

In Celant's essay/Morris' exhibition, the artist's books were understood as devices in subjectivity but as messages in their own right.²⁷⁹ Celant equally emphasised that the book as an artwork, required no visual display 'other than to be read – the active mental participation of the reader.'²⁸⁰ This definition echoed Marshall McLuhan's text, 'The Medium is the Message', where McLuhan argued that the two were no longer distinguishable.²⁸¹ The viewpoint that the media is not the text is interesting to re-examine in light of more recent discourses on medium specificity.²⁸² In a series of essays by Rosalind Krauss on what constitutes the 'medium' of an artwork and whether the

²⁷⁹ The main essay in this had previously been published as an essay in the Italian art magazine, *Arte* in 1971. Celant, G., *Book as Artwork 1960/72* republished by *6decadesbooks*, New York, 2011, 5.

²⁸⁰ Germano Celant, *Book as Artwork 1960/72*, 6

²⁸¹ Marshall McLuhan's 'The Medium is the Message' was published in 1964 and argued that the mediums of communication were an extension of ourselves rather than split so that we are in fact in control of our interactions with technology rather than the decentralizing and fragmentary effect that technology seemed to have. McLuhan argued that the medium used and the message which was intended to be disseminated could not be split as each would inevitably affect the other.

²⁸² It is important to reiterate a point made by Kenneth R. Allen in his article, 'Marshall McLuhan and the Counterenvironment: "The Medium is the Message"', that while many conceptual artists clearly paid attention to McLuhan's work, Art & Language did not favour him, with Mel Ramsden invoking the unpopular term of "McLunacy" in his 1975 article, 'On Practice', republished in Alberro and Stimson. *Institutional Critique*.

term refers to an artwork's materiality or not, Krauss argued that it is too tied to the literality of the materiality and instead the medium should refer to the 'technical support' of an artwork i.e. the canvas, the projector, the film-reel.²⁸³ When considering this in relation to the artist's publication, the medium might be considered the paper on which the text is printed, the ink which is used to print the text, the graphics of the text and everything else which supports the actual reading of the text. But thinking through medium via materiality or immateriality still does consider or account for the intentions of the artists who may or may not have been testing the construct of the medium, and as mentioned before, it explores conceptual art practice within the paradigm of viewing an object in the context of a museum. Text-based conceptual art practice, however, involved questioning and deconstructing this paradigm of viewing, which was further mediated by its fragmentation and display under glass in the context of a museum.

The artist Susan Hiller has written of the display of her artworks in glass vitrines that, when artworks are condensed or constrained, people involve themselves in a more careful, slow, and intimate way than when they enter into a space to see an art installation.²⁸⁴ This is interesting to consider in relation to the display of small text-based works or artists' publications. While in an installation the viewer can walk through the space or survey it from a distance, the vitrine forces close involvement with the work housed within. Susan Hiller writes of viewing these documents under glass that the works became a 'vitrine piece':

When I was first informed of the vitrine I knew immediately that this location would help me to finish the piece of work that had begun long ago in my mind and which might go on forever.²⁸⁵

To Hiller, the display case, or vitrine, became a point of closure, a space between the artist and the viewer where she could no longer handle the work, and the work, in turn, is handed over to the

²⁸³ Rosalind Krauss, 'Two Moments from the Post-Medium Condition', *October* 116 (Spring 2006): 55

²⁸⁴ Susan Hiller, 'Working Through Objects' in Merewether, C., *Documents of Contemporary Art: Archive* (London and Mass.: Whitechapel and MIT Press, 1994), 41

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

audience. The vitrine as a convention of museums and galleries for displaying objects and ephemera, however, has a history which precedes the history of the production of artists' magazines in the late 1960s and 1970s.

Vitrines display objects. They frequently accompany an artwork with supporting documents or ephemera, thus contextualizing the work, or they display archival items which occupy a position between the art gallery's collection and the art gallery's library. In the case of the magazine, vitrines fix them at particular pages but they also act as objects in themselves, prioritizing looking over reading but (ultimately) encouraging both. With the magazine in a vitrine, the viewer is forced to view its pages through glass. We read whichever page's the curator, or artist, has selected. As a result, the pages selected present an authority or hierarchy of what is most culturally important, presenting an institutional narrative. The viewer is also forced to navigate its spatial dimensions through its vertical or horizontal placement in the gallery. In the case of the 2016 Tate Britain exhibition, *Conceptual Art in Britain 1964-1979*, the magazines and journals were displayed within glass vitrines in the centre of the rooms, prioritising their existence and contents as central to many of the ideas and debates of the period but ultimately closing these debates down by repositioning them as artefacts. Thus, the critical response which the exhibition encountered from the press relates both to the audiences' expectations – what they expect to find in an art gallery – as well as the decontextualisation of these objects so that their repositioning under glass and without prior knowledge of the area, resulted in the loss of their meaning or purpose. Yet despite convoluted and complex nature of many of these texts, they still require to be handled and read in order to understand them as a whole. This problematic was raised at the time of Kosuth's 1969 article, 'Art after Philosophy' and in his 'Introductory Note by the American Editor' to the second issue of *Art-Language* in 1970. In this article, he writes how the end of aesthetics results in the beginning of art's virtuality as art-idea. By this he means that writing that if text-based artworks are viewed within their context-as-art, they provide no further definition about anything else and are therefore essentially a tautology – a work of art *is* the definition of art and the world of human desires and social relations are extraneous to this enquiry. Likewise, in Kosuth's 'Introductory Note' to

this issue of *Art-Language*, he extends the separation of art from aesthetics by making the distinction between artists who work with ideas and those who who adopt a traditional craft base to production. Yet Kosuth's early binary definition between art as idea and art as object ignores the materiality of these journals, especially when re-contextualised within a museum.

The act of reading in the context of museum is important when considering the display of Art & Language's text-based works. It is a subject covered extensively in Garrett Stewart's *The Look of Reading*, which describes the exhibition of a work by the remaining members of Art & Language in 1997: *Sighs Trapped by Liars*. This work consisted of 436 small physically installed in the installed seats of chairs thus disrupting the act of reading or at least blurring it as a functional and physical act rather than a mental exercise. Baldwin, Harrison and Ramsden from Art & Language have written of the work 'To make a painting of the open page of a book is a minor displacement. It is to picture reading estranged from its location.'²⁸⁶ Stewart, however, proposes a way forward of interacting with this text-based artwork – as a physical act which incorporates the body of both artist and audience. Likewise, Art & Language describe the chairs in *Sighs Trapped By Liars* as existing between function and dysfunction, as relatively high-genre things (paintings), which 'recover their detail in being made homeless'.²⁸⁷ Although I do not suggest that a way forward of looking at Art & Language is through the representation of the corporeal, I argue that a way to understand the translation of their work into the setting of a gallery is through the haptic – to insert the body of the spectator. These issues of looking and reading text-based conceptual art are further addressed in their 1974 work, *Dialectical Materialism* and lastly in the 2000 facsimile of *Art-Language* produced by the 20th Century Art Archives.

²⁸⁶ Michael Baldwin, Charles Harrison and Mel Ramsden, *Art & Language in Practice Vol. 1* (Barcelona: Fundacio Antoni Tapies, 1999), 277

²⁸⁷ Ibid.

Dialectical Materialism

Art & Language's series of works entitled *Dialectical Materialism* began in 1974 but was first exhibited in their retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art, Oxford in 1975. The series of works consisted of texts alongside their rearranged fragments which were then indexed by letters and numbers. Although there were a number of different permutations of *Dialectical Materialism*, each variation consisted of a mode of 'repetition and extraction' of words with an accompanying index.²⁸⁸ These texts and numbers were made from Photostats and pasted directly onto the walls of the gallery so that the permutation of the work was directly connected to the framework of the particular institution in which it was displayed. Upon completion of the show, the work would be removed and therefore would only exist in this particular permutation for the duration of the exhibition thus existing more as an idea than a set aesthetic: 'The Photostat could be thrown away and then remade.'²⁸⁹

Andrew Wilson has written that in its various permutations, *Dialectical Materialism* 'suggested how ideology can be learned in different ways and used for different purposes.'²⁹⁰ By 1975, Art & Language had 'made clear its position regarding socialist or socially engaged art' through their retrospective exhibition at Modern Art Oxford. Therefore, he writes, the texts in *Dialectical Materialism* are a slogan of socialist solidarity 'in the style of Leon Trotsky written by the artists.'²⁹¹ The word 'S.U.R.F.' (differing in format from *surf*, Surf, S.U.R.F.) is repeated in each variant of the work and typifies its relationship to the institution and the group's politics. S.U.R.F. can be read as the fragment of the word 'surface' thus referring to literal structure and surface of the gallery wall but S.U.R.F. also resembles Russian constructivist graphics thus by referring to text-based art from another era, which was based on formalist aesthetics and design for propaganda, and then making the meaning instable/shiftable. The work thus questioned or reflected upon translation through aesthetic, temporal

²⁸⁸ Wilson, *Conceptual Art in Britain 1964-1979*, 42

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

²⁹¹ Ibid.

and linguistic themes. Furthermore, the acronym U.S.S.R. can also be spelt ‘Serf’, with the same pronunciation, which further ties it to this history.²⁹² (Fig. 67). Lastly, the title of the work grounds it within the theoretical values of Marxism, although Harrison has made clear that this title is both ‘collective and ironic’.²⁹³

I would argue, however, that like art Art & Language’s Indexes and their 1975 retrospective at Modern Art Oxford, *Dialectical Materialism* addresses the nature of the group’s output and dialogue by looking at questions of ideology, learning and language. This is supported by Harrison who writes that the series of works were created upon the problems which the group encountered over the division of labour between artists and viewers, or writers and readers for the work, like other works of the group from this period, addressed issues of intersubjectivity upon the expansion of the group from the early to mid-1970s. This intersubjectivity, like in the Indexing projects, saw the internal dialogues of the group extended outwards to the audience. Baldwin writes of this intended audience that however you ‘cope with all of this will depend on your (own) logic or metaphysics of meaning’ and although the configuration of the work implies a translation or equivalence of meaning, he continues that perhaps the intention, more than a translation, is to ‘set up an intentional circumstance in which it may be interpreted’ so that the viewer can ‘map his or her reading of the English fragment into an intentional context determined by the *S.U.R.F.*, *S.U.R.F.*, *S.U.R.F.*, fragment.’²⁹⁴ Thus the context in which the work is displayed not only forces a particular kind of reading but in doing so transforms its interpretation.

The series of works titled *Dialectical Materialism* have been installed in various institutions, at different dates and in multiple languages and frequently in differing configurations: at the Lisson

²⁹² The text also resembles the journal *Novyi lef* (*New Left*) which was published from 1927 to 1928 as the second journal of The Left Front of the Arts: an association of writers, artists, designers and other creative workers born out of the Russian Revolution.

²⁹³ Harrison, *Essays on Art & Language*, 107

²⁹⁴ Baldwin, Harrison, and Ramsden, *Art & Language in Practice Vol. 1*, 139-140

Gallery in London in 1994 in their exhibition *Art & Language: Early Work 1965-76, Recent Work 1991-94* (Fig. 70); in 1975, in early career retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art in Oxford in *Retrospective Exhibitions and Current Practice (A Recommendation for Optimistic Amnesia)* (Fig. 68); in the Château de la Bainerie, Tiercé in 2007 (Fig. 69); and of course, at MACBA in 2014-15 and at the Tate Britain in 2016. (Fig. 71) The Tate Britain installation of *Dialectical Materialism* was uncharacteristic of the work as there were no images, no permutations of the word 'S.U.R.F' and its display was on the end wall of the gallery. (Fig. 50) In the exhibition at MACBA, the work made reference to its own exhibition history with the text is printed in blocks on one plane of a wall and the words 'S.U.R.F.' looming larger and more scattered, and printed along the tops of the wall making it physically difficult for the visitor to read them. The contents of the text itself, which curves around the wall switches in purpose and tone with shifting meaning and language:

Jack up the car under the rear axle and place blocks forward of the road spring front mounting. Remove wheel spats, nave...

A condition of historical struggle is the recognition of class conflict...

C'est une déclaration directive que Qui veut

Reading this work at MACBA was therefore made into an act, a performance, or a spatial gesture rather than a mental experience as the viewer is forced to look upwards and move/walk as the text is read and the viewer confronted with the space of the room as highlighted by the texts on the wall as well as the contents of the text which were closed, making the reading more interactive rather than a contemplative act. (Fig. 72)

Although the format of this work and its subsequent installations has mutated through its context and geography, the text in the work has repeatedly been positioned towards the top of the walls of the gallery, running parallel to the ceiling. This positioning is 'now commonplace in the institutional and corporate forms of Conceptual Art', but at the time of its original installation, this

form of textual display was more associated with sites of religious or political persuasion.²⁹⁵ The work thus embodies the issue of looking and reading, which I put forward at the beginning of this chapter. Commenting on this, Baldwin, Harrison and Ramsden write of the work ‘And what is the possibility of understanding any possible reading of them (even the judgment that they are meaningless) as having consequences for the fragment of apparently normal text?’²⁹⁶ Like the Indexing projects discussed in chapter one, the unfixed form or meaning of the text and its varying installations thus challenges where or what we identify as the work’s media. As Belting has written:

Images have always relied on a given technique for their visualization. When we distinguish a canvas from the image it represents, we pay attention to either one or the other, as if they were distinct, which they are not; they separate only when we are willing to separate them in our looking.²⁹⁷

Thus, the walls of the gallery on which these works are pasted, and their positioning, is not distinct from the text and its reading and if the same configuration of the work is reproduced in a different gallery, the context will inevitably effect how the work is viewed, how it is read, and how the message between artist and audience is communicated.

The *Art-Language* facsimile boxset, 2000

Like the reproduction of a text in a gallery, the reproduction of a magazine or text also introduces the question of its medium and how we categorise or define a work of art, putting forward the idea of where ‘authentic’ work is situated and whether this is relevant. In January 2000, a facsimile boxset of *Art-Language* journal (Fig. 73, 74) was produced by the ‘20th Century Art Archives’. It retailed at £280 (not including postage, packing or insurance), and was made in ‘response to a growing demand for issues of *Art-Language* which are out of print and therefore increasingly hard to find.’²⁹⁸ This facsimile

²⁹⁵ *Art & Language Uncompleted: The Philippe Méaille Collection*, 146

²⁹⁶ Baldwin, Harrison, and Ramsden, *Art & Language in Practice Vol. 1*, 241

²⁹⁷ Belting, ‘Image, Medium, Body: A New Approach to Iconology’, 304

²⁹⁸ Louisa Riley-Smith, <http://www.20th-century-art-archives.com/20thCenturyArtArchives/Home.aspx>

was produced by the printers of the original copies, 'Parchment', offset printed and made in a standardised A5 format so they fit neatly in the custom-made collector box (the originals vary between A5 and A4 in size). It was produced with a booklet containing an introduction by the remaining members of the group – Michael Baldwin, Mel Ramsden and Charles Harrison – and a set of contents. The introduction describes the journal *Art-Language's* importance in relation to a wider history of conceptual art:

Conceptual art is now well represented in both historical and analytical anthologies. While these rarely essay a well-formed synthesis, the requirements of coherence and extensibility provide conditions for cultural and historical tidying-up and occasionally for anachronistic exegeses and for exercises in meaningless philosophical hygiene.

This description makes clear that Art & Language want their contribution to conceptual art known and clarified – a sort of historical tidying up as they call it and as is so often the case with the largely questioned area of conceptual art. The terms: 'coherence', 'synthesis' and 'meaningless philosophical hygiene' suggest that to read the set of magazines together, rather than in a fragmentary and disparate order, will enable the better understanding of the group in a wider context. It also demonstrates that the story of Art & Language and its members, like the story of conceptual art, is convoluted, multi-vocal and frequently subject to multiple claims of authenticity and therefore the collection of *Art-Language* reproductions represents a finalising and bookmarking to this project, as well as an attempt to control a particular narrative.

The remaining members of Art & Language, Baldwin and Ramsden, have said that at the time of the facsimile's production their main concern was that the journal and the new series should not disappear entirely. They used the original printers they say as a matter of cost and efficiency and at this point the internet was still in its infancy therefore there was no option to archive it online. The group did not want the magazine to become a sort of antiquarian fetish, writing of this, 'Of course in this we have almost certainly failed.' For to use the original printers, although this was not the intention, has subsequently fetishized their mode of production. The printing press which they used,

is near the group's studio in Oxfordshire and is still running to this day. Even if it was pure convenience at the time, this detail is obviously of significance for collectors concerned with issues of authenticity.

Furthermore, although most readers of the facsimile will be unaware of this detail and it makes no difference to the magazine's external appearance, the invisible value of authenticity or the fetish through knowledge is of importance. For while modernism in art relied on the invisible process or the visible subject of artist at work i.e. films of Picasso or Jackson Pollock working in their studios, with the reproduction of a conceptual art object or publication, which was originally intended to focus on process over outcome, its reproduction, ironically, requires an authenticity or a story for its own validity. This leaves the question, how do artworks accrue value as they enter the 'canon'? Is it when they become legitimated by collectors, dealers and gallerists or are they legitimated when they become scarce enough or rare enough to be in demand? And if the work is a copy of the original – an index perhaps – what does this mean? Is it still an artwork? Lastly, how has the act of reading *Art-Language* become an aesthetic ideology rather than an active and discursive project where new meanings result? In other words, how do we read and how do we look at conceptual art?

In Derrida's *Archive Fever*, he wrote about the archive as an imagined place of commencement and thus commandment, which helps us to interpret how we might understand the re-exhibition and reproduction of publications as akin to the keeping of an archive under 'house arrest':

It is thus in this *domiciliation*, in this house arrest, that archives take place. The dwelling, this place where they dwell permanently, marks this institutional passage from the private to the public, which does not always mean from the secret to the nonsecret... With such a status, the documents, which are not always discursive writings, are only kept and classified under the title of archive by virtue of a privileged topology.²⁹⁹

In the case of Art & Language's writing, the audience was always intended to be public and the designation of themselves as artists working within the context of the artworld implies that it was

²⁹⁹ Jacques Derrida, 'Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression' in *Diacritics* 25. No. 2 (Summer 1995): 10

directed at art audiences. Art, however, is not fixed to one audience or temporal context but undergoes a transformation and therefore translation through its re-positionings. Dworkin, has made the analogy of the playback of the disc or the ‘performance’ of some music within a particular semantic context, to argue that perhaps it is better to refer to these as ‘nodes of articulation along a signifying chain’ rather than as the ‘medium’ so that the idiosyncratic production and reception histories of the work need to be taken into account when analysing their ‘re-performance’, thus refuting Krauss’s theory that the medium is akin to the structural support of the work.³⁰⁰ In Dworkin’s theory of the medium, it is not fixed, rather it can be translated and subject to the changing conditions of context and audience. Thus, the framing or exhibition of these works both then and now are of equal importance to this translation and should not be dismissed as closing down meaning or as decontextualising the artwork but instead as an active archive, which develops meaning through re-framing, re-reading and re-contextualising. In this way, we might argue that the medium of the work comes through its production and reception histories rather than the actual physical artwork. To clarify this further, Dworkin writes:

If, in the end, I take ostensibly blank works to be more portentous than Blanchot’s Orpheus does, I find them to be far more serious than does Cocteau’s. And it is in that middle space – that medium – where alert listeners can hear the echo of the laughter provoked by the nakedness of media: not just the derisive snicker, but also the chuckle of recognition and the appreciative reaction to a good joke – as well as the Bergsonian laughter of the social, the corporeal laughter of the Medusa, and the convulsive political machinations of the surrealists’ *l’humor noir*.

To amass an archive is a leap of faith, not in preservation but in the belief that there will be someone to use it, that the accumulation of these histories will continue to live, that they will have a listener.³⁰¹

In other words, to have a listener or, to have a viewer is to have a medium. Likewise, the artist, Joyce Salloum, has written of her work as an ‘active archive’ in similar terms:

Difference is articulated in and around the literal and metaphorical spaces of displacement and dwelling, the constitution of this being viewed as crucial social meanings rather than only as an

³⁰⁰ Dworkin, *No Medium*, 30

³⁰¹ *Ibid*, 33

extension of (an)other locale/space or subjective relationship. It is a dialectics of experience engaging a viscosity of substance.³⁰²

Salloum uses the words ‘engaging’, ‘viscosity’ and ‘substance’ to describe objects which have been literally and metaphorically displaced from their original context so that they acquire new meaning in their new setting. The text becomes the medium only through its reading, only through its audience. The text-based artworks are therefore not just understood as storage items ‘somehow independent of the acts of reading or recognising the signs they record’ but active and socially-bound items, defined through their display and repetition rather than just their materiality or objecthood.³⁰³ This is integral to how Art & Language should be understood and in turn, how text-based conceptual artworks and publications more generally might be understood.

Summary

In conclusion, I have asked how the reception and display of text-based art and artists’ publications have informed how we understand conceptual art today. For the repositioning of text-based art and artists’ magazines through their exhibition leaves the question of how we look at or read this work upon its changing contexts. Or in other words, what is the audience’s interaction with a text-based artwork when it is fragmented, translated or displaced? By exploring the journal and wall-texts of Art & Language between 1967 and 1975, we see how the works become active and relative rather than closed, fixed in meaning and tied to a historiography of medium specificity within the context of the gallery or museum. At the same time, the exhibition of these works relate to issues of communication and distribution. For despite the apparent closure that is enacted by exhibiting these works in vitrines or in institutions, by doing so the works become re-contextualised and relevant to a different audience. This is not to say that they were never intended for art institutions but that their framing and display

³⁰² Jayce Salloum, ‘Sans Titre/Untitled: The Video Installation as an Active Archive’, 2006 in Merewether, C., *The Archive* (Cambridge, Mass.; London: MIT Press, Whitechapel, 2006), 186

³⁰³ Dworkin, *No Medium*, 32

are crucial to their legacy and exhibition history.

Translation forms an important part of this reading as it effects the group's legacy and interpretation but as Benjamin has written, in all translation there are issues of translatability. Like the repetition of a dance score post its original performance, the repetition of a text will take on mutations and variations but these variations are not necessarily detrimental to the work's reading, rather they might be characterised in terms of its medium or structural support. Perhaps rather than questioning the practice of re-framing text-based practice through its exhibition, it is more relevant to understand this work within a curatorial and exhibition historiography where meaning is neither lost nor gained. Lastly, it is important to see how in the work of Art & Language, retrospectives mark points of collective self-reflection, transformation and multi-vocality rather than closure and incorporation into a particular dominant, singular narrative. Thus, although Art & Language's more analytical and introspective form of text-based conceptual art preceded the open-ended research projects of the 1970s, the two decades were not distinct from one another. In the next chapter I will analyse how this collective approach, as well as a turn to discourse and verbalisation, was formulated in art schools in Britain in the early 1960s and how, in turn, this interrogation of production and display was extended to its dissemination i.e. how the pages of the magazine were utilised in order to critique the art school through early forms of discursive and recursive practice.

Chapter 3: Experiment and the Verbal Impulse in Art Education: The Genealogies of Conceptual Art Practice through Pedagogical Dissemination

Introduction

In Charles Madge and Barbara Weinberger's 1973 sociological study *Art Students Observed*, they document the period between 1967-69 at the fictionally named 'Midville College'. As part of this study they describe the 'interesting students'; one of these students, Arthur, is described as an,

intelligent and literate student. He spends most of his time on written research and the application of verbal language system[s] to art. It is too early to say whether his researches are stringent enough to be worthwhile, or whether they are more than a defensive ploy by someone with Sixth Form academic attitudes and to whom art is an embarrassment. Maybe Arthur is too soft for the art game. To his credit he works seriously on his theory.³⁰⁴

Arthur's 'theory' interests are listed as 'a book on Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*, an Introduction to Cybernetics, and a book on College Physics.' Upon assessment, Arthur's tutors describe how he produces a box with a light bulb mounted upon it. Arthur describes how the definition of an art object change so quickly so he wanted to produce something that could either be placed in a gallery and called an 'art-object' or used functionally as a light if it 'becomes obsolete as an art-object.'³⁰⁵ His assessors are mixed in their reactions to the work: 'Watson says he finds the work unsophisticated and banal. Stone says he is making all the right noises.'³⁰⁶ This study resembled an early Art & Language (Michael Baldwin) work, *Untitled Painting*, from 1965, which consisted of a mirror mounted on a canvas. Like Arthur's object which could be placed in a gallery or be used functionally, the work offered a functional object. This study might typify the varying routes that art education was taking at this

³⁰⁴ Madge and Weinberger, *Art Students Observed* (London: Faber & Faber, 1973), 156

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

³⁰⁶ Ibid, 158

moment: between more formalist and avant-garde tendencies – the avant-garde meaning experimental, conceptual and discursive.

In this chapter I will argue that conceptual art evolved from radical pedagogical ideas and methodologies which were manifested in art schools in the late 1960s and included prioritising process over outcome; experimentation; and the use of chance and discourse, or verbalisation, in the classroom. Due to a lack of concrete evidence surrounding this history, however, the art school has been dismissed as a purely biographical accompaniment to an artist's later career i.e. the artist's education and pedagogy are considered as secondary or an irrelevant component. This is not to contest that conceptual art should be studied in terms of points of origin, rather, in order to explore its later permutations, it needs to be studied prior to the point at which it became circulated in major exhibitions and within the marketplace.

Studies into art pedagogy during this period have largely focused on major governmental changes and the amalgamation of art schools into polytechnics but in the aforementioned period there were a number of art schools, both inside and outside of London, dedicated to radical forms of art pedagogy, independent of but not separable from these reforms. These radical forms of art pedagogy were instead the result of genealogies of tutors and networks of students rather than the changing policies implemented by the government. In *Hornsey: An Art School Revolution* the art historian Lisa Tickner presents one of the most comprehensive accounts to date of the history of an art school in Britain in the 1960s. In this book she describes the events which took place at Hornsey College of Art in 1968 and in setting the context for this event, she refers to the recent focus on art pedagogy as relating to the trend for archives as an area of study and practice and explains that like the archive, art pedagogy can be understood as a genre of contemporary practice rather than simply as an historical repository.³⁰⁷ It is from this methodology – pedagogy as practice rather than repository – which this chapter will approach the subject and its relationship to conceptual art. For despite the recent interest

³⁰⁷ Ibid, 157

in British art schools, the engagement with this history has largely ignored the main artists, artworks, and educators involved. Furthermore, although the link has been made between radical pedagogy and conceptual art, this link has largely focused on pedagogical practice rather than alternative networks of dissemination such as the artist's magazine.

As the history of art pedagogy is not always documented nor is its transmission simply linear or hierarchical but transferred via networks and the co-habitation of space, among students and through discussion and writing, it has at times been difficult to trace. Often this transference of knowledge or skills is intangible. Furthermore, the art school is not a closed unit of incubation, immune from external influences but instead students visited art exhibitions, exhibited their own work, and met other students and artists, as well as travelled and read various publications on art as well as other disciplines. The archive, therefore, like pedagogy, can be considered as a specific site of practice beyond its place as storehouse, which might occur through an active engagement with accounts and documentation rather than the recounting of a historical narrative.

The genealogies of pedagogic practice can be explored through the presence of verbalisation in art colleges and that it is this verbal aspect, especially in the early to mid-1970s. This saw the verbal, or turn to verbalisation, as the medium or media of their work. Madge and Weinberger's argument, that the varying roles offered to art students upon their entry to art school in the late 1960s and early 1970s – between formalist and avant-garde practices – meant that students were required to 'define and resolve their own position within the terms of this discussion.'³⁰⁸ To clarify this further, Madge and Weinberger write that some young people may turn towards the role of the artist or art student as a means of avoiding more conventional occupations. Yet, in order to enter the art college, they write that the student must first pass through a series of conventional examinations with not so much a specific artistic talent but a general intelligence and a good command of language, writing:

³⁰⁸ Madge and Weinberger, *Art Students Observed*, 19

However ‘anti-academic’ the values of the modern art student and college staff, the situation obliges them to give a conceptual content to art as an activity. The problem of the art student is therefore three-fold: he has opted out of the dominant occupational system; he is driven to behave as though he had access to a charisma which may not be his to command; and he has to justify this, to himself and to his peers and teachers, in intellectualised terms and under conditions of almost unbearable ambiguity.³⁰⁹

This, I argue, led to the use of text, language and the printed page of the magazine as an outlet for this verbalisation. I argue against the prominence of courses such as the the Advanced Sculpture Course at St Martin’s College of Art as initiating this move to discourse or the verbal through the use of the ‘Group Crit’. For while there is no doubt of the importance of this course in this period, the ‘Group Crit’ provided an intellectual forum which positioned students in competition with one another rather than an environment of collectivity and collaboration. This environment was provided by the space of the student magazine.

This chapter will begin by contextualising the major changes which took place in art education in this period. In particular, it will situate case studies of art school courses such as the Advanced Sculpture Course at St Martin’s College of Art; the Art Theory course at Coventry College of Art; and the Ealing Groundcourse at Ealing College of Art and its extension into the Ipswich College of Art as sites of experimental pedagogy. The first half of this chapter will look at two magazines which started in 1964 and 1965 respectively – *Silâns* (1964) originated alongside the Advanced Sculpture Course at St Martin’s College of Art and was produced by students and teachers Barry Flanagan, Rudy Leenders and Alistair Jackson. This magazine was focused around themes of poetry, sculpture, and an interrogation of pedagogy in art institutions. The second magazine, *Control*, started in 1965 and was produced by artist Stephen Willats. It originated from Roy Ascott’s teaching practices on the Groundcourse at Ealing College of Art where Willats had been a student. This teaching practice extended into Ascott’s and Willats’ teaching practices at Ipswich College of Art once the Ealing Groundcourse closed in 1964. In the second half of this chapter I will explore the pedagogical and

³⁰⁹ Ibid, 21

theoretical underpinnings of *Art-Language* magazine, which originated from the ‘Art Theory’ course at Coventry College of Art in 1969. The magazine was produced in collaboration by the group Art & Language who used the magazine as a discursive site where the text and the discussions between those involved was the artwork rather than the supporting framework. Coventry was described in Madge and Weinberger’s *Art Students Observed* as one of the first instances of the ‘verbal impulse’ in art colleges.³¹⁰ As such, I will explore how *Art-Language* enabled a more prominent and visible manifestation of this verbalising role for artist and art student. Finally, to conclude, I will explore how the mythologising of these courses has overshadowed the radical and discursive contents of these magazines. For while the pedagogical settings from which they originated were radical and important for conceptual art’s development, *Silâns*, *Control* and *Art-Language* all questioned the role of the artists and students in society through the use of text and therefore prefigured some later conceptual artwork and magazines in the 1970s, which covered similar territory and preoccupations.

Changing Policies of Art Education

In order to understand this area more broadly, it is important to trace the existing historiography of 1960s art education in Britain. This follows the main narrative and implementations of the Coldstream Report, which was officially known as The National Advisory Council on Art Education (NACAE) and was informally known as the Coldstream Council after its chairman, William Coldstream, who was appointed as its head in 1959. The first ‘Coldstream Report’ was published in 1960 and suggested a whole restructuring of art education, replacing the National Diploma in Design (NDD) with the new Diploma in Art and Design (DipAD) by 1964. As a result of this implementation, art colleges were

³¹⁰ The verbal impulse was theorised by Charles Madge and Barbara Weinberger as ‘verbal fluency, both of the written and the spoken word, is at a premium in the art college, both tutors and for students. The art magazines abound with examples of a similar tendency in the wider world of art’ when referring to a particular moment in art pedagogy as exemplified by the ‘Art Theory’ course run by Art & Language at Coventry College of Art. Quoted from Madge and Weinberger, *Art Students Observed*, 212.

invited to submit their proposed Diploma courses for approval for the DipAD, which led to a number of closures. Lynda Morris writes that the results of these closures unleashed a great deal of criticism about both the proceedings of the Coldstream and the Summerson Committee.³¹¹ She continues that too little information had been given to the colleges regarding the requirements of the new diploma and that judgments had been made on the pre-existing status of colleges rather than the, ‘possibility of development according to the requirements of the community.’³¹² Thus, London-based art colleges were largely favoured over ones considered more provincial. This implementation of the new DipAD combined with the amalgamation of art schools into the new polytechnics has largely been cited as the most important educational reforms in art education in 1960s Britain.

The main intention of the move from the NDD to the DipAD was to impose order, structure and academic integrity to art colleges, which were deemed lacking in these qualities. In other words, to make Fine Art a more recognisable, respectable and serious qualification at university level education. There have been multiple studies into the effect of this change and as such, it is only worth citing a few which are relevant to my argument in this context. One of the most comprehensive studies to date is David Thistlewood’s, *A Continuing Process*, published in 1981. In this publication, Thistlewood lists ‘alternative’ forms of art education in the 1950s, which were shaped by certain individuals, writing that these were inspired by an understanding of the Bauhaus and gained from such sources as Herbert Read’s *Art and Industry*. He writes that William Johnstone, Principle of Central School of Art in London, brought the artists, ‘Victor Pasmore, Richard Hamilton, Eduardo Paolozzi, Robert Adams, William Turnbull, Alan Davie and others into his studios’ as well as a number of ‘principal innovators’

³¹¹ This was created by John Summerson when he became chair of the National Advisory Council on Art Education (NACAE) in 1962.

³¹² Lynda Morris, “Art – Art Education – Education: Three Titles for a Discussion of Fine Art Education, Art – Art Education – Education: Three Titles for a Discussion of Fine Art Education” (MA diss., The Royal College of Art, London, 1973), unpaginated

in art pedagogy and Basic Design including Victor Pasmore, Richard Hamilton, Tom Hudson and Harry Thubron.³¹³

Basic Design has been described succinctly by Elena Crippa in her 2013 PhD thesis, as emerging in response to ‘already existing teaching methods embodied within the skill-based National Diploma in Design.’³¹⁴ She writes that it was the first attempt to create a formalised system of knowledge based on an anti-Romanticist, intuitive approach to art teaching.³¹⁵ However, what actually constituted Basic Design was disputed at the time and continues to be disputed today. This has been heightened by its ever changing moniker and therefore lack of clear definition, variously called: ‘Basic Design’, ‘Basic Form’, the ‘Basic Course’, ‘Basic Grammar’ and ‘Basic Research’. Rooted in the Bauhaus, it was outlined in Maurice de Sausmarez’s book *Basic Design: The Dynamics of Visual Form*, 1964, as meeting the demand for revision of our attitude to initial training. De Sausmarez, however, writes that far from assisting the situation, there has been a failure to think about these courses critically and as such, a failure to save them from ‘the awful fate of becoming blinkers in which young talents trot docilely to a certain stylistic vacuity, and failure to ensure that they establish effective bridgeheads for contacting and influencing the more specialised provinces of creative activity, painting, sculpture, graphic design etc.’³¹⁶ He writes that Basic Design is, ‘in danger of creating for itself a frighteningly consistent and entirely self sufficient art-form, a deadly new academicism of geometric abstraction for young painters, and for young designers a quick route to the slick sophistications of up-to-the minute graphic design.’³¹⁷ Emphasising that Basic Design was not a method but an ‘attitude of

³¹³ David Thistlewood, *A Continuing Process* (London: Institute of Contemporary Arts, 1981), 6. Thistlewood also lists the North Riding of Yorkshire Education Authority, which organised a series of summer schools and came to determine the character of courses at Leeds College of Art and King’s College, University of Durham. He writes that these establishments and innovators are the subject of the exhibition, ‘A Continuing Process’ because ‘its influence (upon the whole of Britain as a result of its reception by members of the Coldstream and Summerson Committees, and to some extent upon North America) is known to be considerable.’

³¹⁴ Elena Crippa, “When Art Schools Went Conceptual: The Development of Discursive Pedagogies and Practices in British Higher Education in the 1960s” (PhD diss., London Consortium/Birkbeck, 2013), page unknown

³¹⁵ Ibid.

³¹⁶ Maurice De Sausmarez, *Basic Design: The Dynamics of Visual Form* (London: Studio Vista, 1964), 10

³¹⁷ Ibid.

mind', he continues that it was a form of enquiry rather than an art form i.e. that it was not an end in itself but a means of, 'making the individual more acutely aware of the expressive resources at his [or her] command.'³¹⁸ De Sausmarez's book was integral to the teaching of Basic Design and acted as a student handbook to impart its basic principles including, 'Primary Elements and Forces', 'Spatial Forces' and 'colour'. As Basic Design teaching was implemented concurrently with the new DipAD, they have been closely associated ever since. In Madge and Weinberger, however, they describe the difficulties which the new DipAD faced upon its implementation in art colleges, which, rather than lead on from the teachings of Basic Design, saw generational differences and conflicts between style and pedagogical practice. They write that the first report of the DipAD emphasised that the standardised assessments modes which it implemented were not intended to relinquish responsibility of the government's role in assessing the quality of art schools but rather to test the ability of colleges to evolve their own artistic standards. The report maintained that each course should be arranged to reflect the college's interpretation of the content and purpose of advanced study in the special field with which it is concerned and that colleges will have the freedom to pursue their own artistic direction and find their own solutions to the common problems. Thus, the standardising features of the DipAD may have in fact resulted in more freedom of interpretation for the art college, the lecturers and the students. However, Madge and Weinberger argue that this freedom, although allowing tutors more control over their curriculums, resulted in a greater confusion for students regarding the artist's role in society and which activities could be counted as art. They write that art examinations in schools for the General Certificate of Education continued to be administered under the earlier centralised system and in 1967 to 1969 and there was a discontinuity between school art and college art, writing that to go to art school during this period was to see it changing under one's very eyes. 'Underlying doubts about the viability of art in the modern world led to constant reformulations of the artist's role and of the products and activities that could be counted as art.'³¹⁹ This simultaneously provided a space for

³¹⁸ Ibid, 12

³¹⁹ Madge and Weinberger, *Art Students Observed*, 17

experimentation of concepts and material while leaving artists confused and ambiguous about art's value and purpose in a wider society. In addition to this, despite dominant London-centric narratives of both conceptual art and art pedagogy in Britain, it is important to understand that the innovations which took place happened both inside and outside of London, yet might have signified a split between more metropolitan and provincial sites of production. Teachers including Harry Thubron, Tom Hudson, Victor Pasmore, Keith Arnatt, Richard Hamilton and Victor Burgin were situated in art colleges and polytechnics around the country including Leicester, Leeds, Newcastle, Hull and Newport in Wales. The histories of these art colleges, however, lack substantial exploration into the main protagonists and pedagogical methods, which makes genealogies difficult to trace.

By exploring two significant themes in art colleges – behaviour and discourse – the next sections of this chapter will explore some of the particular methods of art pedagogy in this period, both inside and outside of London, which directly or indirectly influenced text-based discursive conceptual art practice in Britain. I do not see these two themes as distinct but rather, in their mutual focus on introspection and experience, as feeding into a broader relationship of the artist and their audience in the post-art school career.

The Ealing Groundcourse

In Lynda Morris' 1973 MA thesis, *Art – Art Education – Education: Three Titles for a Discussion of Fine Art Education*, written while she was a painting student in the Fine Art department at the Royal College of Art, she describes the importance of language in art education, writing that it is 'the most fluid medium in a student's development.'³²⁰ In this section I explore pedagogical and ideological transmission from art college and teacher to student and magazine, using as my case studies: the Groundcourse at Ealing

³²⁰ Lynda Morris, "Art – Art Education – Education: Three Titles for a Discussion of Fine Art Education, Art – Art Education – Education: Three Titles for a Discussion of Fine Art Education", unpaginated

College of Art in London, Roy Ascott, Stephen Willats and *Control* magazine. I look at the concept of dialogue as originating from experimental pedagogy and group discussion in relation to the space of the art college in the 1960s and explore how dialogue intersected with the site of the magazine and argue that the magazine provided a space for the debate and dissemination of cybernetically-informed conceptual art practice.

Lucy Lippard includes a short but not insignificant quote by the British artist and educator, Roy Ascott, at the front of her seminal 1973 publication, *Six Years: The dematerialisation of the art object from 1966 to 1972* before her introduction:

To discuss what one is doing rather than the artwork which results, to attempt to unravel the loops of creative activity, is, in many ways, a behavioural problem. The fusion of art, science and personality is involved. It leads to our total consideration of a work of art, in which physical moves may lead to conceptual moves, in which Behaviour relates to Idea... An organism is most efficient when it knows its own internal order.³²¹

This quote is taken from Ascott's 1963 essay 'The Construction of Change', which Lippard credited to a little-known British university magazine *The Cambridge Opinion*, edited at the University of Cambridge by then student Michael Peppiatt.³²² The publication is otherwise dominated by American and European artists and writers (including Edward Ruscha, Joseph Beuys and Joseph Kosuth), and as such deserves further exploration in relation to conceptual art practice. Yet, the presence of Ascott's

³²¹ Roy Ascott, 'The Construction of Change,' *Cambridge Opinion* 37, January 1964. Quoted in Lippard L., *Six years: The dematerialisation of the art object from 1966-1972*, 1. In an email from Lucy Lippard dated 11/06/2015 she explained that she does not remember why she used this quote or what it related to. The student magazine that the essay that this quote was originally published in, *The Cambridge Opinion*, was edited by now art historian but then Cambridge University student, Michael Peppiatt

³²² From interview between Louisa Lee and Michael Peppiatt, 30/08/2015. In interview Peppiatt describes his involvement with the magazine as follows: 'so I decided what I wanted was to study modern art and then there was this failing magazine called Cambridge Opinion which had run up a big bill with the printers which they couldn't pay off and the printers were saying they couldn't go on at this point, quite reasonably and I stepped in and I said well I think I could make a success of it. So I persuaded them to keep it going and I used that as a way of doing this issue. It's the only one I did and I think it did collapse after that... I had a bee in my bonnet that I wanted to do something about modern art really to cock a snoot at the art history department to show them there was something after Rafael and I had put an issue together about it and there we are and the rest of it was kind of just chance.'

quote at the start of Lippard's book suggests two important points: firstly that art schools in Britain were taken seriously as pioneering sites of conceptual art practice both nationally and internationally. Secondly, that Ascott, as one of these early 'pioneers' of conceptual art education, was considered more influential at the time than he is now given credit. Furthermore, the quote indicates the changing role of educators and art schools as significant sites for the discourses and development of conceptual art in 1960s and 1970s Britain and implies that certain small press student publications had a relatively wide international distribution.

Ascott's essay, 'The Construction of Change', was published at the same time as his 1963 exhibition at the Molton Gallery in London called 'Diagram-Boxes and Analogue Structures'. (Fig 75) In this show, Ascott exhibited various of kinetic, wooden, sculptural-reliefs including: *Video-Roget* (1962), *Love-Code* (1962) and *Homage to C.E. Shannon* (1963). Examining the quote above further, there is a clear link between Ascott's early 'change' paintings exhibited in this exhibition and the conceptual art practices, which were developing in the 1960s. For example, positioning the 'total consideration' of a work of art' in which 'physical moves lead to conceptual moves', indicates the prioritisation of process over objects in the production of an artwork as well as the move from object to process as evident in larger discussions of conceptual art practice. In addition to this, to write that behaviour relates to idea and 'discuss what one is doing rather than the artwork which results', prioritises language over object. This not only suggests that the action or experiment preceded the concept in the production of an artwork but that the space of the art school acted as the point of germination for an artist's career: a place where they could safely explore and test ideas before communicating them, upon graduation, to the wider world. It indicates that the practice of pedagogy imparted by teachers was in itself integral to this process, in contrast to the implementation of policies or structures in education implemented from the top-down dissemination. These practices by the artists, and their art school backgrounds, deserve further attention and exploration.

After finishing his BA at Newcastle, Ascott experimented with painting but eventually deferred his interest to making three dimensional constructions where the viewer was ‘complicit with the artist in making the artwork’.³²³ This ‘complicity’ originated from his discovery of the work of Frank H. George, W. Ross Ashby, and Norbert Weiner – theoreticians who laid the basis for his interest in behavioural theory and cybernetics. This in turn fed into his art and teaching practices and his role as Head of Foundation Studies at Ealing College of Art, which started after his former tutor, Victor Pasmore ‘fixed him up with a job’ with the idea to bring Basic Design to London.³²⁴ Ascott’s constructivist reliefs, based in the aesthetics and teaching of Basic Design combined with his interest in cybernetic theory, was integral to the development of his teaching practice at Ealing College of Art.

Ascott says that when he started at Ealing he was reading Ashby’s, *Design for a Brain*, 1960, which he has credited, alongside George’s, *Automation, Cybernetics and Society* (1959), as largely responsible for his interest in cybernetic educational and social models. He described in an interview how these books ‘blew his mind’ and were subsequently utilised in his pedagogical practice: ‘Ealing will be the organism, cybernetics will be the theory’.³²⁵ The Groundcourse commenced in 1960 and ran for four years, until 1964. In this time, Ascott imagined the art school as an organism and the classroom as a cybernetic model and testing ground for his art practice. Both George and Ashby utilised biological and behavioural studies as a means for making analogies between machines and the human brain. For example, George described cybernetics as blurring the distinction between ‘living’ and ‘nonliving’ systems and wrote about the role of ‘negative feedback’ in both the organism and the non-organism – negative feedback describing organisms as adaptive systems which modify their behavior dependent on their changing environment and therefore related to how a student learns in a classroom. In Crippa’s

³²³ Catherine Mason, *A Computer in the Art Room: The Origins of British Computer Arts 1950-80* (Norfolk: JJG Publishing, 2008), 54

³²⁴ From interview between Louisa Lee and Roy Ascott, 27/03/2015. Ascott has said in interview: ‘I was also very interested in behaviourism, scary stuff, I am totally opposed to it at the moment, neuro science is too materialist, Skinner etc. I had to get over the materialist bit of behaviouralist thinking. In the first year basically we would do everything we could do to disturb the student’s thinking.’

³²⁵ Ibid.

doctoral thesis, she discusses how the concepts and teachings of ‘Basic Design’ fed into the teaching on the ‘Groundcourse’. She emphasises the shift from primary reception to the ‘diagrammatic representation of an idea within this generation, prioritising experiment over outcome and process over execution’ and argues that it is not just significant to artist’s practices but as anticipating and exceeding what is generally understood as conceptual art, writing that ‘[I]t situates the germination, development and rooting of such an expanded notion of British Conceptualism within the art school in the early 1960s’, both, she continues, focused on the process and environment of the art school as integral to the art student’s development.³²⁶ The desired results of which were to equip students with the necessary tools to sustain themselves after their formal education rather than the transfer of technical knowledge and information from teacher to student.

One of the main theorists who has written on Ascott, the Groundcourse and cybernetic and behavioural theory is Edward A. Shanken. In his book *Telematic Embrace: Visionary Theories of Art, Technology, and Consciousness*, Shanken describes Ealing as a cybernetic studio where Ascott would test ideas through his pedagogical practice. He writes how working on a small, didactic scale allowed for cybernetic theory to inform the student’s work after graduation and as a result ‘the transformative potential of the artwork as an input would result in the alteration of the viewer’s behaviour.’³²⁷ Unlike Hudson, Hamilton, Pasmore and Thubron, who saw the space of the classroom as akin to the internal creative development of an organism quite separate from an external ‘reality’, Ascott saw this experiment with behavioral theory as translatable and transferrable to the outside world upon the graduation of the student. He understood cybernetics and new technological resources as a crucial means of eliciting societal change and expressed his belief that the process of making art and the final art object were not mutually exclusive. Furthermore, the behavioural emphasis of the course was

³²⁶ Crippa, “When Art Schools Went Conceptual: The Development of Discursive Pedagogies and Practices in British Higher Education in the 1960s”, unpaginated

³²⁷ Edward A. Shanken, *Telematic Embrace: Visionary Theories of Art, Technology and Consciousness* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007) 46

designed to ‘develop mature personalities capable of activating and improving the organising of society with the classroom understood as a creative system and the behavior within the classroom as subject to alteration and regulation.’³²⁸ As such, art was understood as an active force for societal change.

The art historian Catherine Mason has written that the Groundcourse was revolutionary in that it had no official timetable. Instead, Ascott developed a method of teaching art that was not based in the traditional ‘master and apprentice’ system but made open-ended processes the model for the course, stressing interdependence, co-operation and adaptability within group activity.³²⁹ The Groundcourse, however, was unassessed and therefore considered separate to the main College of Art, operating instead as the equivalent of an Art Foundation: as a point between school and university where students could experiment and resolve where and what they might study post-Foundation. As Morris has written of the Foundation or the ‘Pre-Diploma’, the year ‘serves to acclimatise students to the art college environment and receive a general education whilst determining their suitability.’³³⁰ However, while Foundation Courses were intended to allow a student to experience difference techniques and aspects of art (usually based in medium specificity), in order to for them to make an informed decision in which direction to specialise at art college, students from the Groundcourse left after two years with no specific qualifications or direct routes into further education.³³¹ Instead, they carried out a number of practice-based experiments, performances and activities without a required outcome other than to demonstrate that art could be the process rather than object, and to document these processes. The course prospectus for 1963/64 at Ealing reads:

The Groundcourse places the student at the centre of a system of visual education designed to develop in him awareness of his personal responsibility towards idea, persons and the physical environment such

³²⁸ Crippa, “When Art Schools Went Conceptual: The Development of Discursive Pedagogies and Practices in British Higher Education in the 1960s”, unpaginated

³²⁹ Catherine Mason, *A Computer in the Classroom: The Origins of British Computer Arts 1950-80*, 58

³³⁰ Morris, “Art –Art Education – Education: Three Titles for a Discussion of Fine Art Education, Art –Art Education – Education: Three Titles for a Discussion of Fine Art Education”, 22

³³¹ Mason, *A Computer in the Art Room: The Origins of British Computer Arts 1950-80*, 58

that he may contribute to a social context within which his subsequent professional activity may become wholly creative and purposive.

The intention of the Groundcourse is to create an organism which is constantly seeking for irritation. The term “organism” may be applied to both the individual student and the Groundcourse as a whole.³³²

Thus, it was a site in which the student could collaboratively explore their practice through play and experiment. The other noticeable emphasis in this prospectus was that of the graduating student’s social context – a concept which might conflict with the common role of the lone artist, working in their studio to produce a singular object to be placed in the museum or gallery for display and circulated and sold. Ascott felt it was important to provide a basic training to artists from sixteen to eighteen, stating that he wanted to teach students from the ‘ground up’, hence the name ‘Groundcourse’. He also argued that attempting to influence more established artists was pointless as they were already ‘conditioned by the desperate need to be on the crest of the next wave of fashion or by a cosseted infancy in the nineteenth-century atmosphere of an art school’ and therefore re-training them was near impossible. Instead, he argued, that to educate the young with a *cybernetic spirit*, so that cybernetics might infiltrate through to their practice and a wider society was a more effective approach to changing art practice and society.³³³

The main source of documentation for this cybernetic practice is in the form of photographs of students at Ipswich College of Art. Ipswich mirrored Ealing in its pedagogical methods and was where Ascott taught after the Groundcourse closed in 1964. These go some way in demonstrating the activities and outcomes of the course with one photo depicting a young Brian Eno with shoulder-length blonde hair, wearing a top hat, holding a cane, and playing an unidentifiable game on a white table. (Fig 76, 77, 78) In the background, silver foil covers the walls, which gives the appearance of the set for a sci-fi film, a theatre, or indeed a photograph of Warhol’s ‘Factory’ in the 1960s. Without

³³² Prospectus for the 1963/64 at Ealing reproduced in Edward A. Shanken, *Telematic Embrace: Visionary Theories of Art, Technology and Consciousness*, 155

³³³ Edward A. Shanken, *Roy Ascott: Telematic Embrace: Visionary Theories of Art, Technology and Consciousness*, 141

further description the photo is ambiguous and we do not know how constructed or framed this scene was or how often these classroom games were played, or indeed the identity of the other students. In other images, students in costumes with props clamber across built structures. Coloured lighting permeates the photographs giving the effect of stage sets and there is a sense of both play and improvisation. Constructed environments were built by the students in part creating their own learning environments and scenarios, the photographs acting as documentation of the process of interaction within this pedagogical environment. (Fig. 79)

In addition to the photographs, diagrams drawn by students and teachers also document the games and experiments which took place on the course. They demonstrate the organisms as described by Thompson and George, documenting the behavioural experiments of the classroom in the form of illustrations. (Fig. 80, 81) These diagrams have little consistent outcome or aesthetic, depicting symbols which might allude to cosmology or rune stones with pins stuck into various parts to demonstrate how this diagram might be interacted with, perhaps demonstrating systems of Chance or the I Ching. (Fig. 82, 83) In another picture, a printed text with the words 'play, circle, game, score, process', make evident the basis the theory of cybernetics manifested through experimental exercises and improvisations - the process subsequently documented through diagrams. Artist and Lecturer, Harold Cohen, has said how these diagrams were pinned to the wall of the corridor which led onto the classrooms.³³⁴ Yet, although these diagrams and photographs go some way to document the games and experiments which took place on the course, its actual history remains fragmented and thus the narrative is unclear. However, while Mason has written how the fact that the staff on the Groundcourse had different teaching styles, she writes that their working methods reflected 'precisely the cybernetic principle of requisite variety that Ascott set out to achieve'.³³⁵ Bernard Cohen has said that 'Cybernetics was a way of saying there is more to what we do than simply conforming so we could

³³⁴ From interview between Louisa Lee and Harold Cohen, 26/06/2015

³³⁵ Ibid.

ask questions about ‘the interrelationship of things’. However, he argues that it ‘never went beyond that in my thinking.’³³⁶

Due to lack of a critical literature, the Ealing Groundcourse has been subject to a degree of mythologisation. One example of this mythologisation is demonstrated by writer and curator, Emily Pethick in a short article in *Frieze*:

In the early 1960s Roy Ascott might well have been accused of losing his marbles when a friend of his drove past Ealing College of Art and Design, on the outskirts of London, and reported seeing a group of people skidding and rolling around the entrance hall. What he had witnessed was one of the many teaching experiments Ascott and his colleagues devised for the Groundcourse, where students, after being subjected to continuous flashes of extreme light and darkness in the lecture theatre, were let loose to stumble over a floor covered with marbles. Oh, the liberated days before health and safety regulations!³³⁷

Pethick writes how student, Pete Townsend (later member of the band, *The Who*), credits visiting artist Gustav Metzger, for his stage routine of destroying a guitar after Metzger gave a lecture on Auto Destructive Art at the college and who described Ealing as, ‘the leading art school of the day.’³³⁸ There were also visiting lectures from some of the early pioneers of cybernetic theory, including Gordon Pask and Joan Littlewood, who Ascott was later involved with on the design for the ‘Fun Palace.’ The Fun Palace was conceived of as ‘technologically innovative’ and ‘non-deterministic’ architecture for Joan Littlewood’s conception of a space for alternative theatre practice.³³⁹ Although never realised, the Fun Palace was a collaboration between Pask and Littlewood which initially formed a Committee of various experts in cybernetics including Ascott.³⁴⁰ This is contrasted with less romanticised accounts by teaching staff such as those by the artist Bernard Cohen who has stressed that cybernetics, although employed by Ascott was generally not used by other teachers. He says that they were not as interested

³³⁶ From interview between Louisa Lee and Bernard Cohen, 10/04/2015

³³⁷ Emily Pethick, Degree Zero, *Frieze* magazine 101, September 2006

³³⁸ Mason, *A Computer in the Art Room: The Origins of British Computer Arts 1950-80*, 57

³³⁹ Interview between Louisa Lee and Roy Ascott, 27 March 2015.

³⁴⁰ See Mary Louise Lobsinger, ‘Cybernetic Theory and the Architecture of Performance’ in Goldhagan, S., and Legault, R., *Anxious Modernisms* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2000)

in practicing these methods and this was only one aspect of the course amongst many.³⁴¹ Cohen's teaching, he stresses, still employed more traditional techniques of drawing 'from the model' emphasising that students went to art schools on a very different premise to what they are now: with very little professional intention and with no qualification to exhibit their work upon graduation. This mythologisation of the Groundcourse is further demonstrated by its famous alumni and visiting lecturers, which included the artist Gustav Metzger, alongside various other permanent and visiting staff including Bernard Cohen, Howard Cohen, Peter Startup, Jennifer Sherwood, Ron Kitaj and Noel Forster. The course also produced a number of well-known artists and musicians including the artist Stephen Willats; the musician Brian Eno; and, as mentioned above, Pete Townsend from the British rock band *The Who*.

***Control* magazine**

The clearest lineage of this pedagogical process and influence of the Groundcourse might be seen through its ideological dissemination – the cybernetic and behavioural theory from the Groundcourse are embodied in the work of artist Stephen Willats. For although there is no documentary evidence of Willats' attendance on the course, or the dates when he might have attended (apart from confirmation from both Willats and Ascott), its legacy can be clearly identified in the form and contents of his magazine, *Control*.

The first issue of *Control* magazine, produced in 1965, demonstrated an early attempt at approaching art which was orientated towards dialogue and discursivity between artist, artwork and audience, utilising art for social change and of questioning the role of the artist in society. (Fig. 84) Although the idea of the dialogic in art has been extensively theorised, most recently by Grant Kester and Shannon Jackson, like conceptual art, the term 'dialogic' is used as a retroactive term to define the

³⁴¹ From interview between Louisa Lee and Bernard Cohen, 10/04/2015

linear progression of movements rather than composed of discussions between members of a group. For example, in *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication* (2004), Kester examines the emergence of collaborative, socially engaged practice in the 1990s, utilising Willats' practice in order to define a form of dialogic art associated with the 'rapprochement' between postconceptual and poststructuralist theory in the American and European art worlds during the 1980s. However, as I have argued throughout this thesis, there were marked differences between Willats' earlier form of social practice and those adopted by artists in the 1990s, which relate to the contexts in which this work was produced and how it was both received and circulated. By analysing Willats and *Control*, I shall demonstrate these differences below.

Willats produced the first copy of *Control* magazine a year after the Groundcourse was closed and at the same time as he started teaching at Ipswich College of Art. Embodying many of the same theoretical and ideological aspects of the Groundcourse, the magazine demonstrated how the printed page could be used as a space for experiment and collaboration as well as a site to test ideas relating to behavioural theory and cybernetics. It also demonstrated some of Willats' early attempts at a socially-engaged, research-based art practice.³⁴² The word 'Control' was understood as a necessary aspect of cybernetics: initiating change on a small scale to one's environment, in order that one could then apply this change to a larger social environment. The first copy of *Control* opened with a statement claiming that its main purpose was to, 'publish articles by the personalities which make up the new attitude of communication.'³⁴³ These 'personalities' included such writers and artists as Ascott, John Latham, Laurie Burt, John Sharkey and John Stezaker. In this issue, Willats wrote anonymously under the title

³⁴² The production of *Control* magazine also coincided with Stephen Willats' 'Centre for Behavioural Art', based at Gallery House in London. Its fundamental concern was 'the furtherance of the growing interests amongst artists in establishing relationships between Art, Cybernetics, and the Behavioural Social Sciences'. Archives at the Tate contain a lecture series at the Centre with talks by Kevin Lole, Peter Smith and Stephen Willats on 'Art Practice and Social Function' with the intention to offer an insight into the areas concerning the centre and 'as a polemical tool'. Tate Archives, Stephen Willats, Centre for Behavioural Art, TGA, 20069/1/1/10

³⁴³ Stephen Willats. *Control* 1, 1965

of ‘editor’ and gave the following description of the magazine’s intention and choice of name, which were much the same. An excerpt from Willats’ introduction reads as follows:

To control one’s environment is to assert one’s existence. In controlling my identity I define it. The Free Man has control of every aspect of his world and creates his role within it...In Art the will to control is expressed through processes of restricting experience and of creating in familiar relationships within a universe of visual discourse. In this way the Artist becomes the Free Man. Just as my own artwork feeds back to affect my subsequent behaviour, so in society, generally, the artist activity may function as some kind of ritual control mechanism.³⁴⁴

In this text, the words ‘restriction’ and ‘control’ are accompanied by words ‘freedom’ and ‘chance’: understanding individual change as a way to feed into larger environmental effect, as well as to enact one’s personal freedom within societal structures. The first short text in the magazine, printed within a circle format, is by Willats’ Groundcourse tutor Roy Ascott, thus firmly grounding the magazine in the legacy of the Groundcourse. Ascott’s text reads as follows:

To control one’s environment is to assert one’s existence. In controlling my identity I define it. The Free Man has control of every aspect of his world and creates his role within it (“remakes himself” in Nietzsche’s terms). Although through science we strive for this total freedom, it may never be attained. Art, however, provides the means to win this freedom and act it out – symbolically. In Art the will to control is expressed through processes of restricting experience and of creating in familiar relationships within a universe of visual discourse.³⁴⁵

Thus, this issue places the artist and their behaviour as its main priority with texts which set out the ‘Problem’ of the current status of the artist, stating that a talented artist ‘increasingly risks leading the life of a film-starlet: signed up straight after an art school to produce so many art objects’. (Fig. 88) He states that at the same time the artist is seen as a ‘passive litmus-paper producing objects to be auctioned off or to be gaped at; so he himself can only be auctioned and gaped at’. Lastly, he states that the art-world needs a certain turnover in order to retain the admiration of the wealthy: ‘No style can rule for too long or the bubble will burst.’³⁴⁶ This view is reiterated in the final text by Dean Bradley, who was

³⁴⁴ Roy Ascott. *Control* 1, 1965

³⁴⁵ Ibid.

³⁴⁶ Ibid.

also the designer of the magazine. Bradley writes of the artist as a frustrated ego, ‘a rejected movie star, trying for a star image’ writing that in order to satisfy his ego, he must obtain ‘total power.’³⁴⁷

By the second issue of *Control*, the focus shifts from the artist and individual’s behaviour to how the artist must act in their particular environment in order to enact wider societal change. (Fig. 85) Willats describes this as ‘working out my position’, where one no longer has to ‘hide under the guise of the producer of so-called fine art objects, which can do nothing but restrict my position and performance’, calling himself a ‘Conceptual Designer’ instead.³⁴⁸ He describes the magazine’s role as acting as a ‘forum’, enabling readers to ‘have an insight into artists with a diverse background writing on a common problem’ and emphasises that it is of vital importance that the magazine operates as a platform, ‘outside of the old established mechanisms of the Art Hierarchy which allows for completely free discussion of concepts by the artist.’³⁴⁹ He therefore argues that the Art Object functions only as a means for the communication of a set of ideas and as a platform for thought. Other texts in the issue by such writers and artists as Tom Phillips and Adrian Berg also reflect this view of the art object as a tool for communication and for the shifting role of the artist. For example, Stroud Cornock writes in his text, ‘Out Face’ that, ‘To regard the artist... as continuing to exist in the same context as his historical prototype – as a rare and perhaps alien phenomenon, is superficial’, therefore demonstrating that by the second issue, the focus of the magazine had changed from the artist as individual to the artist and their immediate environment.³⁵⁰ (Fig. 92)

By the third issue, the artist’s behaviour and their role had been extended once again to role of the audience within this interaction. (Fig. 86) In the editorial Willats writes:

In this issue of *Control* the participants have been asked to write from a platform, which deals with an object-audience relationship. They have been asked to consider the control mechanisms exercised by themselves (in the Art Work, etc.) and how these relate to the behavior that an

³⁴⁷ Dean Bradley. *Control* 1, 1965

³⁴⁸ Stephen Willats. *Control* 2, 1966

³⁴⁹ Ibid.

³⁵⁰ Stroud Cornock. *Control* 2, 1966

audience operates: Do they attempt to elicit controlled responses from the audience, do they consider this to be desirable etc.³⁵¹

The contents of the issue then follows this editorial priority by including interactive elements throughout the magazine. These include works such as *Three Light Modulators* which consists of an envelope with three clear plastic squares in blue, red and green which the reader is invited to ‘project’ and ‘superimpose’ and to ‘devise your own way of using them.’ (Fig. 89) On the opposite page to the work *Three Light Modulators* is a text by artist Noel Forster (who also taught on the Ealing Groundcourse), entitled, ‘The Great Art Paralysis’. Here Forster outlines how the idea of art as a game is attractive as it ‘focusses interest on strategy and human relationship’, continuing, ‘An aesthetic of this kind may seem more disposed to kinetic or environmental work, but participation does not necessarily imply inhabiting or operating rather than looking.’ Willats mirrors this sentiment in a text from the same issue when he writes that there is an acceptance by the present visual culture of an ‘Arbitrary Visual Motivator’ as means of transmission and argues that this means of transmission indicates irresponsibility on the part of the programmer towards an audience ‘for this tends to lead towards the act of production being considered separately.’ The problem that Willats puts forward is that art production is effectively a private activity for the artist and as soon as an audience is involved it ‘becomes hit and miss’. He argues that for an observer to obtain the transmission effectively, there would need to be a reorientation on their part involving possible insight ‘or the provision of a new aid such as a key’ and that in order for this transmission between the art object and the observer to be ‘fully operative’, the ‘path with the least interference has to be found; thus a study of Audience Behaviour seems a probable necessity.’³⁵² Willats proposes that in order for art to be more clearly communicated to an audience it will require the rejection of the present accepted format and perspective of viewing art and research into other fields of thought. (Fig. 90) At the time, he saw the ‘control’ that a person held in a situation as fundamental to directing internal and external change. This idea that in order for one to control their environment it

³⁵¹ Stephen Willats. *Control* 3, 1967

³⁵² Ibid

was necessary for them to control their behavior resembled ideas in psychology relating to the then popular Cognitive Behavioural Theory, pioneered in the 1960s by Aaron T. Beck.³⁵³

This clearer form of communication between artist, artwork and audience did not reject the visual but instead understood it as a secondary support or framework for the transmission of an idea – ‘a steering device, part of the polemic of art.’³⁵⁴ Wilson notes that another aspect informing Willats’ practice was graphic design and advertising as he had previously worked part-time for Graphic Art Studio and by the mid-sixties had met the designer, Dean Bradley (who also wrote in the first issue) with whom he was sharing an office space. Bradley designed the first copy of *Control*, conceiving of this issue as an ‘environment’. (Fig. 91) On the front of the first issue is a large purple circle which is mirrored in the central pages of the magazine where another large off-centre purple circle was reproduced. This circle was understood as the ‘node or connection of a communication network’ as well as a form of clarity in design and therefore of communication – essential aspects of cybernetic theory.³⁵⁵ Underneath the circle on the cover is very stylized and recognisable lettering, which spells out the title ‘Control’. The text throughout the first issue is also printed within geometric shapes with an abundance of white space given between text and image, thus mirroring this cover page and giving the magazine an attractive aesthetic as well as easy to follow theoretical fragments of text. (Fig. 87)

This clarity of communication was continued into the following issues with geometric shapes, primary colours and repeated motifs on the front covers conveying a recognisable brand. (Fig. 91) For example, issue two features the same distinctive font spelling out the title but the purple circle is replaced by a yellow square. However, unlike the first issue where there were no images, in the second

³⁵³ Aaron T. Beck developed theories of Cognitive Behavioural Theory in the 1960s, which were first published in *Depression Causes and Treatments*, 1967.

³⁵⁴ Noel Forster, “The Great Art Paralysis” in *Control* 3, 1967

³⁵⁵ Andrew Wilson, ‘Stephen Willats. Work 1962-69’ in *Control. Stephen Willats. Work 1962-29* (London: Raven Row, 2014), 18

there are multiple black and white reproductions of Willats' drawings and sculptural and kinetic works/reliefs. These include, 'Mosaic Tree', 'Maritime Arabesque' and 'Language Drawing' (1965).

In 2017, Raven Row gallery, in London, produced an exhibition based around the early years of *Control* magazine: *Control. Stephen Willats. Work 1962-69*. (Fig. 93, 94, 95) Writing in the exhibition's accompanying catalogue, Andrew Wilson describes how prior to Ealing College of Art, Willats had already, 'immersed himself in the writing of Ludwig Wittgenstein, Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Claude Levi-Strauss' but that it was at Ealing that he was introduced to the 'language and aims of cybernetics', particularly through a lecture given by the cybernetician Gordon Pask.³⁵⁶ He describes how for the social context of art practice 'cybernetics provided an adequate language that could be deployed' and specifically, through Pask, Willats was shown how cybernetics could be used as a way to think about remodelling society.³⁵⁷ Although *Control* was not a direct output of the Ealing Groundcourse as Willats had already been developing these ideas independently and therefore may have attended the Groundcourse with this in mind, the course did, however, confirm and consolidate these ideas. Wilson describes how between 1965 and 1967, Willats taught alongside Ascott at Ipswich Civic College on a new iteration of the 'Groundcourse', following its closure at Ealing in 1964. It was here as well as at his next post at Nottingham Trent Polytechnic, where he was able to implement a way for students to 'work on collaborative projects within the fabric of society.'³⁵⁸

Although, as mentioned before, Willats' time on the Ealing Groundcourse cannot be easily traced, a prospectus from the course offers such courses as: 'Cybernetic Theory', 'Thought Development and Light Handling' running alongside more traditional courses on 'Analytical Drawing' and the 'History of Art and Ideas'. This demonstrates that the 'experimental' and radical nature of the

³⁵⁶ Ibid.

³⁵⁷ Ibid.

³⁵⁸ Ibid, 22. Back up material for John Blandy's thesis on Gallery House, 1971-73, uncatalogued materials, Tate Archives, Box 1. At the same time Willats had been running his Centre for Behavioural Art out of Gallery House in London, which was described as concerning itself with the furtherance of a growing interest amongst artists in establishing relationships between Art, Cybernetics and the Behavioural Social Sciences

Groundcourse, which has been mythologised by ex-students and scholars, may have coexisted alongside a programme grounded firmly in traditional techniques. In addition, it reveals the idiosyncratic nature of art education in this period, which, I argue, was more closely related to pedagogical genealogies rather than overarching changes in educational policy. Although it is difficult to see a clear link between the changes introduced by the DipAD and the Ealing Groundcourse, Tickner notes that the introduction of the DipAD in 1963 marked, ‘the shift symbolically from an education still rooted in educational skills in the figurative tradition to something more open-ended and investigative.’³⁵⁹ She writes how the transformation from the NDD to the DipAD involved a change in pedagogical practice from ideas of talent and imitation to creativity, medium and invention, with the aim ‘not to train apprentices in their métier, but to encourage them to engage with the essence and resistance of the medium itself.’³⁶⁰ Thus, the introduction of the DipAD to art education in Britain was not intrinsically linked to a particular style but rather emphasised a greater emphasis on a freedom of experimentation within a set framework – an idea which was communicated in both Ascott and Willat’s cybernetic teaching and writings.

The use of behavioural theory and experimentation in pedagogical practice as a genesis of conceptual practice in Britain therefore might be traced to a greater freedom of experimentation, emphasis on process over outcome, and the increasingly significant role of the artist in society rather than the lone artist working in the studio. In an unattributed transcribed lecture where the author describes how behaviourism must rely on a physical/observable referent of mental state terms and therefore contains those problems of moving from a number of observations of particular instances of the correspondent mental state in another.³⁶¹ Therefore, its application as a tool of teaching might be subject to an element of inconsistency or lack of understanding with regards to individual subjects.

³⁵⁹ Tickner, *Hornsey 1968: The Art School Revolution*, 90

³⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 91

³⁶¹ This unattributed lecture forms part of the artist, John Blandy’s uncatalogued files for Gallery House now held at the Tate Archives

Thus, in thinking through how this form of teaching compared to another method of art teaching apparent in this period – verbalisation and discussion – we can see that although both methods emphasised the artist’s role in society and the wider purpose and value of being an artist, the move to verbalisation involved a greater interrogation of the artist’s role and value. While, the cybernetics emphasised in Ascott and Willats’ teaching aimed to enact change, the discursive practices which I discuss in the next section questioned the existing paradigm of art education and assessment. Rather than change through the individual or collective in order to impact on a society, they moved towards the social and intersubjective in order to re-invent art education and art more generally: its production, dissemination, and reception.

The ‘Verbal Impulse’ in Art Colleges

The Advanced Sculpture Course at St Martin’s College of Art and the ‘Group Crit’

The site of study in Madge and Weinberger’s, *Art Student’s Observed*, is the fictionally named art school, ‘Midville College’. ‘Midville’ was the name used to denote Coventry and Birmingham Colleges of Art. It is also a term which has recently been used by Morris to denote ‘not-London’.³⁶² The ‘Midville’ study was conducted due to Madge and Weinberger’s belief that the entire structure, scale and scope of higher education in Britain was in a phase of major expansion and change. They wrote that standards in art education were controlled by a centrally administered examining board yet at the same time, art colleges which were recognised as competent to do so, were able to set their own standards and themselves decided about the award of their Diploma. The study was made just less than ten years after the beginning of the new Diploma courses and in the wake of more recent changes such as the incorporation of the art colleges in the new Polytechnics. Madge and Weinberger argued

³⁶² In 2014, an event at Ikon Gallery in Birmingham, ‘Midwest to Midville: repositioning the visual arts in the Midlands’, utilized this term borrowed from Madge and Weinberger. In the event description, Lynda Morris defined Midville as ‘not London’.

that the Polytechnics raised new doubts about the extent of their autonomy in the future, writing that today the art student is offered the choice of a number of different styles to work in 'from a far wider and more immediately contemporary range than was his counterpart a generation ago.'³⁶³ They write that today art students are far more directly exposed to current concerns and controversies in the field of art but this exposure can be confusing for while theoretically all styles are available, 'style' is not directly discussed.

As mentioned in my introduction to this chapter, Madge and Weinberger define the two main trains of study or thought, which were recognised in American art in the late 1960s, and therefore available to students: between more formalist work (painting, sculpture), and between avant-garde tendencies. In this context, the 'avant-garde' was used to describe experimental, current, 'conceptual', and discursive artwork. Madge and Weinberger write that formalists were concerned with colour and spatial elements in art, being less concerned with how the audience views their work and are less likely to engage in public discussion, 'they have critics as their spokesmen to a far greater extent than do the Avant-Garde, who both wish to and do speak for themselves.'³⁶⁴ Arguing that while Formalists tend to accept the ends of art as a 'given aesthetic absolute', Avant-Garde artists, on the other hand, are, 'not interested in such timeless standards', seeing them as, 'entirely irrelevant to present-day problems in art.'³⁶⁵ These two positions, they write, are what art students must confront when they enter art school: 'One of their major concerns while at college will be to define and resolve their own position within the terms of this discussion.'³⁶⁶ They argue that art students, especially Fine Art students, are being socialised into a role which is incredibly fluid and ill defined in comparison to other disciplines such as medicine and law, quoting S.F. Nadel on his view of these fluid roles occupied by art students,

We should beware of regarding all fluid roles too readily as indicative of change, especially of change tending towards the weakening of norms and states of 'anomie'. For roles even in their pristine conceptions may be of such a fluid type, and socially useful because of that. They

³⁶³ Madge and Weinberger, *Art Students Observed*, 17

³⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 18

³⁶⁵ *Ibid*.

³⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 19

would still be roles proper, with a core, although a small one, of firmly interconnected characteristics; but these serve to legitimise further qualities intentionally left undefined and even unpredictable.³⁶⁷

This section will explore how tension between formalist and avant-garde practices, which Madge and Weinberger argue resulted in a ‘verbal impulse’ in art colleges, was played out in such scenarios as the ‘Group Crit’ at St Martin’s College of Art. I argue, however, that the tension embodied in the different roles available for students in art school during this period is more evident in the student-teacher magazine *Silâns*, than the ‘Group Crit’ scenario. In turn, I argue that the movement from painting and sculpture to discourse and collaborative practice in certain art schools fed into a wider verbalisation impulse characteristic of conceptual art practices.

The rise of the ‘Group Crit’ is described by Elena Crippa in her essay, ‘From ‘Crit’ to ‘Lecture-Performance’, published in the Tate’s *London Art Schools: Reforming the Art World 1960 to Now* and developed from her 2013 Doctoral thesis: *When Art Schools Went Conceptual: The Development of Discursive Pedagogies and Practices in British Art Higher Education in the 1960s*. From extensive original research in the uncatalogued Frank Martin Archives at the Tate, Crippa argues that the Group Crit was one of the most distinctive and notorious, as well as influential, formats to develop out of British art schools in the 1960s. In addition to this she writes that St Martin’s hosted one of the most innovative and successful Sculpture departments in the world which she writes was a consequence of the employment of sculptor Frank Martin in 1952 and his subsequent employment of fellow sculptor Anthony Caro. Caro and Martin ‘shared a similar spirit of enquiry and understanding of the direction that art was undertaking – away from figuration’ and towards abstraction. However, their development of a new Vocational Course brought students together who ‘were not interested in or

³⁶⁷ Nadel in Madge and Weinberger, *Art Students Observed*, 18. In S.F. Nadel’s, *The Theory of Social Structures* (Guildford & London: Billing & Sons, 1956), 23-24, Nadel writes that sociologically relevant behavior is always behavior towards or in regard to others. In a given role, therefore, is made up of such behavior exhibited in interaction settings, represents for other ‘actors’ in their roles a set of data with which they can reckon and on which they can orient their own purposive actions.

eligible for the National Diploma and were not seeking a validated course.³⁶⁸ This move had not been possible with the students studying for the National Diploma in Design as it required a strict examination process and the ‘submission of a specific number of studies from the model and the antique.’³⁶⁹

The loose structures of the Vocational Course allowed students to attend for as long or short as the students deemed necessary or at least for as long as they could afford to attend – some stayed for twelve months, others as long as six years and the structure of the course as both advanced yet vocational allowed freedom and flexibility which freed tutors from the need to develop an official curriculum. It would therefore, ‘open students to new materials and new ways of making, assembling and displaying.’³⁷⁰ As a result, two different tendencies started to emerge within the Dip. AD: ‘the by-then established school of Caro, interested in the exploration of the specific and reductive qualities of the medium; and the second strand, which has since been referred to as the more ‘conceptual’ one.’³⁷¹ This distinction was formalised in 1969 as the ‘A’ Course and the ‘B’ Course – the ‘A’ Course referring to the Advanced Course (the more ‘conceptual’ one). Out of the A Course came the ‘Group Crit’ scenario, which originally developed out of need for more space and facilities, which resulted in the dispersion of students ‘working in different locations, especially following the acquisition of satellite studio complexes.’³⁷² Due to this permitted freedom the tutors at St Martin’s insisted on the students returning to St Martin’s every Friday in order to attend a day-long seminar. Crippa argues that these sessions of discussion and criticism were ‘effectively the most important aspect of their teaching.’³⁷³

It was therefore through this weekly Friday meeting that the Group Crit evolved, taking place each week upon the student’s return to the campus. This meeting encouraged students to ask

³⁶⁸ Crippa, “When Art Schools Went Conceptual: The Development of Discursive Pedagogies and Practices in British Art Higher Education in the 1960s”, 129

³⁶⁹ Ibid, 128

³⁷⁰ Ibid, 129

³⁷¹ Ibid, 135

³⁷² Ibid, 144

³⁷³ Ibid.

themselves and other students questions about their choices of making and why they had selected a particular piece and what was the effect of this selection on the overall composition? Was this choice essential? Or if not, what was redundant to the essence of the work? In the absence of rules regarding the 'use of materials, harmony and balance of a composition [as had been evident in Basic Design], the artists would interrogate themselves and their peers on the validity of the decisions underpinning their making.³⁷⁴ It was therefore these continuous discussions which took place among and between tutors and students, that were crucial for the questioning of sculpture's formal and practical elements.

Comparing the teaching on the Group Crit to that of the dialogical formats conceived on Roy Ascott's Groundcourse, it is evident that both emphasised a collective engagement as an instrument for the students' personal development, which helped them get in touch with their individual qualities and potentials.³⁷⁵ Thus, like the Groundcourse, the 'Group Crit' became a space where the student could receive direct feedback for their work from teachers and other students as a means of collective input so that the work did not go directly to the audience but was criticality mediated from teachers and peers. The art student on the A course moved to that of the 'thinker' alongside that of the maker with the image of the artist now, 'seen as akin to that of a scientist, working on the establishment of a universal artistic vocabulary.'³⁷⁶ Crippa makes clear, however, that although the theorising of art student's work may have contributed to artists working more conceptually, the sculpture produced at St Martin's in this period was not 'conceptual' in the same sense that would be used in the late 1960s,

The conceptual presentation of the work was not to be the result of prolonged reflections on the assumptions regulating art-making and on the language shaping its supporting discourse. Rather, what students were to be judged on was referred to as their *intention*.³⁷⁷

³⁷⁴ Ibid, 150

³⁷⁵ Ibid, 154

³⁷⁶ Elena Crippa, 'From "Crit" to "Lecture Performance"', *The London Art Schools* (London: Tate Enterprises Ltd, 2015), 134-5

³⁷⁷ Crippa, "When Art Schools Went Conceptual: The Development of Discursive Pedagogies and Practices in British Art Higher Education in the 1960s", 152

The 'A' Course, therefore provided a forum in which the students could test their ideas and intentions in a group environment, emphasising talking and discussion as necessary training in order to prepare to explain and defend their work upon its wider dissemination after graduation. Yet, although the emphasis was upon group feedback, the work produced was generally not collaborative in production and the training that these seminars advanced was associated with the art student adopting a role or a stance on art. Crippa's thesis does not differentiate the Group Crit from the 'Forum' but Hester Westley has made clear that the 'Sculpture Forum' became a well-known feature of the department organised by tutor, Alexander Trocchi where once a month, a guest speaker would be invited to display their work in the Main Hall of St Martin's. It was therefore separate to the Group Crit scenario.

Despite the Group Crit's role in the development of critical group discussion, it has been criticised for the assumption that participating students would enter the college with a certain degree of knowledge with their own ideological beliefs regarding the history of sculpture and the skills required for the execution of their ideas firmly in place. Westley has described Caro's teaching as assuming the posture and methods of Clement Greenberg in his absence, writing that the Group Crit scenario was, 'designed to isolate and cultivate each art form's particular preserve.' She continues that students were, 'warned that they should be prepared to: 'Display from time to time their work not in the first instance for outsiders... but to gain confidence, to see themselves as sculptors, to be able to stand by and take responsibility for their work in the face of the criticism of their 'peers'' and writes that the qualities of, 'Confidence', 'Responsibility', 'Devastating Criticism' were a prerequisite for the course, concluding, 'this is art school as a Hemingway character might have it.'³⁷⁸ The Advanced Course therefore taught an 'attitude' or a position rather than a set of skills or knowledge and prioritised the individual, 'who would stand for a particular position which embodied a shared discourse.'³⁷⁹ Students were expected to

³⁷⁸ Hester Westley, "Traditions and Transitions: St Martin's Sculpture Department 1960-1979" (PhD diss., University of London, 2007), 124

³⁷⁹ Crippa, "When Art Schools Went Conceptual: The Development of Discursive Pedagogies and Practices in British Art Higher Education in the 1960s", 154

already have had a thorough grounding in sculptural skills and considered sufficiently 'advanced' to begin the task of becoming serious sculptors. Furthermore, eighteen and nineteen year olds were expected to come to art school with a sophistication of ideas and ideology already ingrained through a level of cultural education, suggesting that they originated from a particular class backgrounds and paid-education.

Silâns Magazine

The magazine *Silâns*, produced as a student-teacher collaboration out of St Martin's College of Art between 1964-5, I argue, is an example of a more discursive approach to verbalisation which, has so far been largely overlooked in the narrative of St Martin's history. For although Crippa acknowledges that the critique articulated in *Silâns* was directly levelled against the Advanced Sculpture Course, she goes no further than describe one of the author's, Barry Flanagan's, identification of a flawed teaching methodology at the college. Yet, the magazine provided an early example of the use of an art school magazine as a discursive platform, which would enable connections and networks between both students and tutors, as well as between external art colleges across Britain. I also argue that it prefigured Art & Language's critique and interrogation of art objects and institutions and therefore deserves further investigation within this historiography. Furthermore, while the Group Crit almost certainly provided a platform for the manifestation of this verbal impulse in art colleges, in this format, the verbal was still deemed secondary to the medium of sculpture and, what is more, the verbalisation which was encouraged was entrenched within a particular 'liberal' education. In *Silâns*, the medium was the discourse.

The art historian and curator, Lynda Morris, describes the minimal and conceptual work developed from St Martin's in the early 1960s as 'a reaction to Caro's dominance as to the efforts of

tutors such as Barry Flanagan.³⁸⁰ Thus Morris deprioritises Caro's significance in the development of conceptual art and instead looks to the next generation of artists and teachers as reacting against Caro's authority. This is a significant point, for although the Group Crit marked a development in the methods of producing art in art schools – from the lone artist to the active and engaged critic – it nonetheless prioritised sculpture as the medium. Furthermore, although the Group Crit encouraged dialogue, it did not directly cultivate collaboration between students. *Silâns* magazine, on the other hand, was contemporaneously produced when Caro and Martin were Heads of the A Course as a collaboration between students and teachers: Barry Flanagan, Rudy Leenders and Alistair Jackson. (Fig. 96, 97, 98) Barry Flanagan had enrolled to study on the A Course at St Martin's from 1964 to 1966. Previous to this, he had attended Caro's experimental evening classes which had attracted a group of students who became known as the New Generation: David Annersley, Michael Bolus, Phillip King, Tim Scott and William Tucker. Started in the autumn term of 1964, while Flanagan was on the A Course, *Silâns* lasted just under one year, in which time sixteen issues of the magazine were produced. Printed on a cyclostyling machine in the staff offices at St Martin's with the assistance of the administrative staff, the magazine was cheaply made and simply bound by staples on the left hand side. The paper it was printed on, newsprint, which is now yellowing, and the type was littered with mistakes, with drawing and linocut prints interspersed within the text. (Fig. 99, 100, 101)

Its title, *Silâns*, is the phonetic approximation of the French word 'silence', which Andrew Wilson writes, 'exemplifies how Flanagan was approaching sculpture by carving out language from silence' – a distinction Flanagan made in the first issue between literary and non-literary sculpture in the article, 'Prelude':

To .A sculpture that has never been seen before

To .A sculpture that has never been seen.

³⁸⁰ Morris, "Art – Art Education – Education: Three Titles for a Discussion of Fine Art Education", unpaginated

....

Literary sculpture has been observed.

Non-literary sculpture will have to be seen.

Once upon a time a human asserted himself in this sculpture

form in a non-literary way: the human named the result

of his assertion and accompanied it with a word or group

of words.³⁸¹

The magazine demonstrated the increasing role and importance of text and verbalisation in the sculpture department and the potential 'dilemma' that the conflation of more formalist and avant-garde practices presented for the student. This is demonstrated in passages of writing by David Bainbridge, who described how outdated the idea of the 'sensitive individual subject' who sees their work and purpose in intangible terms in the current society is:

Faced with bold interrogations of his character, his social meaning and function he retreats shamefacedly back to his old 'intangibles'. The majority of artists became such in the first place because they are – or think themselves to be – ultra sensitive beings. They will nearly always assert that they are humanitarians, socialists, anarchists etc but when attributed to the art world it seems those terms are quite mystical. Confront the artist with a positively socialist art programme and he flounders. That the basis of our ideas is not concerned with aesthetic criteria, bewilders him; that the work we produce is not essentially subjective or with limited communication potentiality positively shocks him. This is not the way of an artist.³⁸²

As a teacher he does relatively little harm, other than creating another generation of mediocre artists, who will become another generation of mediocre teachers, besides this can easily be remedied, don't give grants during the schooling but after when artists really need it.

Art should re-examine its function and its uses in architecture as a means of keeping in close contact with the people in whom it professes so much interest.³⁸³

³⁸¹ Barry Flanagan. 'Prelude', *Silâns* 1, October 1964: unpaginated.

³⁸² David Bainbridge. *Silâns* 8, 1965: unpaginated.

³⁸³ Rudy Leenders. *Silâns* 1, 1964: unpaginated.

This questioning of the artist's personality and sensitivity as directly linked to their art but devoid of social purpose is more closely associated with art produced in the 1970s, yet this text demonstrates that artists were questioning art's purpose as early as the mid-1960s. This examination of the artist's role in society also relates closely to the interest in behavioural theory evident in the work of Roy Ascott and Stephen Willats, which was contemporaneous with the magazine. Madge and Weinberger write that today art students are 'far more directly exposed to current concerns and controversies in the field of art'.³⁸⁴ They continue that the success of the artist in liberating themselves from the demands and constraints of their public over the last hundred years has raised fundamental questions about what the role of the artist is and what constitutes an art object.

Not only did the magazine question the conditions of art education but it looked to contemporary art practice and questioned the conditions which the students would be required to operate within upon graduation. For example, in issue fifteen of *Silâns* in the article 'Problems of Contemporary Art Vantongerloo: Paintings, Sculptures, Reflections', the unnamed writer compares two distinct ways of considering 'things': one through our evolution and education, the other as apart from conventions. They explain the first as giving reasons about things and measures according to accepted standards: 'It is aware of nothing but the object itself'. The second, less practical way of examining things they describe as follows: 'examines things from the viewpoint of creativeness', writing that this method is not rigid or inflexible and gives objects a variable existence concluding 'consequently it is unlimited'. The text sets out that an object 'seen from a certain angle and under certain conditions, varies in aspect' and argues that to translate the impression with which this perception makes on us, we always adopt traditional or conventional measurements.' On the facing page in a different text, the writer poses a similar critique towards the art school and the attitude of artists working individually within these institutions:

If we started to talk about ART to each other

³⁸⁴ Madge and Weinberger, *Art Students Observed*, 17

If we questioned each other's sculpture

(realizing it is much smarter to ignore
the clot beside you)

If we could work together

If we could enjoy making sculpture

(realizing it is more with-it to be bored
stiff doing nothing)

If we could borrow from and interchange each others work

If we could trust each other just a bit

(realizing it is easier to kick somebody
then talk to him)

If we could learn not to be

Embarrassed about something

We are supposed to love and

Have dedicated our lives to

Maybe that is all we need: to dedicate ourselves to sculpture

I know this isn't even square

It is cubed, but remember

The dog you eat may be yourself.³⁸⁵

This is mirrored in a text by David Bainbridge, who was later to be a member of Art & Language. In the text 'The Artist/Intellectual as an Ineffective (Hypocritical?) Idealist' from issue eight in February 1965, Bainbridge connects the role and personality of the art student to the artist, thus bridging the two supposedly separate spheres of an artist's life writing:

³⁸⁵ Unknown author, "We are in the position to do anything we like", *Silâns* 15, 1965

So, when at this stage, having avoided those complicated digressions, we ask a real leading question, like ‘what are you, as an artist doing to put your socialist/humanist/idealist principles into practice’, the confusion really reveals itself. Most of the blame they throw at Bond Street of course, in whose hands they are unwilling pawns. Can they help it if their socially purposeful, high minded creations are consumed only by a small group of snobs and financiers? As if, in fact, they were the ones that were being thwarted. The obvious truth that Bond Street is not snaffling up their little gems, but is in fact the only place that can use them, seems to elude them. One can understand why...³⁸⁶

Westley comments on this article that the implicit scepticism indicates a possible contradiction against the first generation of tutors, ‘who asked their students to question the nature of sculpture but to do so within an understanding of sculpture already in place’ continuing ‘When the students arrived at definitions which were not the tutors’ own, it resulted in an aesthetic as well as an intellectual impasse.’³⁸⁷ Thus, the contributors to *Silâns* were questioning the two possible routes for the art student on completion of their studies. If they chose to be a commercial artist, they were compromising their work and acting as pawns to dealers and gallerists. However, if they chose to be a teacher, they were leading a mediocre and unchallenging career path which basically suggested failure. Both routes were inadequate in terms of confronting the artist’s social meaning and purpose: ‘They will nearly always assert that they are humanitarians, socialists, anarchists etc. but when attributed to the art-world it seems these terms are quite mystical.’³⁸⁸

The discourse in *Silâns* took place between students and teachers as an interrogation of the art school, with the resulting text evolving from this discourse. It also enacted a wider interrogation of the varying routes available for the art student at this point – between commercial artist and teacher rather than just a critique of their own work or others. As such, there were also similarities between *Silâns* and *Control* as both magazines embodied the assertion of a distinct role for the art student – one which saw authority as contingent and questioned the role of the artist as an individual creator, hermetic in their role and immune to outside influence. Instead, they examined what the artist’s and art student’s

³⁸⁶ David Bainbridge, “The Artist/Intellectual as an Ineffective (Hypocritical?) Idealist”, *Silâns* 8, February 1965, unpaginated

³⁸⁷ Hester Westley, “Traditions and Transitions: St Martin’s Sculpture Department 1969-1979”, 116

³⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

position in society should now be, suggesting that they should act as a catalyst for change in a large society rather than as sole individual creator. An example of this is Flanagan's critique of the Group Crits and Forums as intellectual practice, framing and structuring their experience to potential outcomes. This is documented in a letter to Antony Caro in issue six of *Silâns* which he wrote when he was attending Caro's evening courses in experimental sculpture just before he started on the sculpture course at St Martin's, 'I need the support, and the time to organise the process by which ideas are translated into presentable readable media' continuing 'the idea is an intellectual 'thing', a dire imposition and an affront to the sensitivity of the human being.'³⁸⁹ Flanagan's open letter to his future tutor, Caro, published in a student magazine argues against dominant discourses which situate the 'Crit' at the centre of combative interactions between students and tutors. Instead, he reserves his interaction for the format of a letter and as such demonstrates that he was not looking for an immediate response, or even a response at all. Rather, the letter defines that the official forum for discussion – the Crit – is not the format which Flanagan feels is sensitive to the ideas or process of art production. Although, this rejection of the idea of the artist as intellectual is in opposition to the verbalisation which the group Art & Language would put forward a few years later at Coventry College of Art, the premise of questioning of confronting the institutions in which they operated is similar to that of the group. As artist and writer Felicity Allen writes, one of the most significant lessons handed down from the late 1960s and early 1970s in relation to art colleges: 'authority is always contingent'³⁹⁰

In 2011, writer and curator Jo Melvin, who now owns the estate of Flanagan, collated all sixteen copies of the magazine together reprinted the facsimile of *Silâns* as one volume. (Fig. 102) The yellowing, DIY printing of the originals was replaced with glossy print paper and perfect-bound format. This reproduction, like the *Art-Language* facsimile mentioned in chapter one, called into

³⁸⁹ Barry Flanagan, 'Letter to 'Mr Caro'', 7 June 1963. *Silâns* 6, January 1965, 4

³⁹⁰ Felicity Allen in Allen, F. (ed.), *Education* (London: Whitechapel, 2011), 16

question the idea of authenticity, for on the website for the estate, the facsimile is described as Barry Flanagan's student magazine, produced at St Martin's College of Art, thus attributing authorship to Flanagan despite its collective production. This is mirrored in its presence on the 20th Century Art Archives website, where it is listed as 'Authorised by the artist's estate.' The website describes how it was originally circulated around the art school population and attempted to disseminate concrete poetry as well as 'experimentalism and enquiry', concluding, 'This facsimile of the complete run faithfully delivers the texture of the original.'³⁹¹ Thus in facsimile form, the magazine's authorization and sense of faithfulness to the original are emphasized as a requisite to its authenticity rather than its contents and context.

Silâns is therefore now identified in relation to concrete poetry rather than as an early form of text-based conceptual art, which is interesting if we consider these two distinctions in relation to materiality and immateriality. For as argued before, conceptual art is inextricably tied to the 'immaterial' as its apparent media, with its basis in concepts and theories, and concrete poetry is defined by nature as 'concrete' – tied to its look, its material form. Yet the subsequent emphasis on the magazine as a means to disseminate concrete poetry tacitly avoids anything political with regards to it, while also largely ignoring the purpose of the name 'Silâns' as opposition to the Group Crit format of Forum – the public sphere where the ideal speaker is given space to speak. At the back of the facsimile, Melvin quotes John James, a poet and friend of Flanagan's he knew from Bristol where he lived before he began the Advanced Sculpture Course. James' quotes describes the effect of the magazine on his circle of friends and associates:

Copies of *Silâns*
circulate from hand to hand among the poets
his influence & practice
touching & shaping the form of the work

³⁹¹ Jo Melvin in Melvin, J.(ed.), *Silâns 1964-1965* (Lethaby Press: London, 2011)

a consequence a continuum

a writing outside literature³⁹²

The analogy which James makes between sculpture and poetry suggests an early permutation of analytic conceptual art whereby the text, the writing and the words are the art form rather than the accompanying theory or criticism.

It is apparent that by rooting these magazines in the context of an art school, they allowed the artists a much bolder expression of their feelings towards their direct environment and the art world more generally. The next magazine which I will explore in relation to its pedagogical underpinnings managed to navigate the three sites of art school, critique and art world but in doing so may have compromised some of the more socially-orientated critique which these earlier magazines were able to display. *Art-Language* magazine which started out of Coventry College of Art in 1969 by the group, Art & Language.

The ‘Art Theory’ Course at Coventry College of Art and *Art-Language* magazine

Tickner has written that students on the St Martin’s ‘A’ course worked ‘with their given materials, in silence, locked in their studio by tutors who watched and said nothing.’³⁹³ While students on the Art Theory course at Coventry College of Art ‘working with language’ were ‘immersed with fiercely articulate tutors in a critique of mainstream, medium-based modernism.’³⁹⁴ Neither, she writes, were concerned with traditional ‘skills’ and both were ‘opposed, in different ways, to self-expression.’³⁹⁵ Although Tickner was referring to the later period of the ‘A’ Course and the ‘Locked Room Experiment’, writing that in order to satisfy his [the male art student] ego, he must obtain ‘total power’

³⁹² John James, From the poem, *It’s Bristol Time Encore*, printed in Melvin J., *Silâns 1964-1965*, unpaginated

³⁹³ Tickner, *Hornsey 1968: The Art School Revolution*, 97

³⁹⁴ Ibid.

³⁹⁵ Ibid.

the comparison of these two courses exemplify a view whereby the role of the conceptual artist in training was that of a serious, heavily theoretical and largely male student.³⁹⁶

Four years after the last issue of *Silâns*, the first copy of *Art-Language* was produced by the group, Art & Language. Initially a teacher-student collaboration, it was produced by Terry Atkinson and Michael Baldwin (David Bainbridge and Harold Hurrell slightly later) on the 'Art Theory' course (1969-71) at Coventry College of Art. (Fig. 103, 104, 105) I argue in this final section that the move to verbalisation, as exemplified by the Art Theory course at Coventry, was a radical form of pedagogical practice, which allowed a more social and collaborative interaction between students and tutors. Although the magazine has been considered as largely introspective and impenetrable by contemporary readers, I propose that the magazine provided a platform for the discourse on the Art Theory course, thus acting as a medium for exchange and collaboration between various pedagogical institutions, artists and future generations. It is the influence and network of these dialogues which were radical to authorities and to the notion of the singular author.

Madge and Weinberger write about the development of the Art Theory course at Coventry in the context of the First Year student's dissatisfaction with the General Studies course at Coventry that in June 1969, the students asked for a staff-student meeting, to which they presented written statements of their views, entitled, 'The Quinquennial Review by the National Council for the Diploma in Art Education'. The result of this dissatisfaction and the presentation of this review, was the development of a combined syllabus, which was put into effect from 1969-70 where 'students were to concentrate for the first five terms of the course on the analysis of language and verbalisation was thus to be so heavily emphasised as to overshadow, and virtually exclude, at least during the first half of the course, the traditional activities of painting and sculpture towards which the Fine Art course was nominally

³⁹⁶ The Locked Room experiment took place in 1969 at St Martin's College of Art under the tutors: Peter Kardia; Garth Evans, Gareth Jones and Peter Harvey. In this pedagogical experiment, twelve students were locked in an empty white room, observed and in silence for eight hours a day for term. The idea was to work with no critical feedback or external stimulation.

directed.³⁹⁷ This course became known as the Art Theory course and was largely run by members of the group, Art & Language.

Coventry College of Art's amalgamation into Lanchester Polytechnic, following reforms by the Coldstream Report, resulted in an instability of the structure and management of the art college, which allowed Art & Language to propose a radical change to the Dip AD. Despite the freedom which this unstructured environment allowed, the ideas of Art & Language tested the environment of the liberal values of the new system following the Report and as a result, they re-imagined the art school as a place that focused on 'discursive, collaborative, analytical, critical and politically aware activities and ideas that need not be expressed in art objects but as an ongoing project of learning.'³⁹⁸ The 'Art Theory' aspect of the course, however, was only one half of the Dip AD. The other half was devoted to more traditional studio practice such as painting, drawing and sculpture. Split into five sections, the Art Theory component covered the following themes: Romanticism, Art Theory, Audio-Visual and Technos and other than the members of Art & Language (Atkinson, Bainbridge and Baldwin), tutors on the course also included: Dave Hiron, John Mitchell, Andrea Moering, Steve Furlonger, Brian Lowe, Tony Hepburn, Ronnie Reese, Stuart Knight and Donald Mears. Alongside these tutors, Barbara Reise, who taught on the General Studies course also regularly contributed to the programme.³⁹⁹ The programme was modified according to Art & Language's concerns but the practice of editing and relating texts was one of the key activities, especially in the second year, which also led to students producing their own publications such as *Analytical Art* and *Statements*.⁴⁰⁰ By 1970, however, the relationship between Art & Language's practice and Art & Language's teaching changed to a quasi-research group in which the more dedicated students were treated like apprentices or co-

³⁹⁷ Madge and Weinberger, *Art Students Observed*, 208

³⁹⁸ Dennis, "Strategic Anomalies: Art & Language in the Art Schools 1969-1979", 104

³⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

workers and the style of education was increasingly directed to a form of 'group-learning'. Mark Dennis writes:

The reading and learning fed into discussions which in turn fed into the production of texts, which were edited and discussed. In that Art & Language never really saw a split between their group practice and their teaching.⁴⁰¹

However, the course has since been enveloped into art pedagogical history and the critical space which it opened up has been swiftly shut down. Had it been given more space, it would have 'attracted a specific kind of student' to art colleges as well as pushed them into, 'developing this problematic relationship between making, talking, writing and learning, a problematic that no other type of course was addressing.'⁴⁰²

Tickner has also discussed the Art Theory course in her book, *Hornsey 1968: The Art School Revolution*. On the course, she writes that it 'drew on emerging critiques of mainstream modernism developed by conceptual artists on both sides of the Atlantic.'⁴⁰³ Among the key components of this course were the themes, 'Techne' and 'Romanticism'. 'Techne', she writes, was not as much about technology, neither was 'romanticism' about romanticism but instead, in their different ways both of these elements of the course 'held up to scrutiny conventionally modernist assumptions about the nature of the art object and the conditions of art practice.'⁴⁰⁴ Although described as a theory course, the Art Theory course at Coventry was separate to the complimentary studies courses and studio activities, rather as she describes of the Art Theory course at Coventry in the following extract from her publication on Hornsey College of Art

The course offered a deconstructive critique of the assumptions which, in its view, fatally compromised studio practice, including a belief in the primacy of the art object, the

⁴⁰¹ Ibid, 170.

⁴⁰² Ibid.

⁴⁰³ Tickner, *Hornsey 1968: The Art School Revolution*, 95

⁴⁰⁴ Wood, 'Between God and the Saucepan: Some Aspects of Art Education in England from the Mid-Nineteenth Century until Today', 183

importance of formal experiment in the medium, and the creative autonomy of artists and students.⁴⁰⁵

This she writes ‘was a source of friction with other staff and administrators irritated by its influence and sceptical of its claims.’⁴⁰⁶ Crippa has also researched details of the pedagogical methods on the Art Theory course at Coventry and has interviewed the remaining remembers of Art & Language, Michael Baldwin and Mel Ramsden, regarding the structure and contents of the course. Baldwin and Ramsden have described their approach as not wanting to follow a pre-ordained curriculum writing, ‘One event was going through the proofs for an article in *Studio International* and we discussed how that could be expanded or thrown away.’⁴⁰⁷ They described this approach as follows:

There were no set philosophical problems in art or any other sort of problems of art that you would go through as an academy and the individuals could not sustain the energy or interest nor had the abilities to do so. The bravery for teacher and student was that a student (me) could then engage with the process of learning and join in the process - it would probably be called a journey today. Terry's approach was to work from notes or make some general observations of a more traditionalist art lecturer style.⁴⁰⁸

In a near contemporaneous account of the course, an article by Anthony Everitt published in the November 1972 issue of *Studio International*, ‘Aspects of Art Education’, he writes that members of staff, and in particular, Terry Atkinson, wanted to, ‘offer a disciplined alternative to the easy habit of *laissez-faire*.’⁴⁰⁹ However, Everitt writes that Robin Plummer, the incoming Dean of the Faculty of Art & Design who took up his post a year before, was ‘widely credited with dismantling the Art-Language course, and at the least permitting the sending away of the part-time conceptualists, or, more precisely, the non-renewal of their contracts,’ concluding that the last generation of ‘Art Theory’ students were on their way out if only because it is difficult to find people willing to teach the course.⁴¹⁰

⁴⁰⁵ Tickner, *Hornsey 1968: The Art School Revolution*, 96

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁷ Interview between Art & Language and Elena Crippa conducted over email, 27/02/2013

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁹ Anthony Everitt, ‘Four Midland Polytechnic Fine Art Departments’ in *Studio International* 184, no. 949 (November 1972): 177

⁴¹⁰ Ibid.

By 1971, Baldwin and Bainbridge had been made redundant from teaching on the course and although Terry Atkinson was kept on until 1973, his role was largely perfunctory compared with ‘the livelier group discussion which had been the core of the earlier programme.’⁴¹¹ The dismissal of Baldwin and Bainbridge in 1971 following a report by the Summerson Council, was further confirmation that only studio work in its accepted meaning – as tangible and visual art objects – would be accepted in art training. In the final section of this chapter, I analyse the main components of the course and how they relate to the contents of *Art-Language* magazine in this period.

Between May 1969 and November 1971, four copies of the journal, *Art-Language* were produced. Madge and Weinberger describe *Art-Language* as the external face of Art and Language as it commenced in the same year as the Art Theory course deserves revisiting. In the second paragraph of the introduction to the first journal, the group write:

The content of the artist’s idea is expressed through the semantic qualities of the written language. As such many people would judge that this tendency is better described by the category name ‘art-theory’ or ‘art criticism’; there can be little doubt that works of ‘conceptual art’ can be seen to include both the periphery of art criticism and of art theory, and this tendency may well be amplified. With regard to this a particular point criteria bearing upon the chronology of art theory may have to be more severely and stringently accounted for, particularly in terms of evolutionary analogies. For example, the question is not simply: ‘Are works of art theory part of the kit of the conceptual artist? But also: ‘Are past works of art-theory now to be counted as works of conceptual art?’⁴¹²

The group attempt to define the boundaries between conceptual art, art theory and art criticism, questioning whether art theory is part of a ‘kit’ of a conceptual artist, or a medium from which they can express their ideas. Yet, as they make clear, by using language as art the question arises, where do you situate this art when it may easily be amalgamated into a history of art theory and criticism rather than as an artwork in its own right? They conclude: ‘What has to be considered here is the intention of the conceptual artist,’ therefore, its definition lies with its purpose.⁴¹³

⁴¹¹ Mark Dennis, “Strategic Anomalies: Art & Language in the Art Schools 1969-1979”, 217

⁴¹² ‘Introduction’, *Art-Language* 1, No.1. May 1969, 1-2

⁴¹³ *Ibid*, 2

By the second copy in February 1970, the focus was still largely on definitions of conceptual artists and artworks. For example, in Terry Atkinson's article, 'From an Art & Language Point of View', he writes:

One can assume that whether or not in the long run the artists associated directly with Art & Language Press are called conceptual artists is no matter, one hopes anyway that in the future there will be new younger artists bringing fresh ideas to the identity of the Press thus affecting its identity no matter what it is or what it is called.⁴¹⁴

Thus Atkinson is simultaneously staking out territory within the conceptual art scene as the same time (particularly with relation to Joseph Kosuth), but also emphasising the importance of younger generations and their continuation of the ideas started by the group – not in a prescriptive sense but through dialogue with the texts. In the fourth issue, however, produced in November 1971, the article, 'Art Teaching' by Michael Baldwin and Terry Atkinson was published. In this article they write that there is a relation between the role of the fine artist and the theory of possessive individualism in Western society, describing the modern British art school as a 'special manifestation of the theory of possessive individualism.'⁴¹⁵ It thus argues against the popular assumption that education offers an equality of opportunity and instead proposes that what art education offers is a 'laissez faire' approach, concluding that the paradox of a laissez faire art education is the possibility of a reflexive consciousness, which involves an active questioning of the existing system. Set out in seventeen points and published at the same time as the course was being dismantled, the tone of the article demonstrates an active dissatisfaction and call for change and is polemic in parts. It wasn't until the third volume of the magazine in September 1974, however, when the crossover between art and education became more explicit.

By this point, the group utilised the magazine as a platform for the dialogue, or verbalisation which had always been apparent in their practice but was now more directly transcribed into print.

⁴¹⁴ *Art-Language* 1, No. 2. February 1970, 25

⁴¹⁵ Terry Atkinson and Michael Baldwin, "Art Teaching", *Art-Language* 1, Number 4, November 1971, 25

The September 1974 issue was produced by Ian Burn, Mel Ramsden and Terry Smith, who had joined the ever-expanding network of Art & Language participants – their names were printed on the front cover under the sub-heading ‘Draft for an Anti-Textbook’, which is written in bold, red writing. Its contents consist of a list from 1 to 39 and includes such sections as: ‘Language has a Hold on Us’, ‘Institutional Serenity’ and ‘Leftish Critique’, and is described in the first section titled, ‘Caution’: ‘We made transcripts of conversations we had in New York during May, June and July 1974. Transformations from ‘talk’ to ‘prose’ are, to some extent, dialogically cosmetic,’ suggesting that the only reason for this transcription is to make these conversations communicable.⁴¹⁶ In the second section entitled, ‘Somewhere to Begin’, they write:

Talking to each other has to do with the relationships its possible for you to set up between people... and to do with being frustrated by present concepts of exchanges between people. That’s important because what’s contingent on such relationships is the way ‘knowledge’ is produced – and especially the way learning takes place; part of what we are trying to do here is break up the regimentation of structures which make some people ‘experts’, some ‘learners’, and subject-syllabuses can be protected.⁴¹⁷

Part of the internalised pandemonium of the work articulated since around mid-1972 has to do with how we map and map onto each other... hence blurting... One of our problems ... it may turn out to be an advantage... is that we can’t separate the ‘knowledge’ from the ‘noise’... the knowledge industry tries to exclude noise, but I’m interested in the noise, its just about all I’ve got. I get to a point where I start imagining its all noise...⁴¹⁸

They emphasise that this ‘internalised pandemonium’ was a way of breaking down structures, breaking down the silence. Through the medium of verbalisation, the group communicate this internal ‘noise’ to their external readers. (Fig 106)

Thus, Madge and Weinberger’s use of Art & Language and the Art Theory course at Coventry as examples of the ‘verbalising’ impulse in conceptual art practice and art colleges demonstrate the importance of the verbal aspect of Art & Language’s output. It is this verbal aspect, which I argue is the medium/media of their work, especially in the early to mid-1970s, rather than the

⁴¹⁶ Ian Burn, Mel Ramsden and Terry Smith, *Art-Language: Draft for an Anti-Textbook* 2, no. 1, September 1974, 1

⁴¹⁷ Ibid, 2

⁴¹⁸ Ibid, 3

magazine or the printed words on the page. In attempting to align their teaching practice and the magazine *Art-Language*, we see not so much a development but an increased self-reflexivity there is and an attempt to engage wider range of participants as well as audiences. The group write that they are not sure whether their approach is destined to play a major role in either the future of Midville, or elsewhere but that ‘what is beyond question is the importance of verbalisation in the art colleges (and in the art periodicals).’⁴¹⁹ This influence, they argue, was already clear before the Art & Language viewpoint was formulated and will continue to be of importance, concluding that one might see Art & Language as, ‘an outgrowth from the verbalising impulse, as a militant expression of the need to discuss, to defend, to validate, and above all, to *define* activities’, demonstrating the importance of ‘the verbal’ to the group by this point.⁴²⁰

Summary

In conclusion, it is evident that the two major themes which this chapter has identified as integral to radical art pedagogy in 1960s Britain – behavioural theory and a turn to verbalisation – have paved the way for later developments in conceptual art practice. Reforms in art education were not mutually exclusive from more radical methods of pedagogy but instead each fed into, or reacted against, one another. Thus art schools were platforms for discourse and experimentation as well as site of conflicts between formalism and more avant-garde practices. This conflict, as well as conflicts between students and teachers due to teaching methods, drove students to become increasingly vocal and to use print and magazines to vocalise this discontent.

Students were also dissecting the role of the art student and artist and their place within the art school and upon graduation, into society. The student magazine thus became a means of producing

⁴¹⁹ Ibid, 21

⁴²⁰ Ibid, 209

work which would undermine the outdated frameworks and paradigms of the art school structure and its forms of assessment. Through publications such as *Silâns*, students were using the dialogue between contributors as their medium to discuss, to argue, to defend and ultimately to challenge and to change their environments. Lastly, the progression from Basic Design to cybernetic inflected teaching at Ealing and Ipswich College of Art demonstrated an early development of a dialogic form of conceptual art which informed the socially-orientated and open-ended practices of conceptual art of the 1970s. Although Crippa argues for this development, she does not stress the importance of the printed-page as a major site for the discourse which underlined this artwork. Magazines therefore provided a space for this verbalisation, enabling students to enact discourse between themselves, their tutors, the institution and other institutions. They also opened up space for the idea of the collective in conceptual art and for the performance of dialogue. My final chapter will explore the transformation that this dialogue addresses, alongside the student magazines produced in the 1970s and how they reflect a larger generational discourse between text-based conceptual art of the 1960s and the 1970s.

Chapter 4: The Art School Magazine as Network: SCHOOL, *Ostrich, Ratcatcher, Issue* and 'The Newport Group'

Introduction

[A]part from art history, there was little formal teaching. It was as if the reputation of the institution was based solely on the presence of the artist/staff and that even the air you breathed, entered your thinking and practice by a kind of osmosis. This is very different from art education today, where student guidance and teaching are offered with a view to giving a measurable experience to the client/student. At St Martin's we were left to our own devices, but tutors were around and students could ask to see them. Tutors were mostly sympathetic and benign presences.⁴²¹

To dwell perennially on an institutional critique without addressing specific problems within the institutions is to generalize and sloganize. It may also have the fortunate consequences of affirming that which you set out to criticize (language... sociality...) which does not embody a commodity mode of existence. That is to say, I don't want to simply reiterate present society's mode of intelligibility and affirm market hierarchies.⁴²²

In Harold Rosenberg's 1973 essay 'Educating Artists', he described the disparity between contemporary, or conceptual art, and its impartation from one generation to the next via teaching, writing that the best students, 'scarcely listen to their teachers but derive their ideas from the art journals.'⁴²³ In the same collection of essays, Mel Ramsden from *Art & Language* wrote that teaching doesn't merely mean getting others to spout your point of view but that a commitment to teach and learn is a commitment to dialogue, to commonality, 'not point of view or authority' and that teaching is constituted through a particular person's praxis. Rosenberg was writing from an American context and perspective, which differed from the experience of teachers or students practicing in Britain. However, what might be garnered from this viewpoint, as well as from Ramsden's, is the question of generational influence and dialogue as integral to understanding the formation and characteristics of

⁴²¹ David Dye, "Backwards into the Future: an exploration into revisiting, re-presenting and rewriting art of the late 1960s and early 1970s" (PhD diss., University of Northumbria, 2010), 11

⁴²² Mel Ramsden, 'On Practice' (1975), Alberro, A. and Stimson, B., (eds), *Institutional Critique: An Anthology of Artist's Writings* (Cambridge, Mass. And London: The MIT Press, 2009), 176

⁴²³ Harold Rosenberg, 'Educating Artists', Battcock, G., *New Ideas in Art Education*, 95

1970s art education. It also brings to light questions of dissemination and how concepts and style might, or might not, be traced between teacher and student and in turn, its wider dissemination into conceptual art practice.

In this chapter I will argue that the student magazine was an integral space for the dialogue from student to student or from student to teacher, demonstrating a form of generational intersubjectivity through networks rather than hierarchical transmission of knowledge, which started in the 1960s with magazines such as *Control*, *Silâns* and *Art-Language* (as discussed in the last chapter). I argue that the content of student magazines in the 1970s was not radically different from those of the 1960s as both were based on a commitment to dialogue. Rather, art school magazines in the 1970s enacted a discursive, or recursive relationship to these earlier magazines, which saw their sites and contexts change rather than their ideologies. Instead I propose that there was a complex intergenerational dialogue enacted through teaching and publications which, rather than simply seeing one generation of conceptual art disseminated to the next, instead resulted in students interacting with older magazines and artists in a changing social and political climate. This dissemination mirrored a larger relationship of 1960s to 1970s art, which I have previously discussed in this thesis, yet it was the site of the art school magazine where it was most evident. For this dissemination and dialogue, I will argue, the site of the magazine was integral.

In order to explore this generational dialogue, and the dissemination of conceptual art practice further, it is necessary to extend the theme from the last chapter to a number of publications produced from the early to mid-1970s. In the first section I explore a group of students producing *Art-Language*-inspired publications at Newport College of Art, provisionally and retrospectively called *The Newport Group*. I will look at them in relation to more dominant art magazines in this period such as *Studio International* with the intention of demonstrating the various routes which conceptual art took in the 1970s in relation to pedagogical production and dissemination. In the next section, I study three short-lived, student magazines produced from 1975 to 1976: *Ratcatcher*, *Issue* and *Ostrich*. These magazines

saw the impulse to verbalisation described in chapter three enact a more radical and political confrontation with the institutions of the art school and the gallery. Influenced by earlier forms of conceptual art practice in the 1960s, yet also simultaneously reacting against it, their contents demonstrated a complex cultural and generational dialogue with overlapping ideologies.

***Studio International* and Richard Cork**

From early 1975, the new owner of *Studio International*, Michael Spens, alongside the magazine's new editor, Richard Cork, ran a series of bi-monthly issues devoted to reflecting the changing direction of art in the 1970s. The themes of these issues included: Women's Art; Photography; Film; Performance; Architecture; Art Magazines but also, crucially, Art & Social Purpose. While the previous editor, Peter Townsend, had orientated the magazine around its geographical position in London, 'poised between Europe and the US, susceptible to the influences of both, and wholly committed to neither, under Cork's editorship, the magazine's intentions changed to that of a platform for modern and contemporary art in this period. It was therefore intended to reflect the diversity of interests and mediums of art throughout the seventies.⁴²⁴ This purpose is demonstrated in the September/October 1976 special issue of *Studio International*, which centred around the topic of art magazines. In this issue Cork introduced the aim of his editorship to, 'present art not as a narrowly specialised phenomenon obsessed with its own internal properties, but as one facet of the many alternative ways in which the arts as a whole seek at once to interpret and to shape the continuously evolving forces of contemporary society.'⁴²⁵ He recounts in the introduction that in May that year he had received a letter from the head of a London art school announcing that they were sending back their subscription renewal for

⁴²⁴ Jo Melvin, "Studio International Magazine: Tales from Peter Townsend's Editorial Papers 1965-1975" (PhD diss., Chelsea College of Arts, University of the Arts, London, 2013), ii

⁴²⁵ Richard Cork, 'Editorial' in *Studio International: Artists' Magazines* (September/October 1976): 100

Studio International as it seemed that the magazine no longer included painting as part of modern art.

Cork writes that although he welcomed the letter, it was simultaneously unpleasant to receive as it:

encapsulated precisely the attitude towards art which I was dedicated to opposing through the magazine. And the appearance of this dissenting verdict from the heart of the art-educational establishment proved that I had begun to draw blood.⁴²⁶

Although Cork does not specify which London art school the letter originated from, the head's demand for *Studio International* to retain more traditional art values and media, such as painting and sculpture, was seemingly in conflict with Cork's aim for the magazine to seek to, 'interpret and to shape the continuously evolving forces of contemporary society.'⁴²⁷ It also demonstrated that despite conceptual art's incorporation into institutions, magazines, and art collections by this point, British art schools were still reticent to actively advocate conceptual art practice through pedagogy or publications. Lastly, as reported by Cork, the letter demonstrated that art schools recognised the efficacy of art magazines as influential modes of dissemination, and therefore felt that they needed to upkeep the promotion of traditional studio practices as proper training for students rather than those associated with conceptual art.

The artist David Dye has written of his own experience at art school and introduction to modernism in relation to his tutor John Latham's work, *Art and Culture* (1966). He describes a simultaneous incorporation and rejection of modernism in the art school:

Vaguely aware that the sculpture of Caro and most of the other artists/staff at St Martin's could be said to be Modernist, my introduction to what this term meant came through another artist's work. John Latham taught at St Martin's, a couple of years before I arrived there. In 1966 he organised an event called *Still and Chew*: a group of students was asked to chew pages of a book borrowed from the St Martin's library, Clement Greenberg's *Art and Culture*.⁴²⁸

⁴²⁶ Ibid, 101

⁴²⁷ Ibid, 100

⁴²⁸ David Dye, "Backwards into the Future: an exploration into revisiting, re-presenting and rewriting art of the late 1960s and early 1970s", 11

Dye argues that, ‘Greenberg’s views on art were ‘transubstantiated’ into their material essence, thus in *Art and Culture*, Latham had, ‘defined sculpture as a paradigm of Modernism in its purity and separation from everyday life.’⁴²⁹ Thus, this quote demonstrates an ambivalence towards Greenberg’s writing at St Martin’s college of Art. Caro has been described as assuming the posture and methods of Greenberg and the Group Crit scenario as associated with a Greenbergian/Modernist notion of the development of the artist through self-criticism, designed to isolate and cultivate each art form’s particular preserve.⁴³⁰ Latham, on the other hand, actively and performatively destroyed these roots of modernism.

Cork’s relationship to modernism was equally ambiguous, which is made evident in a retrospective selection of his collected writings from the 1970s, *Everything Seemed Possible: Art in the 1970s* (2003); he wrote in the introduction that it was exciting to see artists of his generation employing different media including film, video, performance, raw documentation, photography and texts. The result of this, he argues, is that artists needed ‘no longer conform to the old hierarchy’, furthermore, at the beginning of the 1970s, he had emphasised in his critical writing that, ‘the latest generation of artists is interested, not so much in the old idea of executing easel paintings or free standing sculpture, as in exploring the idea of the closing gap between art and everyday life.’⁴³¹ Despite his support for art which did not pertain to the mediums of painting and sculpture, Cork does not suggest any difference between formalist and more contemporary art other than that related to their medium specificity. Furthermore, Cork identified St Martin’s School of Art in the late 1960s as the place ‘where the spirit of dissent was at its strongest’ citing artists including Richard Long, Bruce McLean, Gilbert & George and Rose Finn-Kelcey, as some of the most prominent, important and exciting artists of this decade.⁴³²

⁴²⁹ Ibid, 16. Dye describes how the resulting pulp from Latham’s project was treated with chemicals, which diluted it further into a clear liquid. This was then placed into a teardrop shaped vial, labelled ‘Art and Culture’, and returned to the library.

⁴³⁰ Westley, “Traditions and Transitions: St Martin’s Sculpture Department 1960-1979”, 111

⁴³¹ Richard Cork, *Everything Seemed Possible: Art in the 1970s* (London: Yale Books, 2003), 2

⁴³² Ibid.

Yet, by prioritising St Martin's over other art schools, he was excluding some of the more radical and non-London-centric practices.

Cork considers artists such as Marcel Broodthaers, Joseph Beuys, Tadeusz Kantor, Ed Keinholz, John Latham, Mario Merz and Claes Oldenburg, as the best artists working in this period – artists who were ‘refusing to make a fetish out of any single medium’.⁴³³ Medium as a concept, is therefore prioritised over intention, idea, context or social imperative, with Cork concluding that these artists, ‘offered a refreshing corrective and helped pave the way for new artists to move with supple, inventive resourcefulness among a range of alternatives.’⁴³⁴ This statement, alongside Cork's choice of artists, as representative of the best conceptual artists working in this period makes evident that although he embraced new mediums as means for experimentation, in prioritising medium, he rejected art which was inconclusive or dialectic in nature. He also misunderstood that the conceptual art that he promoted was intrinsically tied to institutional structures – both the institution of the art gallery and the institution of the Advanced/Vocational Sculpture Course based at St Martin's College of Art. Although the Advanced Sculpture Course did not offer a recognised qualification, define a particular outcome, or designate a period of time for which the student was required to attend the course, it was nonetheless regarded by many as the most important and interesting location for studying art at that time and therefore it inadvertently acquired cultural capital and institutional backing.

The most notable exclusion from Cork's list, however, is the group, Art & Language. Cork's description of Art & Language's 1973 exhibition at the Lisson Gallery in London as disclosing, ‘their most private and doubt-filled conversations’, resulting in their communal approach as ‘now more accessible than ever before’ proposes that their practice was before this point, inaccessible. He

⁴³³ Ibid.

⁴³⁴ Ibid, 7

concludes that Art & Language's debates will 'remain forever enclosed within the specialist field.'⁴³⁵ In making this critique, however, Cork makes evident his bias against the group and in the process, ignores the educational roots and ideologies of their work. This pedagogy as practice was integral to their production and output and to ignore this integral element of their work fails to acknowledge the group's social and political content and context.

SCHOOL

In the same year as the Art Magazines issue in March/April 1976, Cork released a special issue of *Studio International* called 'Art & Social Purpose'. This issue began with an introduction by Cork, where he wrote that the 'only way to effect such an interaction is to break out, once and for all, from the appallingly incestuous debate conducted by most modernist artists, whereby its latest 'breakthrough' is automatically evaluated in terms of its relationship with the existing avant-garde pantheon alone.' He continues that 'this is by far the most urgent and important challenge facing art in the latter half of the seventies: to restore a sense of social purpose, to accept that artists cannot afford for a moment longer to operate in a vacuum of specialised discourse without considering their purpose in wider and more utilitarian terms.'⁴³⁶

The magazine incorporated such artists as Steve Willats, Gustav Metzger, Terry Atkinson, Terry Smith, Victor Burgin, the Artist's Placement Group (APG) and Margaret Harrison. None of the line-up of Art & Language (as it stood in 1976), however, were invited to contribute to this issue. In opposition to this decision, Paul Wood wrote to Cork to say 'what magazines like *Studio* really represent is a capitalist consumption-category masquerading as reality and fooling people into accepting

⁴³⁵ Ibid.

⁴³⁶ Richard Cork, 'Editorial', *Studio International: Art & Social Purpose* 191, No. 980 (March/April, 1976): 94

capitalist production relations.⁴³⁷ Wood's reaction might also typify the diverging generational interests of conceptual art in this period, which were manifested through art school publications and their opposition to major art magazines like *Studio*. For while Cork largely found fault in the work of Art & Language, at the same time, he was keen to incorporate some of the art school projects, which acted as alternative platforms for conceptual art and were orientated around social and political concerns. These magazines were directly, or indirectly, linked to the work of Art & Language, and as Wood argues were, 'militantly hostile to what were regarded as accommodations to the mainstream art press.'⁴³⁸

One example of an alternative platform for conceptual art in art colleges was 'SCHOOL' (Fig. 106). This was the title of a project which although never materialised, provided a network for students and teachers in art schools to share similar concerns regarding the structure of art education, the mismanagement of art colleges and the inadequacy of the teaching staff. In 'Support School?', an article promoting the project, the unnamed authors write, 'what substantiates the radicalism of 'School' as an alternative?' and continues 'Any alternatives to the mildly agitated community debate over possible post-Modernist 'directions' posing as the quest for a socialist art... must attempt to formulate that which *Studio International* et al cannot, by virtue of their very nature as ideologically and economically 'fixed' consumer items.'⁴³⁹ Thus, despite *Studio International's* intentions to provide a platform for contemporary art and new media, the magazine was inextricably linked to institutions and their agendas, and as such considered a 'fixed' and circulated consumer item. The project, 'SCHOOL', on the other hand, was purposefully unfixed in its location, participants, or identity, and thus masqueraded as a movement, therefore undoing and undermining the idea of an institutional 'helm' like *Studio*.

⁴³⁷ Paul Wood, ' "Back in the Day": Preliminary Notes Towards a History (1970-1973)'. (Unpublished Introduction to *Politics of Art Education/Noises Within* reprint edition, 2017)

⁴³⁸ Ibid.

⁴³⁹ *The Noises Within Echo From a Gimcrack, Remote and Ideologically Hollow Chamber of the Education Chamber of the Education Machine: Art School* (Edinburgh: SCHOOL, 1979), 113

The first poster for SCHOOL was written by member of Art & Language, Michael Baldwin, and the responsibility of its production and distribution was taken by Art & Language affiliate, Dave Rushton, who set up 'School Press' to print three different posters. Cork attempted to incorporate and patronise SCHOOL into his special edition on 'art magazines' but writers of 'SCHOOL' resisted this incorporation by writing a letter to the Cork at *Studio International* which is reprinted in the second issue of *Issue* magazine. This letter documents *Studio's* proposal to support 'SCHOOL' as an intercollegiate journal, with the possibilities of wide distribution. 'SCHOOL' responded by making clear its resistance to such affiliations. The editors of *Issue* argue that they saw *Studio* as attempting 'a supposedly radical social section submerging any concerns with the reality of political economy in favour of institutional aspirations composed from an institutionally formed and transmitted history.'⁴⁴⁰ They write that for this reason, it is important that their politics are done internally and locally i.e. within the art schools and in their associated magazines and through their own networks and channels rather than through *Studio* so that 'small magazines such as ours, aren't simply poor attempts at big ones' concluding:

In a letter to M. Ramsden... Richard Cork issued an invitation to an issue of 'Studio' which would be examining contemporary art magazines. He declined the offer... School can only be regulated as a radical alternative, not a socialist balloon(s) for harmonious capitalist consumption (Ramsden).⁴⁴¹

This demonstrates the various generational conflicts which were taking place by the mid 1970s between Cork – who considered *Studio* as 'contemporary' by moving from the medium of painting and sculpture to wider social issues - and the contributors to 'SCHOOL' who rejected *Studio International* as a symptom/outlet of the institution. Yet, in *Studio's* selection of artists who fitted their remit, the inherent conservatism and bias to medium specificity was revealed.

⁴⁴⁰ *Issue* 2, 1976, 5

⁴⁴¹ *Ibid.*

Although, as I said previously, SCHOOL was never fully actualised as a project, Mark Dennis writes that several students can be linked as working under its banner. The network of ‘SCHOOL’ consisted of students and teachers across Britain at: Hull College of Art; the Royal College of Art in London; and Nottingham Trent Polytechnic. Furthermore, it is unknown whether it was ever intended to materialise into an actual publication or organisation, or instead to exist solely as a unifying identity. Its lack of materialisation, however, might say more than if it were ever physically produced. However, it initially evolved from these three colleges with the intention that it would provide a network and platform between these and other colleges for students who were questioning the art institution and its bureaucratic ties. Thus, rather than proposing an alternative means of working or making art, it instead insisted on a confrontation with the educational system and its teaching by operating through more marginal forms of distribution and networks, publishing in small editions and acting as a platform for discourse and discussion.

‘SCHOOL’ was publicised in art colleges by means of the distribution of A3 size posters and adverts in college magazines using distinctive and well-designed bold, ‘Wild West’ or army recruitment style lettering, with ‘SCHOOL’ at the top and a polemic of the political directives of the project below. The poster for the project read:

The careless purveyors of high culture are presented with clear alternatives. One of them is finally to be fixed as the harmless class, the dangerous harmless class, the social and historical scum...

SCHOOL’s two primary objectives were to act as an, ‘as yet somewhat negatively derived and demarcated context for critical practice maintained as a morally acceptable prospect by notions of a vague ‘democracy’ of editorship (political unity is/was as yet undiscussed) and crude ownership of ‘the means of production.’⁴⁴² Secondly, it operated as, ‘an attempt to transcend the local (individual,

⁴⁴² *The Noises Within Echo from a Gimcrack, Remote and Ideologically Hollow Chamber of the Education Machine: Art School*, 113

institutional, community) limitations of points of production within art education.⁴⁴³ It was therefore also intended to transcend the traditional hierarchical structures of editor and readership, or writer and audience, and instead to act as a collaborative platform for student's writing rather than for the promotion of the sort of individualism and 'privatistic' interests, which some conceptual artists, such as Art & Language, related as defining more traditional art practices and institutions.

Studio International magazine's complex dialogue with art school magazines and the project, 'SCHOOL', calls into question generational dissemination of conceptual art and the conflict inherent in this dissemination. The art historian Michael White has written on generational dissemination in relation to the Dada movement of the 1920s and 1930s in his publication *Generation Dada*, that categories of youth and old age are constructs.⁴⁴⁴ He argues that only those who become conscious of themselves as a generation are able to utilise that knowledge to contextualise their place in society – what has been described by June Edmonds and Bryan Turner as 'active' and 'passive' generations.⁴⁴⁵ Yet the dissemination of text-based analytical conceptual art from the late-1960s through to the 1970s was not necessarily formed through an understanding of the student's place within history, a view epitomised by Charles Harrison upon his return to teaching after a three-year break. He wrote that at this point he 'met a new breed, for whom obsessions with dope and pop music were the accompaniments neither to a laconic engagement nor to a picturesque anarchy, but rather to an apparent unbreachable and privatistic cynicism.'⁴⁴⁶ He continued that by 1973 'the articulate representatives of an entire generation seemed somehow to have been outmanoeuvred or disenfranchised or bought off.'⁴⁴⁷ Thus, by the early 1970s, the anarchic potential of art school students in the late 1960s had, according to Harrison, been incorporated into a branded culture of youth and

⁴⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁴ Michael White, *Generation Dada: The Berlin Avant-Garde and the First World War* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2013), 15

⁴⁴⁵ In June Edmonds and Bryan S. Turner, *Generational Consciousness, Narrative, and Politics* (Lanham, Boulder, New York, Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2002)

⁴⁴⁶ Charles Harrison, 'The Late Sixties in London and elsewhere' in *1965 to 1972 – when attitudes became form*, 14

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid.

rebellion, which as a result reduced the political and social activity and the urgency with which they operated.

This comment, although polemical in part, is significant in relation to the idea of generations as it defined the late 1960s as the most radical period for art student activity. I argue rather that the 1970s did not lack radicalism in its politics but that the period from 1968 to 1972 was a period of reflection and transformation through an ongoing dialogue, which looked backwards as well as forwards. Publications reflected this in their contents and aesthetics. For despite the general opinion that the sixties generation had a coherent and continuing identity, there were instead a number of ‘generation units’ involved throughout this decade.⁴⁴⁸ The idea that the generation around 1968 were united by exclusively left-wing activism is largely unfounded yet has been perpetuated by certain books and texts which neglect the anticommunist activities of the decade as well as those ‘divided by gender.’⁴⁴⁹ Certain events around this date, however, have been used to perpetuate this idea. For example, the student revolution which occurred at Hornsey College of Art in May 1968, which has been well documented by Tickner, has come to coincide with wider political events of 1968.

Hornsey made a large impact amongst students and was widely covered in the press - both nationally and internationally – and although it differed considerably in its aims, it shared with later student publications the importance and use of print to gather support and publicity. Printed material at Hornsey was produced on a ‘Gestetner’ printing press – essentially a duplicating machine, which would use a stencil and a thin piece of paper coated in wax. A stylus would then write through the paper and remove the wax beneath creating a stencil. Following this an ink roller would be used to create an imprint of the stencil’s outline onto a sheet of paper beneath. This process could be duplicated multiple times and revolutionised the copying process, which was previously more laborious and done by hand. Quoting Hornsey student, Mike Bygrave, in a flyer composed for the ‘Hornsey’

⁴⁴⁸ Jack Whalen and Richard Flacks, *Beyond the Barricades: The Sixties Generation Grows Up* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989)

⁴⁴⁹ Edmunds and Turner, *Generational Consciousness, Narrative, and Politics*, 5.

exhibition at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London (1968), Tickner calls the use of this duplicating machine a ‘Gestetner Revolution’. The students used a mimeograph machine, which she writes was essential to the ‘administrative life’ of the revolution as it allowed it a media profile as the sit-in gave rise to ‘an enormous amount of writing’:

More than seventy documents, from one-page notices to substantial analyses of art education, were rolled off stencilled ‘skins’ on the Gestetner machine in those pre-photocopy days, tenderly repaired and reattached through copious reprintings.⁴⁵⁰

Yet Hornsey also represented a different generation of students and educational concerns than those of the students producing magazines in the mid-1970s. This difference has been explored further by Dave Rushton and Paul Wood in their 1970 text, *The Politics of Art Education* where they write about the merger of art schools and colleges into polytechnics: ‘the major force determining the politics of art education over the next few years was to be the relationship of art colleges to, and in, the polytechnics.’⁴⁵¹ They write, ‘Dark tales are told of sell-outs, insults are hurled, resignations take place, emissaries trot off to the Minister, yet the art colleges were absorbed all the same.’⁴⁵² Rather than places for educational democracy, Rushton and Wood understand polytechnics as a means of conformity and ‘technocratic stratum’ by the state, arguing that the polytechnics were a result of the Labour government needing to accommodate the local authorities without alienating them. They argue that this necessity of accommodating local authorities followed from the 1968 events in France and London where the government realised the student movement was a force to be reckoned with and therefore should take an approach of appeasement rather than confrontation.⁴⁵³

This mirrored Art & Language’s description of Polytechnics in their 1975 catalogue for the Museum of Modern Art, Oxford as the ‘reinforcers of class hegemony’ and ‘among the most

⁴⁵⁰ Tickner, *Hornsey 1968: The Art School Revolution*, 38

⁴⁵¹ Dave Rushton and Paul Wood, *The Politics of Art Education*, 22

⁴⁵² *Ibid.*

⁴⁵³ *Ibid.*, 24

reactionary and backward of educational establishments.⁴⁵⁴ Yet, they argue, these ‘allegedly educational institutions are designed (and mostly function) as suitable places of employment of a traceable bourgeois or narco-bourgeois workforce.’⁴⁵⁵ Thus the politics which ran through these magazines and the ‘SCHOOL’ project, which related to the context of institutional change, might also reflect Cork’s attempt to democratise *Studio* as a publication – this democratisation being liberal and all-encompassing rather than some of the anarchic projects of the art schools, which wanted to disrupt and change the paradigms of production, dissemination and reception in both art and art education.

Thus, I will argue that the relationship of art students to teachers and institutions relates more closely to Griselda Pollock’s concept of generational dialogues and the dissemination of feminism. Pollock describes how feminism is the precarious product of a paradox with no linear progress from early thoughts to mature theories. Pollock writes of this dissemination, ‘we have a synchronic configuration of debates within feminism, all of which have something to contribute to the enlarging feminist enterprise, the issue becomes one of how to make that paradox the condition of radical practice.’⁴⁵⁶ Likewise, I argue that the movement of conceptual art practice from the late 1960s to the mid- 1970s, and its varying routes post-1972, should be considered in relation to a ‘synchronic configuration of debates’. By this I do not mean temporal coincidence but rather that there was a recursive relationship between the two eras rather than a break, a rejection or a linear development. This is a radical proposition which, as yet, has not yet been made in the literature of this period.

Pollock quotes theorist, Julia Kristeva, writing about generations of feminism in relation to space and time as shifting from ‘the temporalities of femininity and feminism to reconceptualise both in terms of *space*’⁴⁵⁷:

⁴⁵⁴ *Art & Language 1966-1975* (cat.), Museum of Modern art Oxford, 25

⁴⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 26.

⁴⁵⁶ Griselda Pollock (ed.), ‘The Politics of Theory: Generations and Geographies in Feminist Theory and the Histories of Art’ (London: Routledge, 1996), 9

⁴⁵⁷ Julia Kristeva, ‘Women’s Time’ [1979] in T. Moi, *Kristeva Reader* in Pollock, *The Politics of Theory: Generations and Geographies in Feminist Theory and the Histories of Art*, 9

My usage of the word 'generation' implies less a chronology than a *signifying space*, a both corporeal and desiring mental space. So it can be argued that as now a third attitude is possible, thus a third generation, which does not exclude – quite to the contrary – the parallel existence of all three in the same historical time, or even that they be interwoven one with each other.⁴⁵⁸

Kristeva identifies the lineage of a chronological generational structure as patriarchal, thus highlighting desecence, inheritance and influence in contrast to a spatialized notion of generational interaction, where generations do not contend but are overlapping, parallel, interwoven. I do not intend to co-opt this definition for the dissemination of conceptual art because I realise the conflation of feminist and conceptual theory is problematic. However, I propose that in utilising a spatialised notion of generational interaction rather than a linear model of dissemination, we can conceive of a new and radical methodology of conceptual art and its transition from the 1960s to the 1970s as well as more recently. For each definition of conceptual art has come to inform the other and each occupy similar territory but each refer to different moments and contexts particular to conceptual art's development and aftermath. I propose that we therefore consider conceptual art practice and its dissemination in relation to this model of parallel existence rather than through a linear or reactive progression or retroactively, through post-conceptual movements such as post-modernism. Therefore, in looking to these differing generations of artists and publication platforms associated with conceptual art, it is important to take these concerns and identifications into account. For example, how institutional critique, which characterised analytical conceptual art practice in the late-1960s, became incorporated and extended into the internal critique of the art institution in the 1970s. In turn, how the critique of the institution proved insufficient as artists sought to question the paradigm of reception and critical assessment of the work of art.

Griselda Pollock encapsulated the tension of various phases and the aftermath of conceptual art in an article for *BLOCK* magazine in 1985/6 entitled 'Art, Art School, Culture: Individualism after the death of the artist'. In this article she argues that there was a generational conflict between students

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid.

and art teachers i.e. there was a disparity between the teachers' own practices and what they were 'teaching' and the output of their students. This, she writes could be explained sociologically – there was 'a generation or two of teachers and artists whose sense of art and culture was formed at a different moment to that of their current students.'⁴⁵⁹ She proposes that art students in the mid-80s were by this point, 'utilising deconstructive practices which teachers found hard to accommodate to their paradigm of art and its appropriate terms of assessment.'⁴⁶⁰ In addition to this, that 'the majority of teaching staff in schools were men and the students engaged in this tradition of work, were women.'⁴⁶¹

Pollock has written that there was a fracture or tension between art tutors trained in modernist thought and aesthetics, and those of students interested in politics and deconstruction, writing that the teachers that she encountered in art schools in the 1970s and 1980s disseminated outdated notions of art 'having themselves been socialised within one form of modernism or another'.⁴⁶² The result of which, was that they found it hard to adjust to radical post- or anti-modernist art, which extended into the teacher's assessment of the work. By this she meant the difficulty of art teachers to examine art such as that which was, 'photo-text, scripto-visual or some such form.'⁴⁶³ This, she writes was often 'sustained by reference to a body of cultural theories by art teachers trained in the school of modernism, writing that this work generally handles questions of gender, representation and sexuality, which these teachers find difficult to assess.'⁴⁶⁴ She continues, however, that this work is 'by any criteria certainly accessible/assessable.'⁴⁶⁵

The points which Pollock makes are also relevant to art colleges in the late 1960s to mid-1970s. For although Pollock was writing slightly later (1985/6) than the period in question, the idea

⁴⁵⁹ Griselda Pollock, 'Art, Art School, Culture: Individualism after the death of the artist' in Robertson G., *The BLOCK Cultural Reader* (London: Routledge, 1996), 50

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁶¹ Ibid.

⁴⁶² Ibid.

⁴⁶³ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid, 50

that by this point the schools had become a ‘particular terrain of feminist struggle and masculinist resistance at a period of intense social conflict, signifies a continuum and legacy, as well as a rejection, of the conceptual art practices which began in the 1960s and 1970s.’⁴⁶⁶ She also traces the feminist and gendered politics which emerged alongside these practices, concluding that, ‘Art schools will remain the privileged site for the reproduction of white male supremacy, and as such an easy target for and all too willing ally in the doomed Thatcherite reconstruction of imperial Britain, unless the double challenge of feminist and anti-racist struggles is confronted now.’⁴⁶⁷ Thus, she identifies the points of conflict in the art schools by the mid-1980s, which related to a continuing struggle between society and politics, student, teacher and institution – ones which were arguably started in the mid-1960s, on the pages of student magazines. Examples of this include *Silâns* and *Control* magazine as discussed in the last chapter.

It is this perspective which deserves further attention in relation to the conceptual art produced in Britain in the 1970s and to conceptual art’s legacy more generally, for ‘conceptual’ art has now become utilised to describe many practices which do not necessarily follow the incantations or politics of its original permutations. This ‘generation’ of students and artists operating in the mid-1970s, as well as the conceptual artists practicing, combined cultural production with political agency and thus affiliated themselves with earlier forms of conceptual art while simultaneously distancing/distinguishing themselves. Former member of Art & Language, Terry Atkinson, wrote of this moment in the history of conceptual art:

It seemed to me by that time that to preserve and extend the gains in theory which parts of Conceptualism had won, and they had not been easily won, that one of the places not to be was in Conceptualism.⁴⁶⁸

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid, 65

⁴⁶⁸ Terry Atkinson, *The Indexing The World War 1 Moves and the Ruins of Conceptualism* (Belfast: Circa Publications, Cornerhouse, 1992), 7

The idea of being 'in' or 'out' of Conceptualism, or conceptual art, suggests that it was a closed group or membership, with a clear set of definable attributes, boundaries and members. It is through this dissemination of Art & Language's practice into a little known group of students on the sculpture course at Newport College of Art, provisionally called 'The Newport Group', where I will explore this idea further.

The Newport Group

London-based art schools, as mentioned in chapter three, have continued to dominate histories of art education in this period. An example of this is a recent major research project titled 'Art School Educated', which resulted in the publication, *The London Art Schools: Reforming the Art World, 1960 to Now*. In its introduction, its editor, Nigel Llewellyn describes the intention of the publication to look at life in the post-war London art schools and wrote that in attempting to explain events which occurred in these schools, 'we have often had to turn our attention to art schools outside the capital.'⁴⁶⁹ Yet despite this intention, the focus of this publication are the main art colleges in London: Wimbledon, Camberwell, St Martin's, Goldsmiths and Central, and as such, colleges outside of London only play a peripheral role. As argued before, by focusing on these art schools, the publication discounts some of the more radical and experimental networks and pedagogical practices which were taking place outside of London, as well as the importance these localities and institutions played in shaping the look and form of conceptual art in the period. For while there were major pedagogical changes occurring at these London art colleges, there were also important debates being played out in art schools outside of London, which as yet have not been fully explored.

⁴⁶⁹ Nigel Llewellyn, 'Introduction: Histories and Contexts' in *The London Art Schools: Reforming the Art World, 1960 to now*, 11

One of these sites was Newport College of Art in South Wales, where the *Newport Group* demonstrated a continuation of the ideas developed by Art & Language. (Fig. 107, 108) Wood writes that around 1970 there were two groups of Art & Language-influenced student activity. The first was a group in Coventry on the 'Art Theory' course at Coventry College of Art who produced *Statements* and *Analytical Art*: this group's concerns were, 'unsurprisingly close to those of the main body of Art & Language's work', which he describes as questioning the art object and the 'Indexing' projects of the early 1970s.⁴⁷⁰ The second group were those at Newport College of Art, which he writes had emerged out of 'analytical' conceptual art. Wood continues that this group were influenced by concepts in analytical philosophy such as epistemology, the philosophy of language and philosophy of science but also informed politically by 'the left turn take of conceptual art and 'by the culture generally, in the early 1970s.'⁴⁷¹ Wood has written in his essay 'Between God and the Saucepan: Some Aspects of Art Education in England from the Mid-Nineteenth Century to Today', that 'the Art & Language/Conceptual art diaspora became more politicized, extending through several student generations and various colleges.'⁴⁷² These students produced magazines which actively opposed the art schools in which they were working and the teachers who taught them but also acted as an extension of the magazines associated with conceptual art, which came out of the mid-to late 1960s and were based around narratives of rejecting the modernist aesthetic in favour of aesthetics of 'pure' communication: language, words, systems, cybernetics such as *Art-Language* and *Control* etc. In comparison, this new generation of artists were more DIY in their approach: messier, actively disruptive and peripheral/marginal as well as more opposed to particular art schools and their tutors who were themselves trained in conceptual art practice. In this context it seemed that teachers became allies and/or enemies rather than figures from which to impart knowledge or to engage in discussion. There was also a level of distrust and criticism of the role of the art school. Whereas before it was used

⁴⁷⁰ Wood, 'Back in the Day: Preliminary Notes Towards a History (1970-1973)', 1

⁴⁷¹ Ibid.

⁴⁷² Wood, 'Between God and the Saucepan: Some Aspects of Art Education in England from the mid-nineteenth century until today', 183

as a base for experiment from which their own practice could evolve with some questioning of teachers and the institution, now the forms of assessment and structure were entirely deconstructed, proposing not just a new way of making and viewing art but a new method of assessment entirely.

From 1970 to 1973, students on the sculpture course at Newport – Peter Berry, Paul Wood and Kevin Wright – collaborated on a project intended for assessment at the college. Its first publication stemmed from an essay question set for assessment on the Art History component of the sculpture course at Newport. The question asked whether, ‘contemporary art can have any meaning outside aesthetic response’. Rather than answer the question in a straightforward sense, the three students analysed the language of the question, taking it as an assertion which, ‘underwrote everything about the institution of art education’.⁴⁷³ What evolved from this analysis was a booklet with a series of essays, produced in an edition of fifty copies which, as a jointly authored work, was intended to question the conventions of authorship as well as that of the established boundaries between theory and practice.

Wood has written about the supposed ‘provincialism’ of The Newport Group, located outside of London and that what they were producing was ‘not London’, continuing, ‘look through those early magazines – and it was very much the case with us – and the sense of *not* being metropolitan.’⁴⁷⁴ Yet the use of the term ‘provincialism’ can imply a lack of sophistication or a degree of small-mindedness and is rarely used now in relation to art. The work produced at Newport, however, was far from lacking in sophistication. Berry, Wood and Wright were all below the age of twenty when they started at Newport but from 1970 and 1974 they produced a series of journals, text-pieces and two early video works. On top of this, they were involved in three relatively important art exhibitions – an accomplishment unknown to most art students. Their name ‘The Newport Group’ was possibly coined by writer and curator, Rosetta Brooks, and others in London around 1972 upon the group’s inclusion

⁴⁷³ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁴ Interview between Paul Wood and Mark Dennis, 01/09/2015, an appendix to Dennis’ PhD diss., “Strategic Anomalies: Art & Language in the Art School, 1969-1975”

in the exhibition mentioned in chapter two, *The Avant-Garde in Britain* at Gallery House (1972). Yet, up to this point, their work has been largely unexplored in relation to both art pedagogy and conceptual art and thus deserves attention.⁴⁷⁵ (Fig. 109, 110, 111)

The sculpture course at Newport was at this point taught by artist, Keith Arnatt, who was practicing conceptual art but did not directly influence the group's style. Wood has said in interview that at Newport they never had any help from anybody apart from Arnatt who 'didn't do a huge amount in terms of active involvement in the work', but did however do 'enough to give us some sort of confidence to carry on and to show that there was a precedent for the kind of thing that we were trying to do.'⁴⁷⁶ This statement exemplifies the experimental yet laissez faire environment of the art schools in this period, as well as the influence of publications as discursive spaces. For alongside Arnatt's distanced encouragement, the group took as their more direct influence the discursive and interrogative format of the magazine, *Art-Language*. Their dialogue with analytical conceptual art, however, was not through mimicry but rather transformed the work of Art & Language in the late 1960s by way of a continuation of this interrogative format but by a new generation of conceptual art practitioners working in the context of an art school. These art students were looking to their own context in order to ask how to rewrite forms of production and assessment in order to change art, the artist and their relationship and purpose with a wider society. Wood describes the choice to make this publication as that of there being a sense that you could do anything you liked but that this was, 'short circuited so easily by simply doing the one thing that you couldn't be allowed to do.' He writes that to:

think and write and to ask questions and that was beyond the pale and that immediately put us on a collision course with the institution as a whole range of areas that you know, you couldn't look at the thing and assess it aesthetically or whatever, that was the aesthetics in terms of that post-Duchampian and the other thing of course was joint authorship because the artist was an individual and the student had to be assessed individually.⁴⁷⁷

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁷ From interview between Louisa Lee and Paul Wood, 11/12/2017

Mark Dennis has described how the students at Newport would have easily got hold of the journal, *Art-Language*, emphasising that it was relatively affordable and could be made available through various public means such as libraries.⁴⁷⁸

Printed and distributed in October/November 1970, the first publication produced by the *Newport Group* consisted of a series of essays which posed an initial challenge to, and analysis of, the key terms of the question set for assessment. It did this by drawing on analytical philosophy including: ‘aesthetic response’; ‘contemporary art’; ‘true role of art’ with reference to Joseph Kosuth’s essay, ‘Art After Philosophy’, which had recently appeared in *Studio International*, and which the group had collectively read. They then utilised this essay as a means to question their own art education, notably its division into the mediums of painting and sculpture, thus as Madge and Weinberger argued, verbalising their discontent at art education in this period, which they considered not intellectually rigorous enough. In subsequent publications, the group continued this enquiry into the nature of contemporary art by using the same format of essays printed and compiled. For example, in issue number 1D, titled, ‘Art and Exclusivity and Sequel...’, the group acknowledged the need for a contextual understanding of art and raised the question of art’s ‘radical expansiveness’ and ‘non-exclusivity’, asking the question: if anything could now be considered art, how do we go on in contemporary art within an old aesthetic framework? This implied that there was a necessity for a new framework to be constructed from education upwards in order for artwork to not be assessed on an outdated mode which no longer suited its intentions or form. In this issue, they also directly linked their work to that of *Art & Language* by using their theory of four ‘recognition devices’ to identify something as ‘art’. These recognition devices were divided into low-level and high-level: the low level recognition devices were intended ‘to construct something with the morphological characteristics of previous art and to extend these, while remaining within the overarching category ‘physical object’.’⁴⁷⁹

⁴⁷⁸ Dennis, “Strategic Anomalies: Art & Language in the Art School, 1969-1975”, 185

⁴⁷⁹ Wood, ‘Back in the Day: Preliminary Notes Towards a History (1970-1973)’, 1

The high-level ones related to theory: ‘to place something in an ‘art’ context and to declare something to be a work of art thus opening the door to theoretical objects.’⁴⁸⁰ The publications also discussed various Art & Language works, alongside those of artists Robert Morris and Carl Andre, as having established the possibility of an ontologically expanded category of art. Thus while they acknowledged their debt to these earlier conceptual artists and artworks, they put forward the idea that frameworks, and paradigms of display and viewing, needed to be changed from the point of education upwards.

Like Ascott writing of instilling the ‘cybernetic spirit’ in students on the Ealing Groundcourse, once artists were established it was already too late. This is demonstrated when they demarcate their difference from the work of Art & Language by writing that what they produce is ‘Art Strategy’ rather than ‘Art Theory’. They discuss the problem of ‘different points of view’ when it is proposed that anything can be art and instead propose a move to ‘a different kind of viewing’. As John Roberts has written, ‘The cognitively attuned spectator and critical collaborator of conceptual art judges Modernism (and pictorial art) to bring about a degeneration of weakening of critical self-awareness.’⁴⁸¹ Thus, the Newport Group proposed that rather than remove the point of viewing, it was necessary to deconstruct the paradigm of viewing entirely by presenting a collaboratively produced dialogue on art to their audience, which utilised introspection to enact change and transformation. Therefore, the group utilised methods from *Art-Language* in order to deconstruct methods of art education.

Despite this attempt, Wood writes that what he feels was distinctive about the Newport Group work and, ‘one reason for its subsequent disappearance’⁴⁸², was its focus on the question of art education - the advantage of which was that this led to an early engagement with issues of praxis, action and ideology.⁴⁸³ However, he writes that the disadvantage was that it made the focus of activity highly localised and without longevity. Thus the introspective nature of their work, like that of Art &

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁸¹ Roberts, ‘Photography, Iconophobia and the Ruins of Conceptual Art’ in Roberts J. (ed.), *The Impossible Document and Conceptual Art in Britain 1966-1976*, 22

⁴⁸² Wood, ‘Approaching Newport: Preliminary Notes Towards a History (1970-1973)’, 3

⁴⁸³ Ibid.

Language's Indexes around the same time, did not translate to changing permutations of conceptual art in the 1970s. These were increasingly orientated around research based practices outside of the institution and emphasised art's purpose in a wider society. Wood writes of his time at Newport, 'We were dogmatic and sounded more certain than we were, when in fact our work was an almost wholly autodidactic, improvised accretion of sticks and stones with which to fight back against a pervasive and almost invisible institutionalised modernist orthodoxy.'⁴⁸⁴

The two Super8 films produced by the group involved Berry, Wood and Wright reading out scripted dialogue to the camera in a critique of art pedagogy. In the first of these films, produced in June 1972 called, 'Practical Considerations', the group make reference to 'an assessment situation', or the DipAD final assessment of their work with an Internal panel: Keith Arnatt and two Externals, Jonah Jones and Terry Atkinson. The film proposes that there are normal evaluative situations within an educational context which, 'all speak the same language'. Due to the significant shift or break in the work of the Newport Group from relatively normal practice, the work would be, 'problematic to the scrutineer, as promoter of status quo values'. They argued that since the group's work could not be assessed within this normative structure of assessment, it is required that they provide a 'general structure' within which they can be assessed. They acknowledge that in order to resolve the 'laissez faire' attitude of art education and assessment there needs to be a paradigm-shift but only in terms of moving away from the broken, 'essentialist physical object paradigm', giving no indication or solution as to where or what it should move towards. Thus, the film ends with the assertion that rather than laying a set of criteria over a practice which the criteria doesn't fit, what is required is a consideration of 'how the activity is to be practiced in future.'

Alongside their other work for assessment, 'Practical Historical Relativity', they also produced a film in 1973 for the Welsh Arts Council entitled, 'Epistemic Inheritance'. (Fig. 9.7, 9.8) This film was

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid.

intended to be distributed among the art colleges of Wales and was exhibited in the Arts Council galleries in Cardiff but was never distributed afterwards. In this video, again, the argument was that art education was inadequate and not rigorous enough, especially in the epistemological grounding of its ideological position. Dennis writes that, 'although the script is clear and straightforward and contains evidence of the characteristic chutzpah of many of the young graduates covered in this thesis, it is not hard to see why the work was not distributed; it is wholly critical of the status quo of these colleges.'⁴⁸⁵

The output of the group's work therefore centred around utilising the analytical and ontological debates of Art & Language and extending them to the domain of the art school, arguing that this space formed the way artists' produce and assess artworks relying on an outdated framework, stating that there is a 'current abuse of exemplar-based learning' in art schools, which should not rely on a rule based learning process like science but at the same time, distinguishing it from 'capricious subjectivity and irrationality'. They argue that the claim of art education based on learning by example is not any less systematic than learning rules in a science-based context and therefore utilising this outdated system of teaching and assessment does not allow the paradigm shift which is required in art education.⁴⁸⁶

By 1975 another post-Newport generation was emerging from British art colleges. Influenced by 'the political turn of conceptual art in general, and of Art & Language in particular.'⁴⁸⁷ Wood writes that the magazines produced out of art schools from the mid-1970s onwards were, 'a series of entirely conjectural, strategically illiberal, and deliberately scurrilous local magazines... All of these were different in character, more political, more subversive, than the earlier self-published journals of *Analytical Art* and the Newport Group, four or five years earlier.'⁴⁸⁸ These magazines were operating out of and expressing discontent with the three art colleges from which they originated: *Ostrich* from

⁴⁸⁵ Dennis, "Strategic Anomalies: Art & Language in the Art School, 1969-1979", 243

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁷ Wood, 'Back in the Day: Preliminary Notes Towards a History (1970-1973)', 6

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid.

the Royal College of Art in London, *Ratcatcher* from Hull College of Art, and *Issue* from Nottingham Trent College of Art. To vocalise this discontent they were heavily sarcastic, subversive and utilised comic strips and puns to mock these institutions from which they operated.

Issue

The first of these magazines, *Issue*, was published from 1976 to 1979. (Fig. 112, 113, 114) During this time, only three issues were produced in total but its contents exemplified a continuation of some of the ideas and techniques which were evident in the journal *Art-Language*. In the introduction to the first issue of *Issue*, the contributors wrote that it was best introduced by a, ‘characterisation of the institutional background from which it emerged’, and describe this background as that of ‘liberally conceived education in art and design functioning in a western capitalist society.’⁴⁸⁹ *Issue* sets out its purpose as the result of a ‘considerable lump’ of the art sectors educational content being derived from ‘theory and doctrine’, which is ‘administratively preserved and transmitted – innocently or otherwise’, proposing an antidote to this as ‘dialogue’.⁴⁹⁰ The magazine thus aimed to provide a, ‘parallel space for dialogue so that such bureaucratic constructions might be dismantled to secure the prevention of the entrenchment of vested interests.’⁴⁹¹ It concludes that given the fact that the audience for the first issue of this magazine will mainly be other students at the college, the success of this magazine and the possibility of subsequent ‘issues’ is dependent upon any ‘ongoing discourse it manages to provoke.’⁴⁹² (Fig. 121, 122, 123)

With the aim that the journal may give students engaged in such active criticism the support they lacked in their own school, *Issue* magazine was intended as an ‘inter-college journal’ rather than as

⁴⁸⁹ “Introduction”. *Issue* 1, 1976.

⁴⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹² *Ibid.*

purely a platform for the students at Nottingham Trent Polytechnic. It was written and produced in the Fine Art department at Nottingham by David Batchelor, Robert Van Beek, Sean Feamly, Michael Fyles, John Hainsley and Paul Smith, whose names appear in the editorial but are not attributed to any particular text or image, thus giving the appearance of collectively produced and authorless texts. There is also a note in the introduction to say that it was produced, ‘with help and additions from Art & Language and Mike Murphy’ – an acknowledgment of the influence of the group upon their work and their continuing collaboration with the student population and with educational institutions.⁴⁹³

The contributing essays are given headings such as: ‘Art and its Idiolect’ and in Issue two, ‘Artist as ~~Teacher~~... Besalaried Twat’. By the second issue, the magazine was subtitled, ‘The ‘hobnobbing with (para-) bureaucrats sends you blind’ edition. The published texts remark on the politics of art education and its wider context, directing a remark in the introduction towards Victoria Bailey of the ‘NUS Student bulletin’ and Clive Philpott, contributor to *Studio International* magazine:

The point of circulating our magazine, take note Victoria and Clive, is not to advertise the wares of Trent Poly (God forbid) but to show students elsewhere, if not a model, at least a rough example of what self-activity might involve.⁴⁹⁴

Thus the magazine not only actively derided mainstream art magazines, like *Studio International* and *Art Monthly*, but vehemently opposed the bureaucratic interests of Nottingham Trent Polytechnic. Instead, *Issue* promoted itself as an alternative space for work and dialogue and positioned itself as anti-institutional. It was produced inside the art college, using the equipment available but was not intended to represent the school. Rather, it was produced in spite of the school, or to undermine what the art school represented. Its only connecting factor was the students who produced the publication and their views of Nottingham Trent and the art education system more generally at this time, which were made evident through dialogue and exchange.

⁴⁹³ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁴ *Issue* 2, 1976

Issue, however, much more closely resembled the aesthetics of zine culture than the neat aesthetics of *Art-Language* or the now fetishized design of *Control* magazine. There was no uniform size (both A4 and A5 were used), colour or branding so its main identifying factor was its name, which was intended to be as bland and ambiguous as possible. It also pokes fun at the idea of a publication or journal by reference to itself or its own seriality. While *Art-Language* was elaborately numbered by issue, number and year, *Issue* was simply titled and numbered with no sub-headings or list of contributors on the front cover and it was purposefully unprofessional in its aesthetic. This inconsistent format and lack of affiliation or branding demonstrated an orientation towards a youth demographic – the students at Nottingham and at other art colleges across the country. Its appearance thus marked a simultaneous break and continuation of the aesthetics and theory of the conceptual art of the late-1960s. (Fig. 120)

Ratcatcher

In another student magazine from the same year, *Ratcatcher*, (Fig. 115, 116, 117, 118) produced at Hull College of Art, the focus is more explicitly the internal politics at the art college and the actions of the Student Union. Four issues of the magazine were produced in total, largely by student Steve Lawton with the help of Steve Daley Yates and with contributions from Philip Pilkington, Paul Wood, Dave Rushton, Harold Hurrell, Mel Ramsden, Michael Baldwin and other anonymous students at Hull College of Art. The main focus of the magazine writes Dennis, was to attack the staff in the college ‘whose managerial positions such as the heads of departments and couching the relationship between teacher and student as largely that of bureaucrats administering a lumpen proletariat.’⁴⁹⁵ Thus, following closely the movements of the staff-student committees, the magazine functioned to illuminate any perceived attempts to disenfranchise the student body. This is demonstrated by its first issue, produced in July 1975, which is introduced by the following statement:

⁴⁹⁵ Dennis, “Strategic Anomalies: Art & Language in the Art School, 1969-1979”, 262

The privatistic nature of art education makes it particularly pertinent to art colleges; students are said and seen to have psychological problems over their work which require treatment rather than debate.⁴⁹⁶

Like *Issue*, the look of *Ratcatcher* is idiosyncratic in that the four issues differed in size, colour and font so that there was no coherent style or branding. It was produced on a Gestetner-type reproducer with newspaper cuttings and cartoons, again giving a zine-like appearance. Again, the DIY aesthetics of zine culture, which were becoming popular in the 1970s, were utilized. Zines could be produced quickly and cheaply and therefore political ideas could be disseminated without having to go through official publishing outlets or reviews. This empowered more marginalized figures or people without the means to produce more professionalized publications. It also, however, became an aesthetic in itself, orientating itself towards youth culture and politics. The aesthetics of *Ratcatcher* will have therefore been as a result of both choice and necessity. Looking at the cover of the first issue, it is A4 in size and printed in a deep magenta with the title of the publication in bold black sans serif letters. Like *Issue*, it gives little, or nothing, away about the contents of the magazine. By the fourth issue, the magazine has been reduced to A5 and the lettering is now in a calligraphic style resembling a German Fraktur font – a traditional calligraphic gothic font traditionally used in Germanic type. By the fourth issue, it also had the date and location on the cover but no other information.

Dennis describes how the articles in *Ratcatcher* were written in an ‘aphoristic and sloganistic form’, and that much of the vernacular tone was due to Steve Lawton’s skills as a satirist and ‘vivid writer of absurdist scenarios.’⁴⁹⁷ This is demonstrated in the first and second issue, which were both A3 in size and had red or dark pink covers with the title of the magazine typed plainly at the top of the cover in black or gold. The second issue features a comic entitled ‘Rats and Ratcatchers’ where an illustrated history of seventeenth century ‘ratcatchers’ by Harold Beard shows how the publication

⁴⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁷ Ibid.

took its name and indeed, how the students considered the role of the magazine – as a means to expose and catch the lecturers or ‘rats’ of the institution.

In another illustrated article entitled ‘Naturalistic Fallacies’, the writer ‘decodes’ certain terms such as ‘Education – something I went fru at school’, ‘Fantasies – Good Bits of art’, ‘Art – Therapy’ and ‘NUS – a Bunch of Marxists’. By the third and fourth issues, the magazines had been reduced to an A4 format and featured a combination of gothic fonts, printed on flimsy newsprint. The third edition of *Ratcatcher*, published in April 1976 was subtitled ‘Democracy at Work – in all its Shining Glory’. In this issue, the contributors describe the recent nine-month struggle over the students union, summarizing the series of events from May 1975 to January 1976. In this issue, they also attack the art teaching at Hull by documenting the redundancy of such an art education in the article, ‘Exploits of a Soho artisan’, where they document the difficulty of an ex-student to find a job on a living wage following their graduation from Hull. Paul, the graduate, describes how it took him two weeks to get his first job at a studio where he was paid £27 a week, ‘the wage that I was bringing home meant that I did not have very much use for it. Quite a few days I went without food.’⁴⁹⁸ After five months, Paul is given the sack and he moves onto a similar job in another company. Even though he is a member of the Socialist International, when asked how active he is he responds, ‘You’re joking. At work I just kept my mouth shut or else I wouldn’t have lasted a day. The only places that are organized union-wise are the big places, and there are few jobs to be had there.’ Paul concludes in regards to the future of Graphic Design courses:

My view is, that if there is going to be a graphics education, then its going to have to be responsible for both the teaching of skills which will be demanded in the job, and the criticism of these skills’ social function... The main point is, you cant expect the people who are going to be employed as graphic teachers to teach criticism, when all they are about is hanging on to a cozy job, and the people who are employed as art history teachers are only about enforcing arbitrary bureaucratic measures.⁴⁹⁹

⁴⁹⁸ ‘Exploits of a Soho Artisan’. *Ratcatcher* 2, April 1976. Reprinted in *The Noises Within Echo from a Gimcrack, Remote and Ideologically Hollow Chamber of the Education Machine: Art School*, 73

⁴⁹⁹ *Ibid*, 78

The implied uselessness of teaching in art colleges is enforced further in the next article, ‘Class Teaching’ where they write that teachers have neglected their own historical role and therefore cannot be trusted to represent students’ class interests: ‘To those who think they’re socialists but are only poor sociologists: don’t presuppose the (institutional) common cause of ordinary teachers and students.’⁵⁰⁰ This statement suggests again, that magazines became platforms for this discontent.

Ostrich

Lastly, the magazine, *Ostrich*, (Fig. 119) which was produced by students at the Royal College of Art (RCA) in London, demonstrates the presence of a student-produced magazine in a London art college.⁵⁰¹ Started in March 1976, the magazine only lasted for two issues and was produced by Paul Wood, who following his time at Newport, had moved to the RCA in order to pursue an MA in General Studies. Alongside, John Dennis, who had enrolled on the Environmental Studies MA, they collectively produced and edited ‘Ostrich’. Their combined individual dissatisfaction with their courses, combined with their attendance at the newly formed Revolutionary Communist Group (RCG) in London, fueled Wood and Dennis’ collaboration.

Mark Dennis writes of the magazine that, unlike *Ratcatcher* and *Issue*, which both faced ‘the seemingly depressing problems of lazy tutors within a largely ignored institution, the students here, though facing just the same problems, experienced them set against a forceful narrative of unmitigated success.’⁵⁰² Dennis writes how it was purposefully set against the existing RCA student magazine, *Ark*: ‘the mouthpiece of the college’s successes.’⁵⁰³ The magazine shared with *Issue* and *Ratcatcher* its

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid, 80

⁵⁰¹ In the same year that *Ostrich* was produced, another student magazine *A Journal from the Royal College of Art* was produced. It only lasted two issues but featured contributions from Rosetta Brooks, Pete Challis, Chris Edwardes, Francis Fuchs, Les Legums, Yve Lomax, Sarah McCarthy, Jonathan Miles, Ieuan Morris, John Stezaker, John Tagg, John A. Walker, John Wilkins & Paul Wombell.

⁵⁰² Dennis, “Strategic Anomalies: Art & Language in the Art School, 1969-1979”, 276

⁵⁰³ Ibid.

concerns with the increasing commercial interests of the art school, the inadequacy and laissez-faire attitude of teaching and a desire to change the structures of art schools and to make them more academically rigorous.

The cover of the first magazine, like *Issue*, was printed on a Gestetner Press and thus each copy was slightly different with differing ink density, colour and placement of type spelling out its title. Printed by hand, the covers differed considerably. The hand-made aesthetic of this magazine ironically gave it a greater sense of materiality and tied into the idea of the individually produced object of art. Alongside the title, 'Ostrich', is the exclamative, 'RCA Sucks!', with the listed contents alongside. Yet despite this provocative statement, the title page affirms that it was funded by the RCA Students Union. Appearing termly, it used terminology resembling that used in *Art-Language*: 'If there are any problems about the 'ongoingness of issues...' And, 'What stands behind a lot of the substantive critique in *Ostrich* is the ongoing problem of theory and practice', and finally:

Ostrich is generated out of an on-going criticism. We hope it generates more, and is a shareable working instrument in the subversion of educational orthodoxies.⁵⁰⁴

Thus literally taking the words from the group for their own purposes and struggles both in the art school and the artist's role within a wider society.

In the editorial of the first issue, written by John Dennis and Paul Wood, they describe the audience of this new magazine as, 'those inside the RCA and on the other hand, those outside it, either in art schools (mainly) or in other institutions.'⁵⁰⁵ The title, *Ostrich*, refers both to the 'burying the head in the ground' of the art colleges response to issues as well as the students who produce the magazine as 'sticking their necks out'. They argued that by saying 'audience' 'it shouldn't be thought we mean

⁵⁰⁴ John Dennis and Paul Wood. *Ostrich* 1, March 1976, E1

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid.

anything passive’ and instead the magazine was intended as a functioning tool to motivate other students in art colleges – to activate a generational consciousness, writing in the magazine:

Producing *Ostrich* is one of our paths in this struggle; one of the best things that could happen as a result of it is, either, that it stimulates local production of a similar kind in other institutions, or, if that already exists, that it stimulates its circulation (because if it’s around, we haven’t seen much of it).⁵⁰⁶

In the article printed in *Ostrich* entitled, ‘General Studies ???’, Dennis and Wood defend the subject of ‘General Studies’, which had come under a considerable amount of criticism and write that the subject itself isn’t wholly to blame for its reputation as a bureaucratic imposition. Instead, the institutional division of courses between the practical and the theoretical had relegated General Studies to a compulsory and complementary subject which was understood to give students a grounding in theory but was largely detached from the actual production of art: ‘think of the years of boring seminars and irrelevant slide-shows that never touched the collective problems of being involved in art education.’⁵⁰⁷

Dennis and Wood conclude that ‘if you’re critical of the relation of General Studies to other courses and what that implies about the education that you’re getting, come to a meeting at “The Music Room, Main Building”, with a date and time.’ Wood has described how *Ostrich* evolved out of these meetings ‘to mobilise the students on what to do about it.’⁵⁰⁸ The magazine as a site of dialogue, which signposts to other activities, inside and outside of the art school, as well as the critical debate taking place with regards to the role of art history, general studies and discourse within the art school, is where I will conclude.

Like the *Newport Group*, these magazines were actively searching for a progression in the way that art education was conceived and assessed and are partially reproduced in the 1979 publication, *The Noises Within Echo from a Gimcrack, Remote and Ideologically Hollow Chamber of the Education Machine*. This

⁵⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁸ Interview between Paul Wood and Mark Dennis, 01/09/2015, an appendix to Dennis’ PhD diss., “Strategic Anomalies: Art & Language in the Art School, 1969-1975”

publication acted as a collection of ‘articles/notes/documents/transcripts etc’ to document some of the critical work apparent in art colleges. It describes itself as taking *Art-Language* as its inspiration but details how by 1979, ‘these magazines have run their course without having established, as it were, house roots’, continuing that, ‘It has repeatedly been argued that the failure of one generation of students to secure the ear of the next has been a crippling one for student self-activity. However, this has seldom prevented this happening.’⁵⁰⁹ (Fig. 124) Compiled by Dave Batchelor, Mike Fyles, Steve Lawton, Alan Robinson, Dave Rushton and Paul Wood, *The Noises Within* is the most comprehensive compilation of the student output from this period, which also documents generational differences and acts as a record of radical pedagogical discourses and magazines produced by students. Most importantly, it tracks the discourses and networks which originated from the ‘Art Theory’ course at Coventry and built up around a number of art schools through publications thus demonstrating how text-based art practice of the late 1960s was disseminated into 1970s art schools. It is significant, however, that these magazines are not well known and relatively difficult to obtain thus indicating that art historians have not felt them significant enough to analyse in respect to the history of conceptual art and art pedagogy in Britain.

Summary

The magazines in this chapter exemplify the intergenerational issues faced between conceptual artists working in Britain in the 1960s and those working in the 1970s. That is not in a straightforward and linear progression but one through various contestations of the role of the individual in art and in society, which had been analysed, fragmented, re-positioned and continued to be further interrogated. They also demonstrate that in art schools across Britain, and frequently outside of London, students used the magazine to vocalise their discontent, to create networks between other art schools and

⁵⁰⁹ *The Noises Within Echo from a Gimcrack, Remote and Ideologically Hollow Chamber of the Education Machine* (Edinburgh: SCARP, 1979), 1

students and to disseminate ideas and politics. In addition to this, unlike earlier conceptual art magazines, their unfixed appearances only created loose connections and a weak sense of branding and authorship. Thus by utilising a more DIY rather than slick, conceptual appearance, they distance themselves from the more coherent and uniform styles of *Art-Language*, *Control* and *Studio International*. The only consistent branding between *Ratcatcher*, *Issue* and *Ostrich* was the logo and polemic of 'SCHOOL' magazine which acted as the network or coherent identity which perhaps these magazines, individually, lacked. Lastly, despite the importance of these magazines for the dissemination of ideas and politics amongst art students, they have been largely overlooked. This, I argue, is symptomatic of a larger omission in the historiography of conceptual art, which dissolved the legacy of text-based conceptual art in the 1970s.

Having departed from the idea of artists writing, text and publications, this is also where I will conclude – in language as a multi-vocal, open-ended and collective practice as a means to disrupt and fragment paradigms of production, distribution and reception. These aspects of the history of text-based conceptual art have not been incorporated into museums or collections but instead sit in archives – as supporting art school practices and ephemera – separate from the dominant narrative. In addition to this, women working in conceptual art and the feminist art movement were only beginning to emerge during this period, therefore the history of female students in art schools has been even further neglected.

Conclusion: Discursive Sites: Text-based Conceptual Art Practice in Britain

This thesis has traced the changing sites and trajectories of text-based conceptual art and artists' publications in Britain from the late 1960s through to the late 1970s, which saw artists adopt text, language and publications in order to question paradigms of viewing and display. Alberro writes that the historiography of conceptual art focuses on, in its broadest possible definition, 'an expanded critique of the cohesiveness and materiality of the art object, a growing wariness toward definitions of artistic practice as purely visual, a fusion of the work with its site and context of display, and an increased emphasis on the possibilities of publicness and distribution.'⁵¹⁰ Yet, as he continues, from the outset, and continuing to this very day, conceptual art has been 'entangled in controversy by those who stake claims to its foundational moment.'⁵¹¹ Thus, he argues, any claims for a 'clarity or purity of its foundational lineage, or indeed its legacy, should be regarded with skepticism.'⁵¹² In this thesis, I have questioned the definition of conceptual art as categorisable by its materiality or immateriality as well as its retroactive definition as a form of 'institutional critique', and instead proposed that we reconsider the vast amount of text-based art produced in this period in relation to its context and to its audience. In the process, I have questioned how we define the media of conceptual art upon its reframing and recontextualising – from its circulation as a text to its display in an art gallery.

Using the exhibition, *Conceptual Art in Britain 1964-1979* at Tate Britain (2016), discussed in my second chapter, I have asked questions about the legacy of conceptual art through its exhibition history – how the reception and display of text-based art and artists' publications have informed how we understand conceptual art today. I have aimed to avoid a retroactive linear reading and instead have returned to the site of the artwork, or magazine, in order to understand it as a 'discursive site': between

⁵¹⁰ Alberro, 'Reconsidering Conceptual Art, 1966-1977', xvii

⁵¹¹ Ibid, xvi

⁵¹² Ibid.

other artworks and magazines but also with relation to the discourses which originally surrounded this art and its production. In addition to this, I have explored the concept of collaborative writing and collaborative reading, both in the work's production and its exhibition. I have done this in order to explore how these collaborative practices attempted to dissect and undermine narratives of modernism, fragmenting the text through the breakdown of dominant modes of viewing and display.

It has therefore been a necessary strategy to reposition a definition of conceptual art through its text-based art practice, publications, and pedagogies in order to understand how they provided a site for discourse through the late mid 1960s into the late 1970s. Utilising philosophy, psychology and social research, I raised questions regarding context and its means of production, as well as its dissemination and circulation. Through my research, it has become apparent that the incorporation of these publications into exhibitions and institutions was being perpetuated at the time of their production by both the artists and the institutional spaces in which their work was displayed. I have therefore questioned the idea that conceptual art ended upon its incorporation into the institution (around 1972/3) and have instead asked that we position this art in a broader landscape of art history and indeed, conceptual art history.

In seeking to establish a deeper understanding of the intersecting yet conflicted relationship between art, text, philosophy and research in conceptual art, as well as the changing roles of artist, critic and curator, from the early 1960s to the mid-1970s, this thesis has demonstrated the shifting nature of conceptual art through its institutional affiliations. Initial relations with behavioural theorists and cyberneticians such as Norbert Weiner and F. H. George, as well as philosophers and sociologists including Wittgenstein, Russell and Marcuse, were replaced by political and social research as practice, utilising data collected from participants as the media and thus shifting the perspective outwards and to more public collaborations. Although diverse, these artistic uses and appropriations of behavioural theory, philosophy, structuralism, sociology and politics, as discussed in my third chapter, were united by a consistent investigation of the questioning of the dominant paradigm of the art object as painting

or sculpture. They also asked how an artist produces a work and who they produce it for, as well as whether the meaning of that object was conditioned by its use and context. The magazines which I explore have operated as a tool to ask these questions.

Writer, Gregory Sholette, connects the collectively produced art and community-based practice which took place in Britain in the 1970s to the changing direction of funding in this period – when the British Council started to ‘funnel support to muralists, photographers, theatre troupes and other cultural and media workers operating outside the studio in urban and rural settings.’⁵¹³ I gave examples of this in my second chapter with works including, *Women & Work*, by Mary Kelly, Kay Fido Hunt and Margaret Harrison and Mary Kelly’s, *Post-Partum Document*, as well as Conrad Atkinson’s, *Strike at Brannan’s* and *Work, Wages and Prices*. I demonstrated how the press, as well as the general public, found the status and categorisation of these works confusing: as artwork or research project. Yet, I argued, that early forms of socially-engaged art practice differed from more recent permutations of ‘participatory’ art and from ‘Relational Aesthetics’ as they were seeking to present social and political research as art in a paradigm which did not yet accommodate this media. As such, like conceptual art, they cannot be read through this retroactive lens.

As Sholette argues, in recent years, the choreographing of social experience itself became a recognisable form of practice. He writes, ‘in other words, activities such as collaborative programming, performance, documentation, protest, publishing, shopping, mutual learning, discussion, as well as walking, eating or some other ephemeral pursuit is all that social practice sometimes results in’ and concludes ‘its not that traditional community-based art generated no social relations, but rather that social practice treats the social itself as a medium and material of expression.’⁵¹⁴ Thus, although more recent studies in conceptual art have argued that it preceded and fed into this ‘social turn’, the open-

⁵¹³ Gregory Sholette, ‘Delirium and Resistance After the Social Turn’ in Charnley (ed.), *Delirium and Resistance : Activist art and the Crisis of Capitalism*, 215

⁵¹⁴ *Ibid*, 216

ended research projects of the 1970s were not intrinsically linked to more recent socially engaged practices. Socially-engaged practices, as they are now termed, were already present in the art of the late-1960s. Furthermore, the art of the 1970s was an extension of the conceptual art produced in the 1960s. Therefore, the connecting factor of the art of the 1970s (and the sixties) to more recent socially-engaged practice is the idea of the ‘shifting-site’. The theorist Miwon Kwon addresses the ‘shifting-site’, defining it in terms of site specificity – a theme which was relevant to this period. Yet, I propose in my thesis and in this conclusion that these relationships are not just discursive but also ‘recursive’ – in that they looked back to earlier forms of conceptual art practice and even mimicked these practices. The term ‘recursive’ is usually used in relation to computer technology or mathematics and is defined as relating to or ‘involving a programme or routine of which a part requires the application of a whole, so that its explicit interpretation requires in general more successive applications.’⁵¹⁵ In synthesising my research I have realised that this is an increasingly important term. For example, the members of Art & Language described their 1974 work, *Dialectical Materialism* as ‘English-ish texts superscribed with alphabetical and numerical indices with (usually) a recursive matrix or map in the bottom corner, and a further sheet with a graphic display consisting of the quasi-words *Surf, Surf, Surf*, etc.’. Likewise, the term is used by theorist Eve Meltzer in my third chapter, when referring to Mary Kelly’s *Antepartum* as, ‘recursive, suspended – although not quite *waiting* for the subject to appear as one would say of other important works of the period.’⁵¹⁶

This thesis has been a process of ‘making visible’ various sites through dialogue with lateral or previous sites and trying to display material authentically while also defamiliarising its previous context of production and display. In doing so, it has aimed to indicate that both are based in questions of medium specificity as intangible, ephemeral, ungraspable, or, in other words, waiting for the subject or the object to appear. Yet, at the same time, in an attempt to pin down this rupture in a linear narrative

⁵¹⁵ Oxford English Dictionary, <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/recursive>

⁵¹⁶ Meltzer, *Systems that we have Loved: Conceptual Art, Affect, and the Antihumanist Turn*, 5

from modernism to postmodernism, attempting to place conceptual art in a history or timeframe but not fully understanding its particular dates or demarcations.

As mentioned above, artists were ascertaining new roles in society throughout the 1960s and into the 1970s, not just in Britain but internationally. Exhibitions were mirroring this change as demonstrated by their names: *Language III* at the Dwan Gallery, New York (1969); *Information* at the Museum of Modern Art, New York (1970); *Art For Society: Contemporary British Art with a Social or Political Purpose* at the Whitechapel Art Gallery, London; and *Art for Whom?* at the Serpentine Gallery in London, both in 1978. This was also reflected in Richard Cork's editorship of the magazine, *Studio International*, where he sought to approach each issue thematically in order to reflect some of the priorities of art in the 1970s. Yet, in doing so, Cork also fixed the artwork to identifiable categorisations, often defined by their medium-specificity, which in turn related to the idea of 'expansiveness' and 'anything goes experimentalism', as well as the wider move to liberalism in art education which, identified in chapter three and four of my thesis. I argued that *Studio International* therefore failed to understand, or to reflect, the period as one of shifting relationships between the artist and its site of production or dissemination, which was orientated around discourse, collaboration and disruption of established paradigms yet remained one of the most dominant distribution sites for covering conceptual art during this period.

Returning to Mary Kelly, who I wrote about in my first chapter, she writes that in the co-creation of the artwork *Women & Work*, she initiated her ideas for the production of *Post-Partum Document* (1979). She writes that by focusing on women's working lives she noticed that they would not talk about their private or domestic lives, therefore leaving the questions of what kind of labour *Women & Work* documented. Kelly has said that at first she looked at the collection of data for *Women & Work* very sociologically but it became more and more obvious that you, 'couldn't get rid of the irrationality of this event', leaving the question of desire and of the social and psychic constructions of maternal

femininity'⁵¹⁷:

But in the installation itself, regarding the impossibility of conforming to what might be the limits of a site-specific project, we weren't even getting information at the centre of it that referred us back to that site. The site shifted to the domestic space, and once again, when we got there, we found that it was even more radically dispersed at a psychic level. It was the specificity of *debate*, or discursive sites that became increasingly important to me.⁵¹⁸

Thus, Kelly demonstrates how the public site of work directs towards the private site of the home, making this question of a shifting site or a discursive site evident. It is this concept of a shifting site, I argue, which was integral to conceptual art practice – from leaving the site of the art gallery to shifting to the site of the page of the magazine. The institution or the site was consistently questioned, challenged and analysed within its context of operation rather than separately – through art criticism or art history.

At the same time, as I discussed in chapters three and four, students in art schools were dissecting the role of the art student and artist and their place within the art school and, upon graduation, into a larger society. The student magazine became a means of producing work which would undermine the outdated frameworks and paradigms of the art school structure and its forms of assessment. Through publications such as *Silâns*, *Ratcatcher*, *Issue* and *Ostrich*, students were using the dialogue between contributors as their medium to discuss, to argue, to defend and ultimately to challenge and to change their environments. Thus, like early feminist art practice, students found ways to undo the paradigm of dominant art practices – through mimicking conceptual art practices, utilizing language in art, making DIY and 'amateur' style art and collectively-produced work. They did this in order to critique the art school system, the neat aesthetics of analytical conceptual art, and the art world more generally in this period. Yet they also did this out of necessity, for like women making conceptual art, there was no existing language for their practice and the conditions of

⁵¹⁷ 'Interview with Douglas Crimp' in Bhabha, Crimp and Iverson, *Mary Kelly*, 15

⁵¹⁸ *Ibid.*

production needed to be rewritten.

Baldwin, of Art & Language has written that art students possess a certain kind of strength in that they are ‘often malingerers of various kinds, awkward and resistant to many standard forms of social and epistemic processing.’⁵¹⁹ He writes that there was an intellectual space within them in which various kinds of informal teaching and learning can occur, ‘[t]hese are small and aggressive autopoietic systems perhaps.’⁵²⁰ These are analysed and critiqued in the video *An Epistemic Inheritance*, produced by the Newport Group at the Newport College of Art in 1973. It is in returning to the analysis of this film that I shall conclude this thesis.

In *An Epistemic Inheritance*, the members of the Newport Group (Peter Berry, Kevin Wright and Paul Wood) put forward the problematic nature of the contemporary situation in art and in the art school through dialogue between the group recorded on film. Although scripted, this recorded dialogue is performed by the three members of the group who relay how the role of the art student in the early 1970s was subject to the dissemination of outdated formalist practice and pedagogy. By performing this pre-scripted dialogue, they demonstrate an alternative narrative for the system of production and assessment in the art school. By literally verbalising their critique to the camera, and the audience, the group transmit the words, the text, through their bodies and onto the screen, thus transporting the verbal into different media. They describe their position in respect to formalism as a major paradigm where there was a combination of supposed objectivity with a marked individualism and subjectivism and argue that the continuation of modernism through minimalism and post-minimalism continues to face ‘a subjectivist aggrandizement of the individual’. The aim of the video was therefore to present the idea that in order to avoid subjectivism and an ‘illicit assumption of objectivity or neutrality’, there was a necessity to embark upon a discussion of and to question the

⁵¹⁹ Michael Baldwin, ‘A Story, a Moral and a Postscript’ in Payne A., *Research and the Artist: Considering the Role of the Art School* (Oxford: Ruskin School of Drawing and Fine Art, 2000), 77

⁵²⁰ Ibid.

outdated frameworks of the art school and its means of assessment. Thus, this work exemplifies the intergenerational issues faced between conceptual artists working in Britain in the 1960s and those working in the 1970s. That is, not in a straightforward and linear progression but one through various contestations of the role of the individual in art and in society, which had been analysed, fragmented, re-positioned and continued to be further interrogated. Yet at the same time, as Juli Carson writes, this form of intersubjectivity, which is exemplified by the group Art & Language and their influence upon the students at Newport, mainly related to institutional and ontological limitations and as such did not ‘allow for the unconscious’, something she argues that Mary Kelly’s *Post-Partum Document* addressed.⁵²¹ In addition to this, the role of the artist and that of the art student, had not yet acknowledged women as working in the context of art or in art schools, thus, the image of the posturing lone male artist still dominated this idea of ‘roles’ but was beginning to crack.

It is in using the text, the essay, the publication as a site for dialogue, where artists attempted to redefine ways of working and looking simultaneously, which I will end my thesis. I started with a quote from theorist John Roberts in my introduction and will also end with this quote: ‘conceptual art continues to underwrite the art of the present’, not through direct links but through what was ‘discovered about power and aesthetics’, writing that there is no uniform inheritance and the art has no stable set of positions but it lives on through its ‘aporias, mistakes and misinterpretations.’⁵²² That is, conceptual art continues to fascinate not through a traceable, defined and linear progression into post-modernism or post-conceptualism, but through a dialectic engagement with the present. Nothing is fixed, complete or finished and the power-structures of art and its institutions are consistently questioned and re-defined but not necessarily changed or transformed. In this PhD thesis, I have not sought to re-write this history or to uncover a forgotten strain of art history in need of excavation, but rather to demonstrate how conceptual art in Britain was engaged in, and continues to be engaged in, a

⁵²¹ ‘Excavating Post-Partum Document: Mary Kelly in conversation with Juli Carson’, 185

⁵²² Roberts, *The Impossible Document: Photography and Conceptual Art in Britain 1966-1976*, 7

dialogical 'ongoingness'. This ongoingness looked both backwards and forwards and continues to be tested and contested. Its analysis through the site of text-based artwork and the printed page is a way to explore this discussion and ongoing dialogue with the past and the present.

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Chapter 1

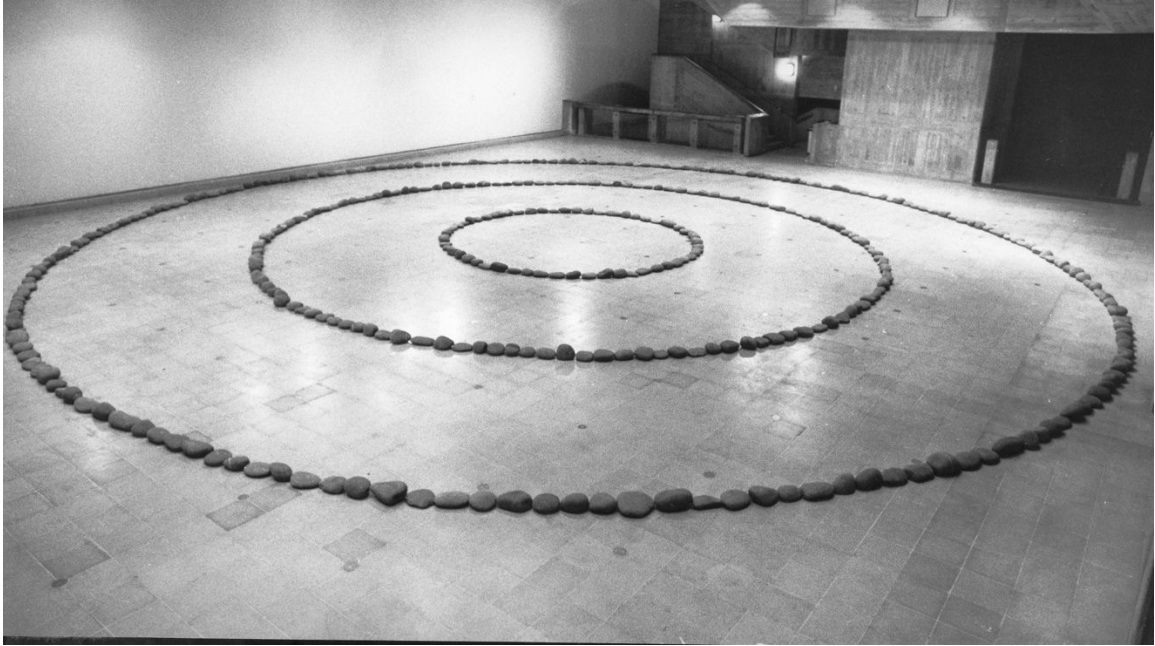


Fig. 1

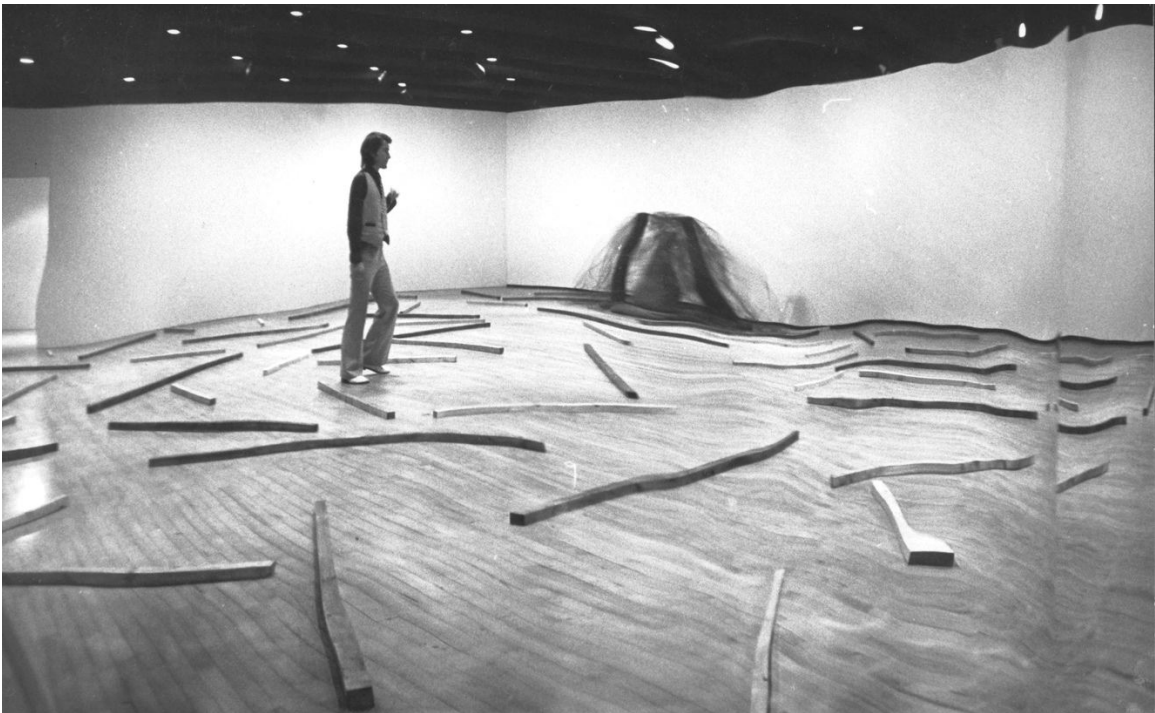


Fig. 2

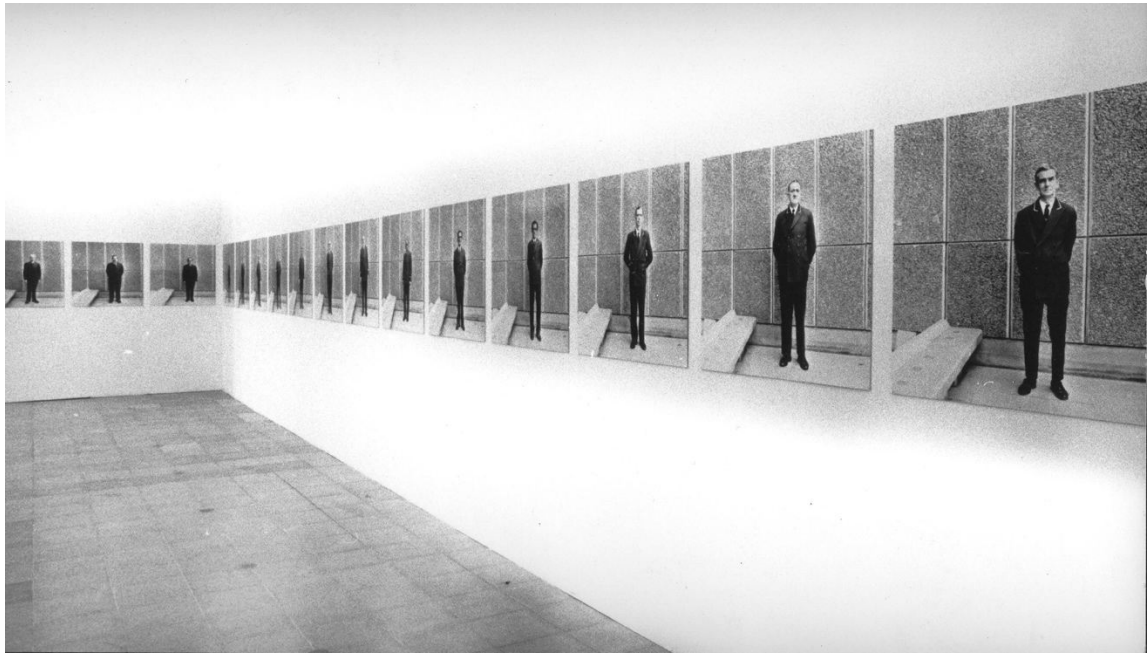


Fig. 3



Fig. 4

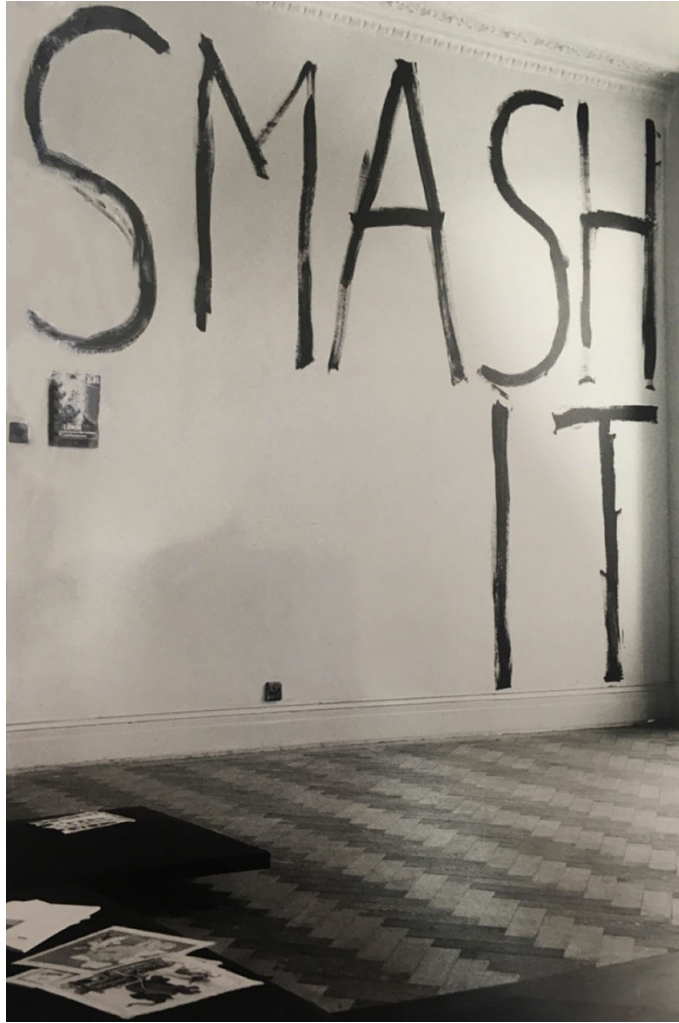


Fig. 5



Fig. 6



Fig. 7



Fig. 8



Fig. 9



Fig. 10



Fig. 11



Fig.12



Fig. 13

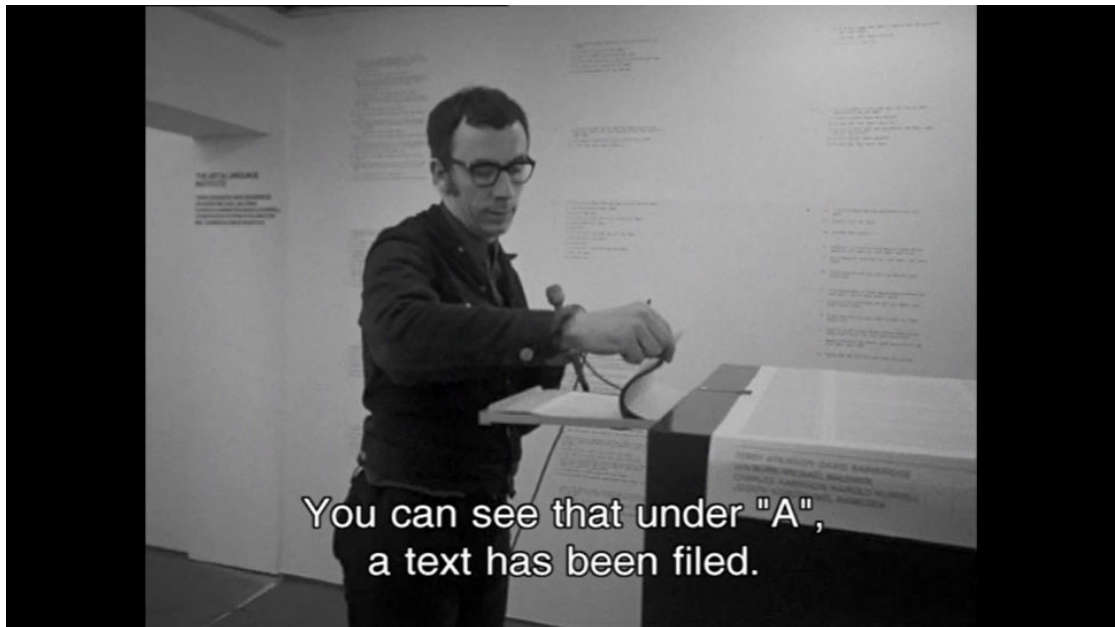


Fig. 14

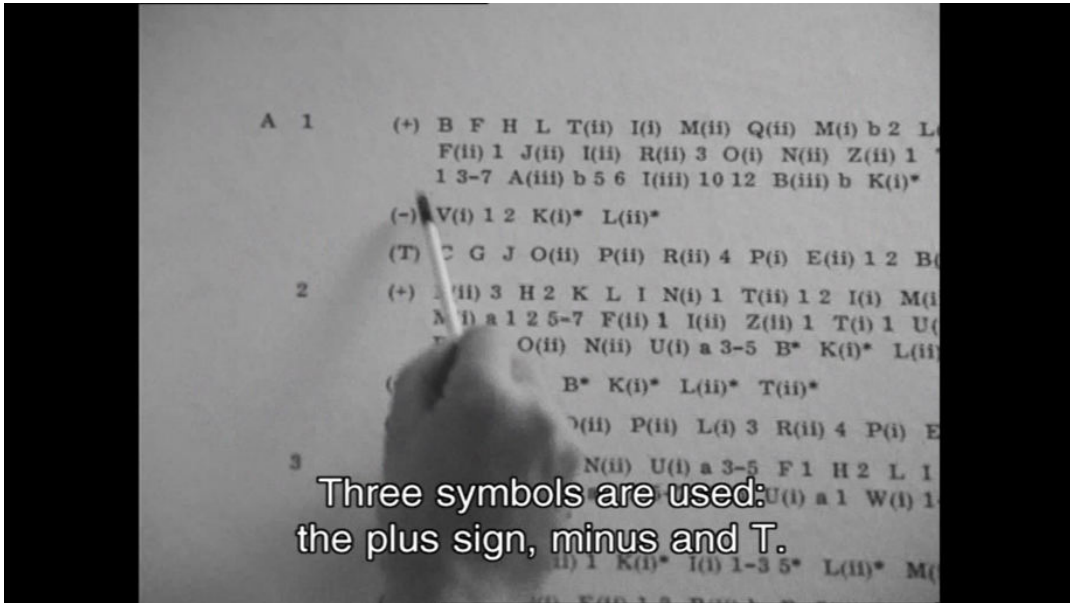


Fig. 15



Fig. 16



Fig. 17



Fig. 18

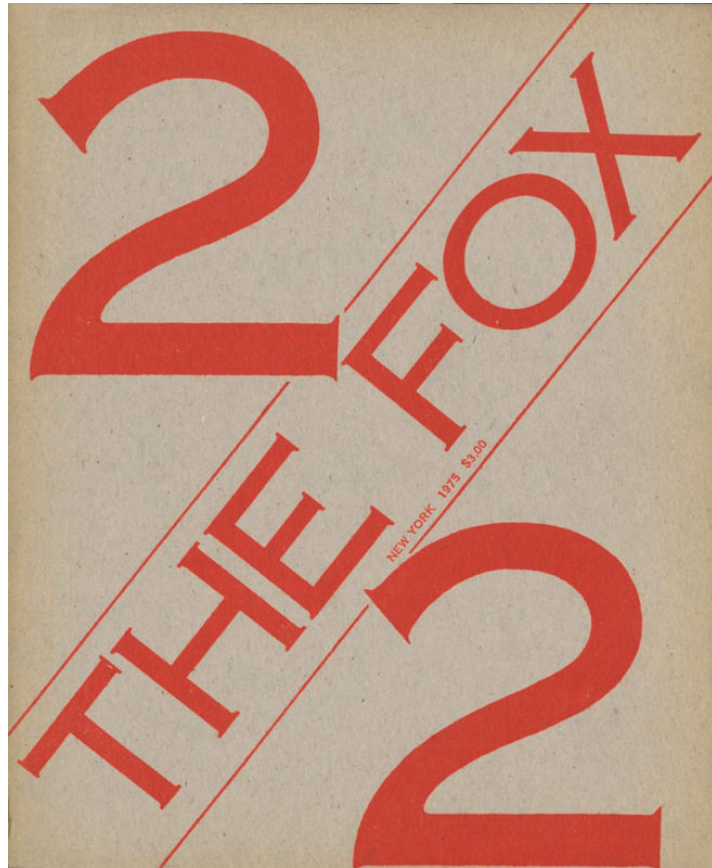


Fig. 19

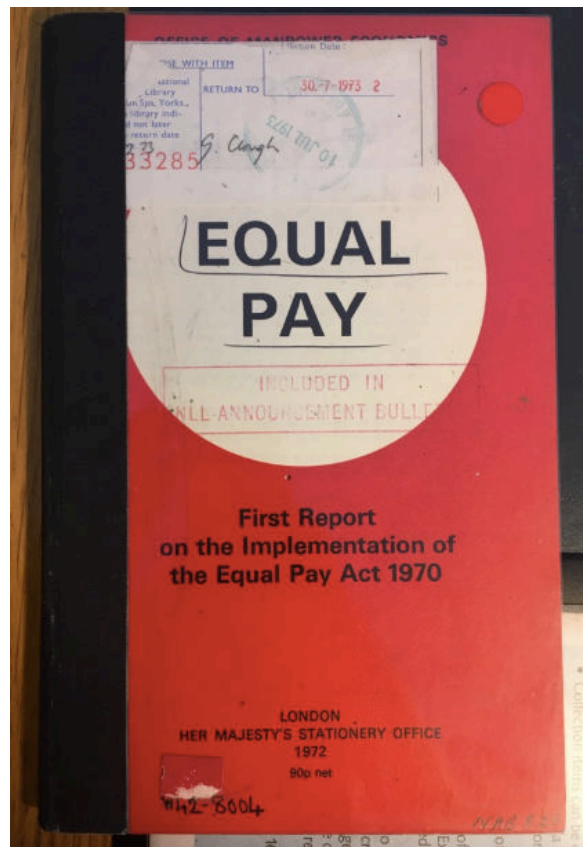


Fig. 20



Fig. 21

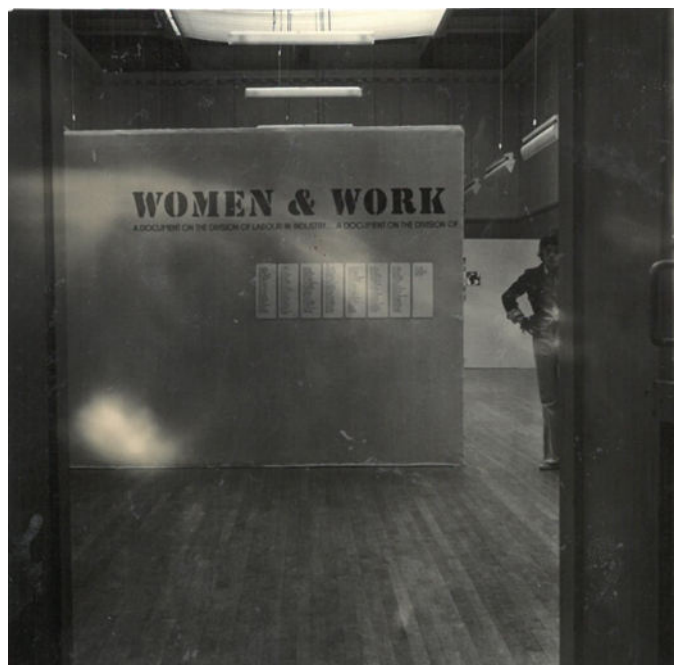


Fig. 22

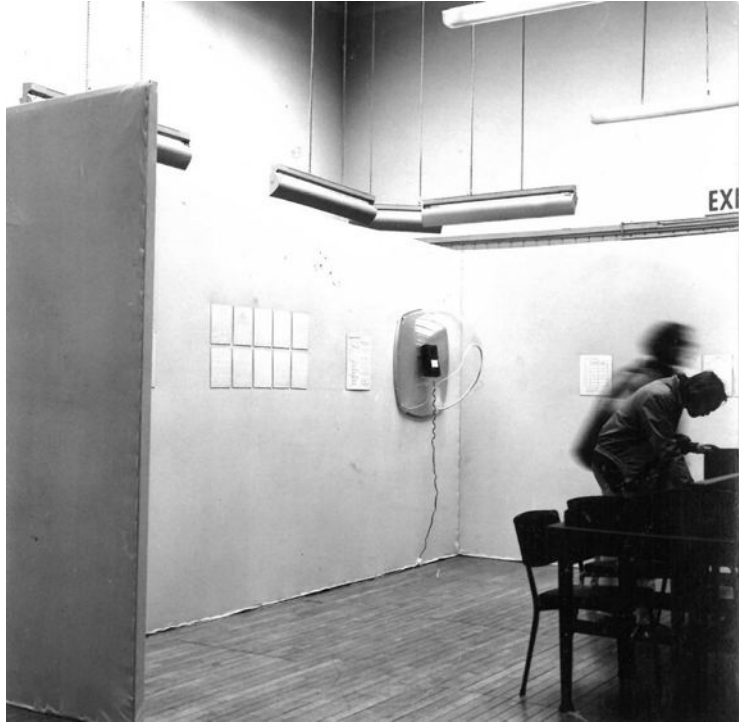


Fig. 23



Fig. 24



Fig. 25

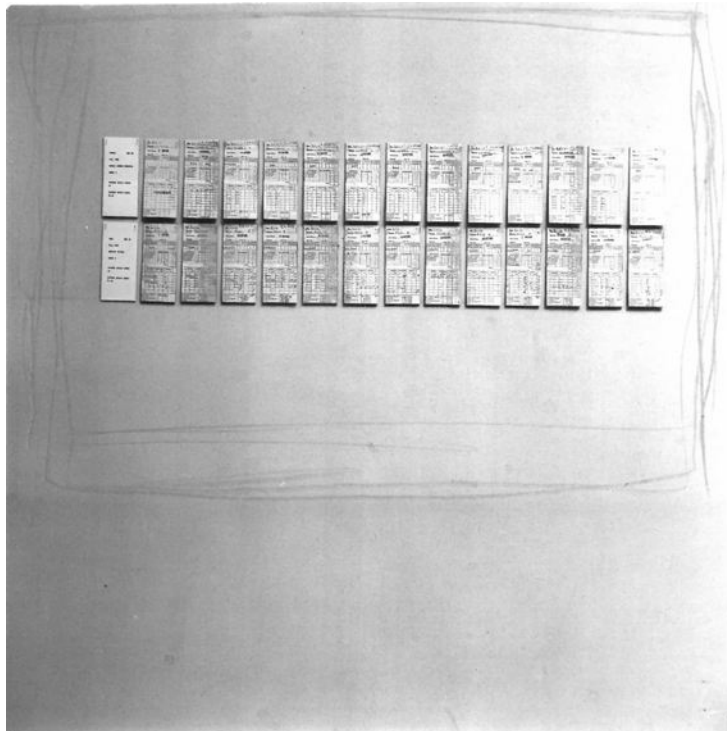


Fig. 26



Fig. 27



Fig. 28



Fig. 29



Fig. 30



Fig. 31



Fig. 32

FILM:
GENDER DIFFERENCES
IN JOB DEFINITION -
MANUAL AND NON-MANUAL

MALES	FEMALES
MACHINE SETTER	RIVET MACHINE OPERATOR
TANDEM SLITTER OPERATOR	BUSSE PACKER
BODYMAKER OPERATOR	LINE INSPECTOR
PALLET STACKER	HAND WIPER - SIDE SEAMS
FORK TRUCK DRIVER	HAND SOLDERER (ROTARY)
LORRY DRIVER	HANDLE PLACERS
DEPARTMENT MANAGER	OFFICE MACHINE OPERATORS
DESPATCH PLANNERS	TELEPHONIST
	FILING CLERK
	WHEEL TESTER ATTENDANT
	HARE PRESS OPERATOR
	SINGLE BLANK PRE-CURL OPERATOR
	CANTEEN ASSISTANT
	BLANKING PRESS OPERATOR

Fig. 33

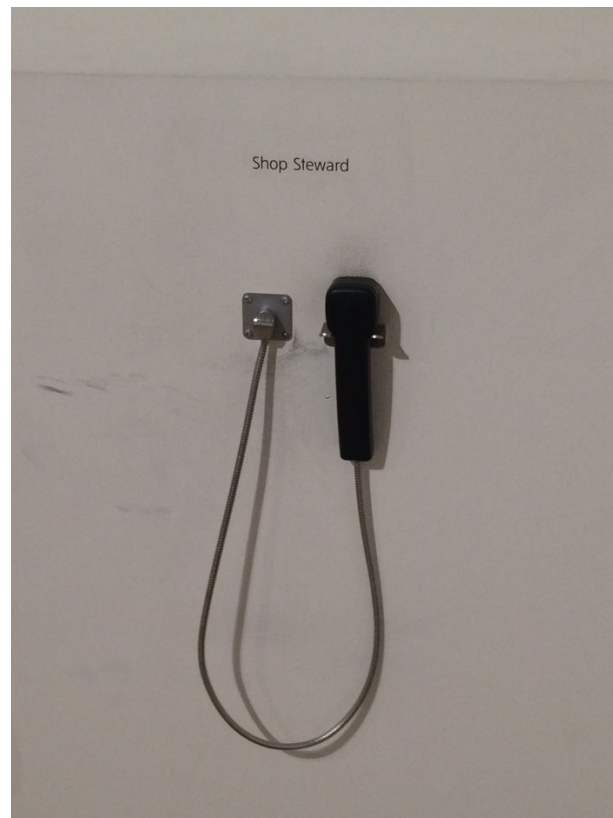


Fig. 34



Fig. 35



Fig. 36



Fig. 37



Fig. 38



Fig. 39

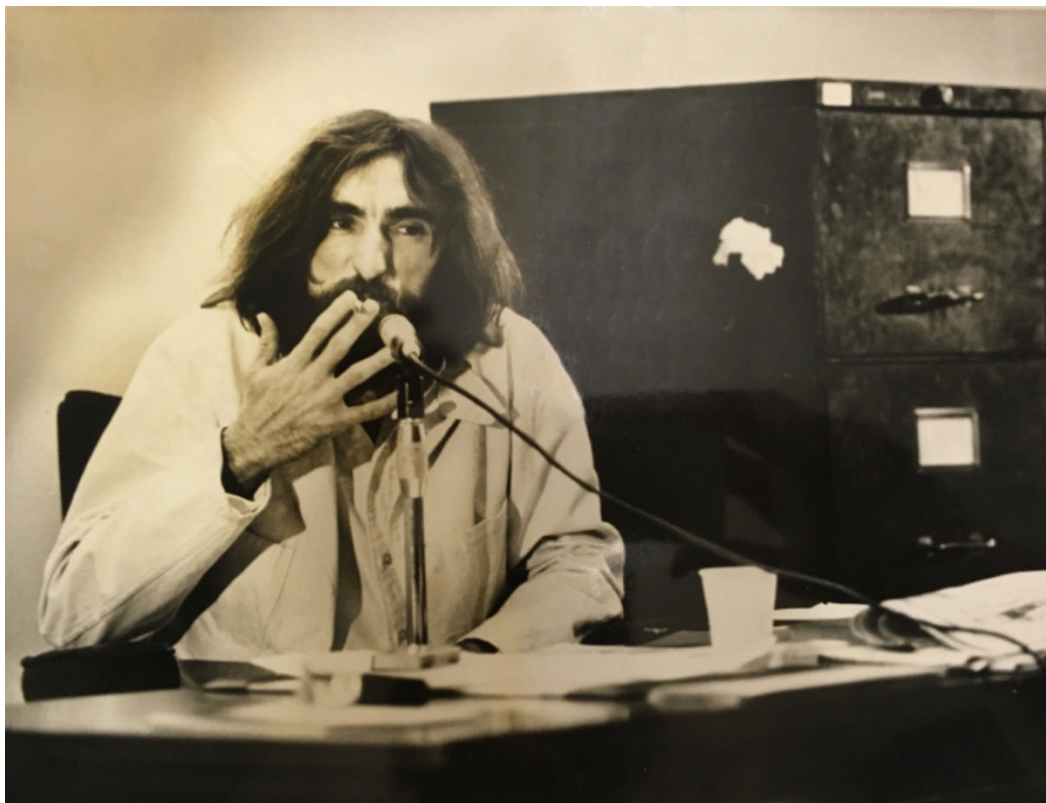


Fig. 40



Fig. 41

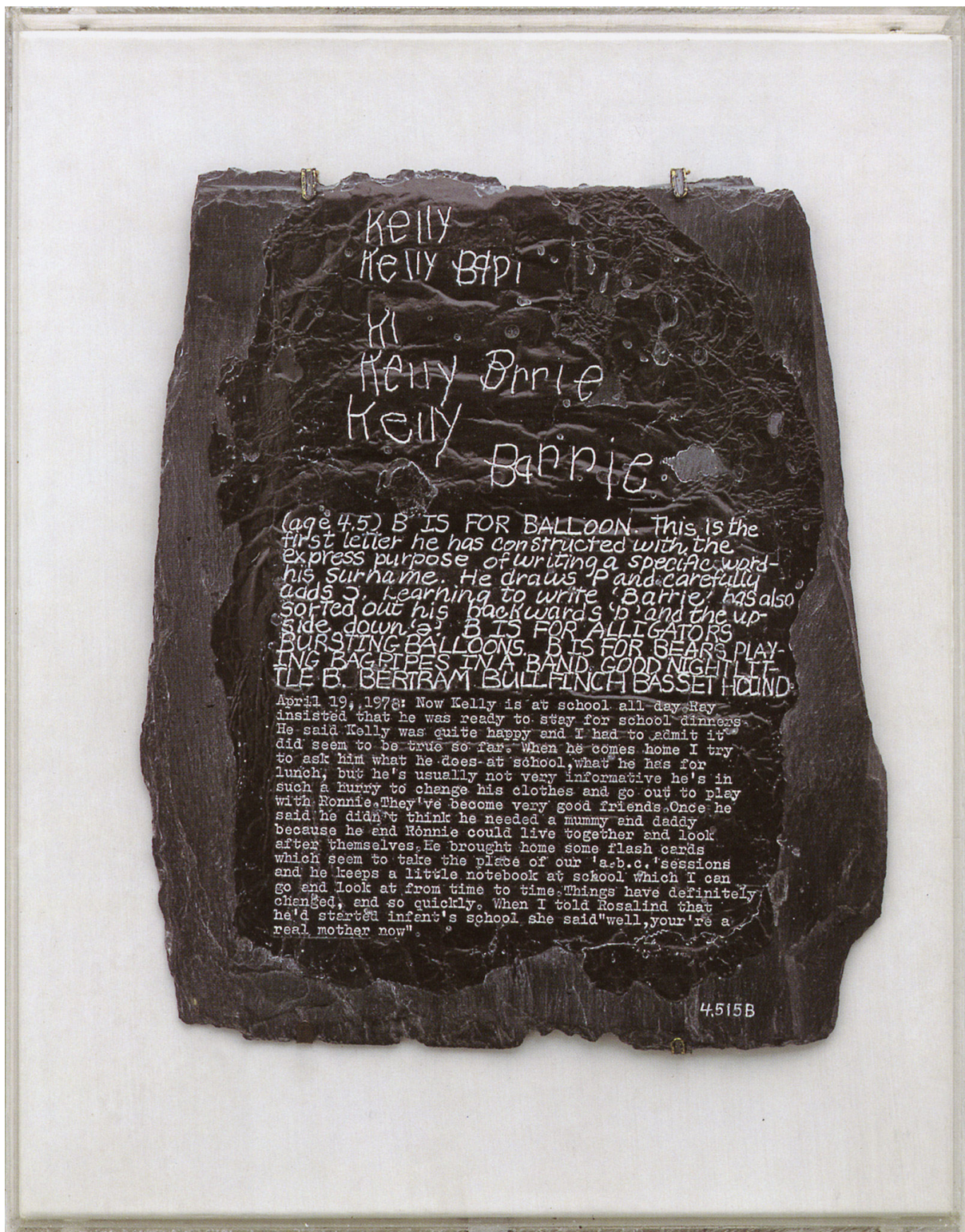


Fig. 42

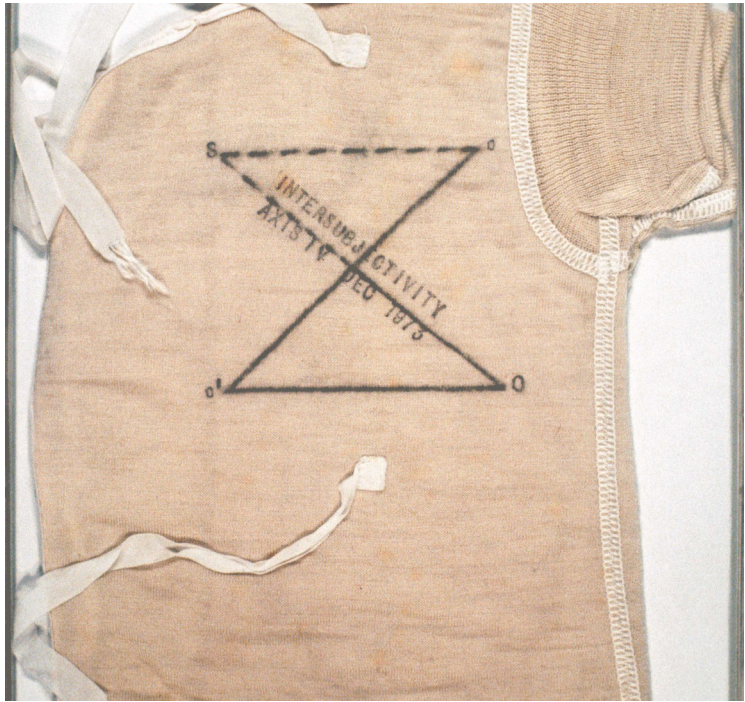


fig. 43

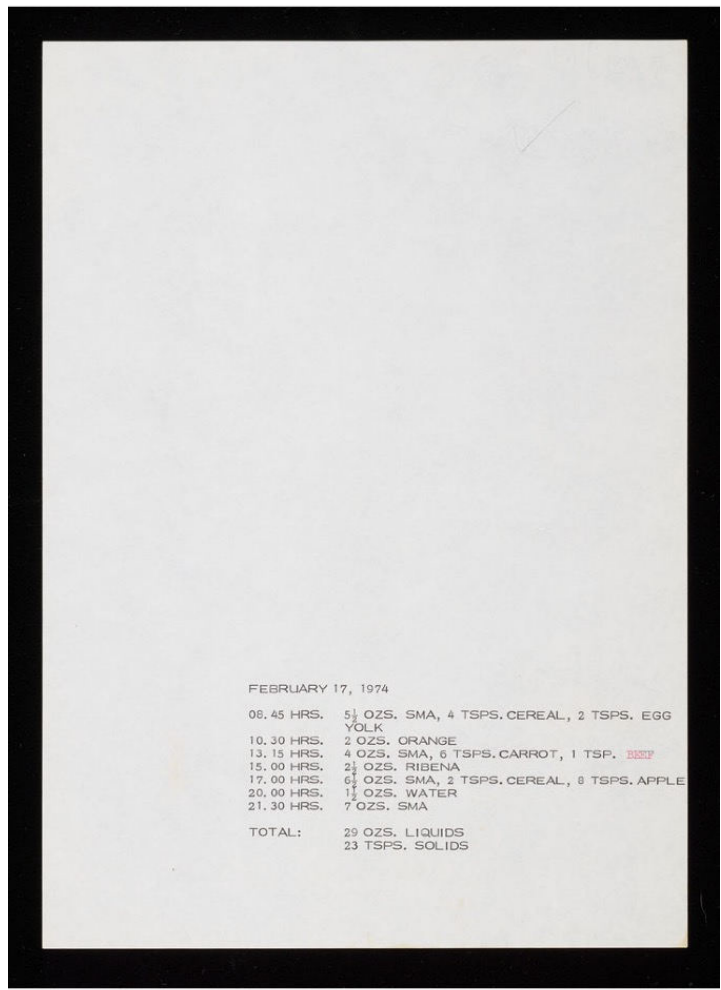


Fig. 44



Fig. 45



Fig. 46



Fig. 47



Fig. 48



Fig. 49



Fig. 50



Fig. 51



Fig. 52



Fig. 53

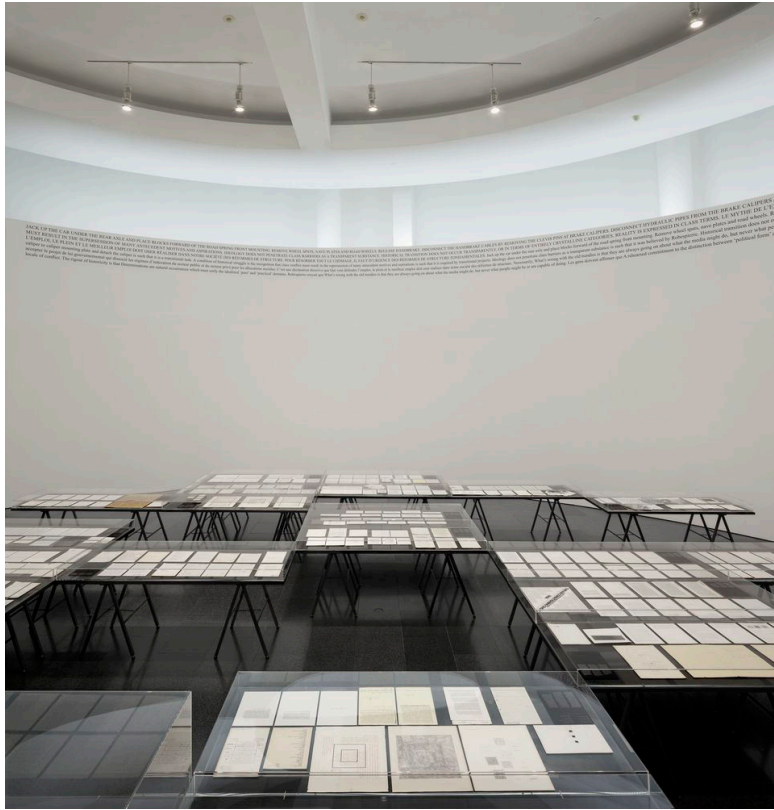


Fig. 54



Fig. 55

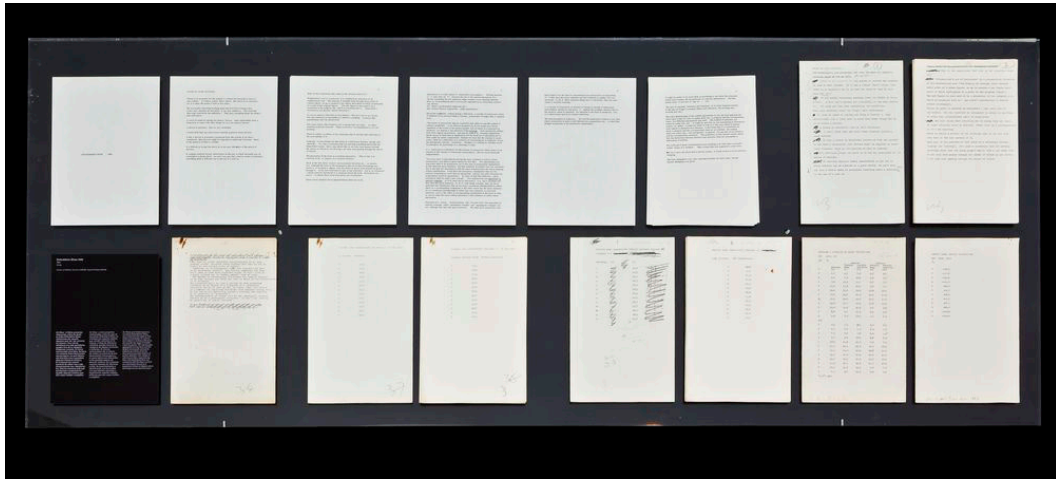


Fig. 56

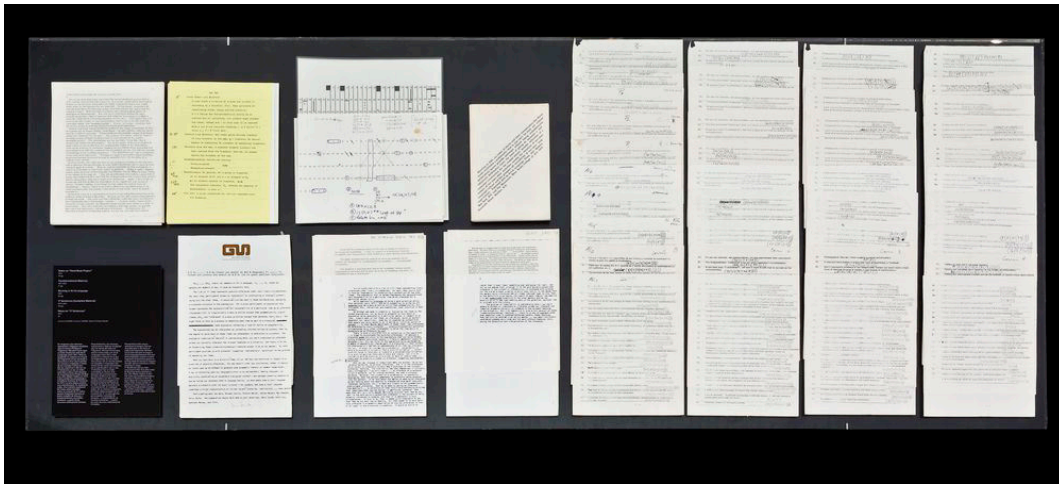


Fig. 57

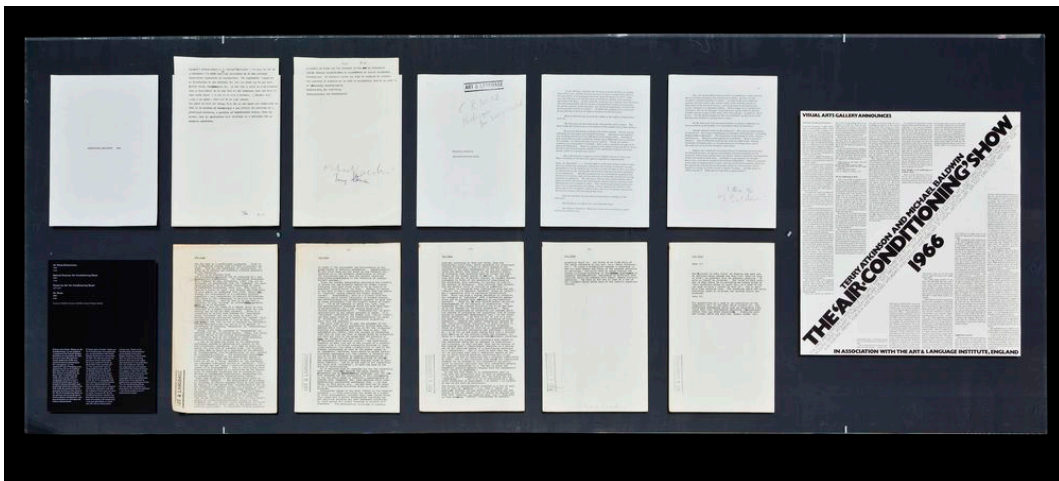


Fig. 58



Fig. 59



Fig. 60



Fig. 61

**MUSEUM OF
MODERN ART OXFORD**
21 SEPTEMBER - 26 OCTOBER 1975

ART & LANGUAGE
1966-1975

Retrospective Exhibitions and Current Practice	1
'We have some non-utilitarian problems (of notation) in the face of ...'	4
This Connects with the Given Political Moment, etc....	7
To Boring Professors ... Transitional Demands	10
'A point of reference ... or what? Individuated (distributed) idea-prac- ...'	12
Dialectic and Unsightly Drinking: Art Galleries as the Putative Sites of Non-Trivial Conflict	15
Notes ... More Worry about Going-On	18
The Preservation of the Species Direct Speech	21
The Preservation of the Species Counter Course	23
'Putative art practice in Britain is focussed on the art schools. Most ...'	25
Self-Superseding Strategy ... or the Given Political Moment	28
Good Evening ... It's Modern Amusements Time Again	33
For the B. B. C.: A Visual Description of ...	37
'The requirement that one should see his 'work' as 'in' the dialectic of ...'	40
Good Morning - Old-Fashioned Amusements	41
'We might want to walk into over-complex iterations, just like a lot of ...'	43
Historically Proper Names	44
Alphabet of Lenin - Intermediate Para-Structures	46
Dear Stefan ...	49

SEPTEMBER **1975**

TATE GALLERY

Fig. 62

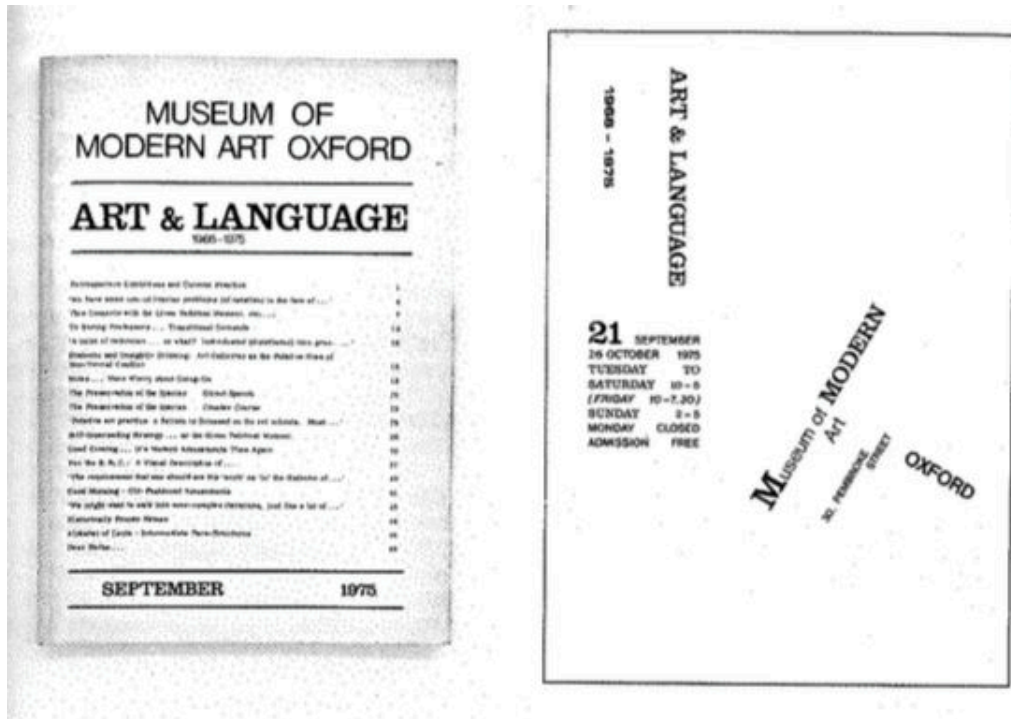


Fig. 63



Fig. 64



Fig. 65

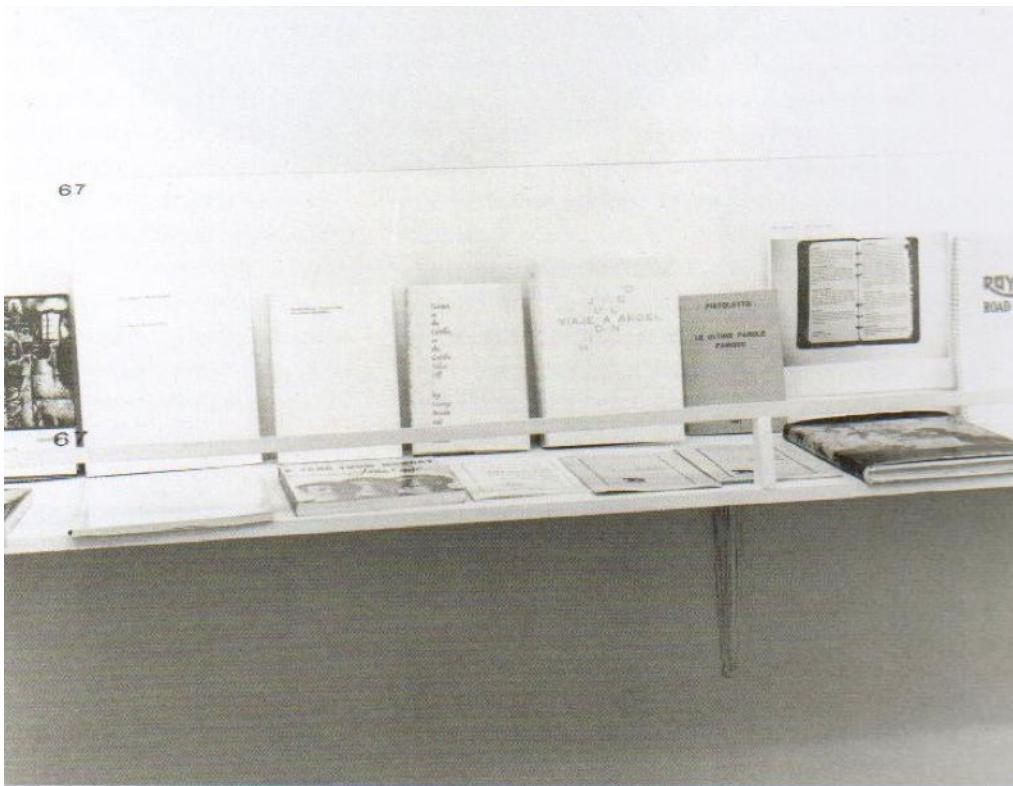


Fig. 66



Fig. 67



Fig. 68



Fig. 69



Fig. 70



Fig. 71

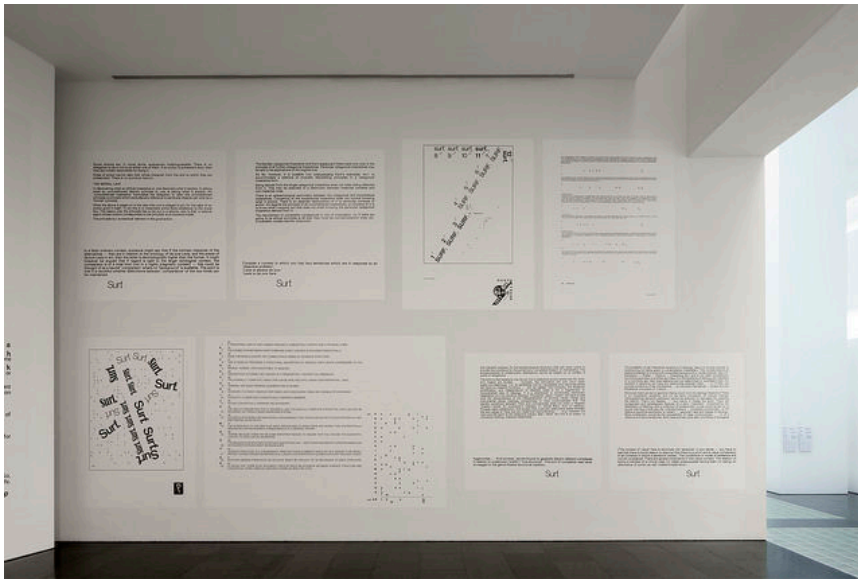


Fig. 72

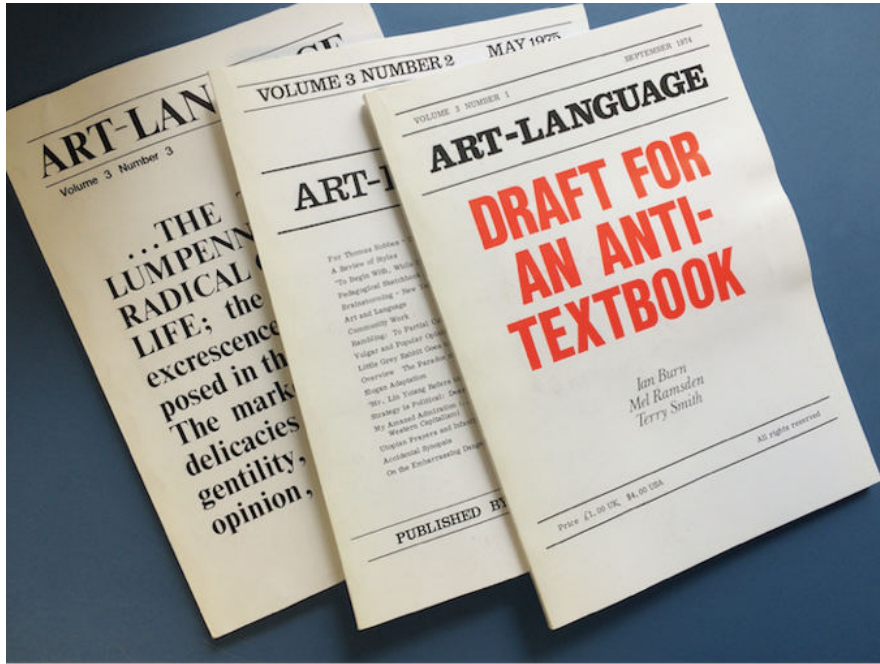


Fig. 73



Fig. 74

Chapter 3



Fig. 75



Fig. 76



Fig. 77



Fig. 78

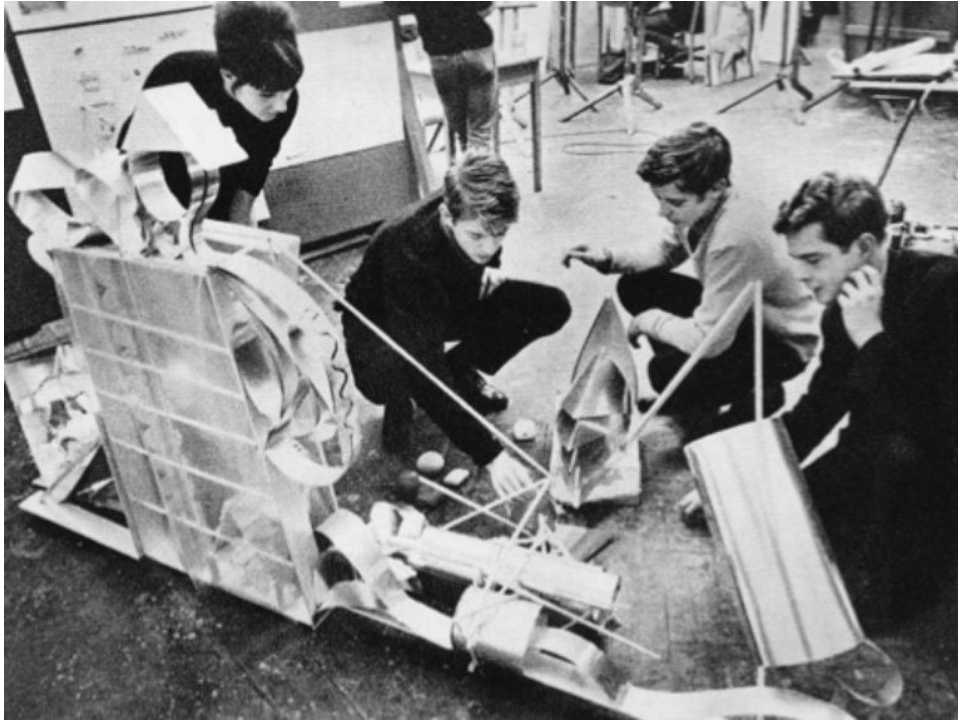


Fig. 79

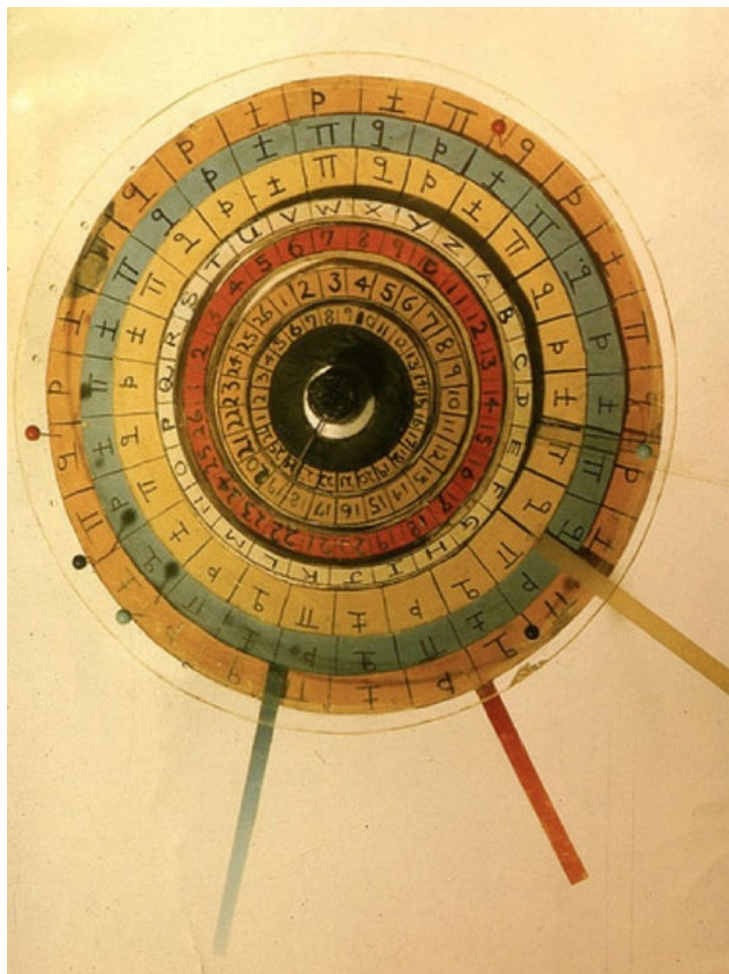


Fig. 80

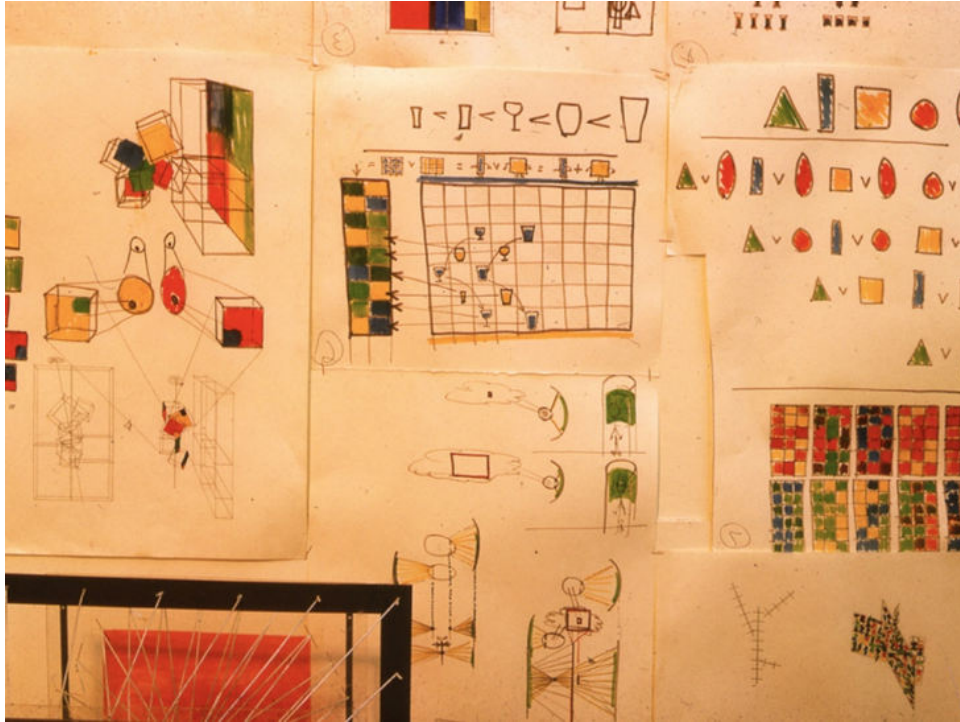


Fig. 81



Fig. 82

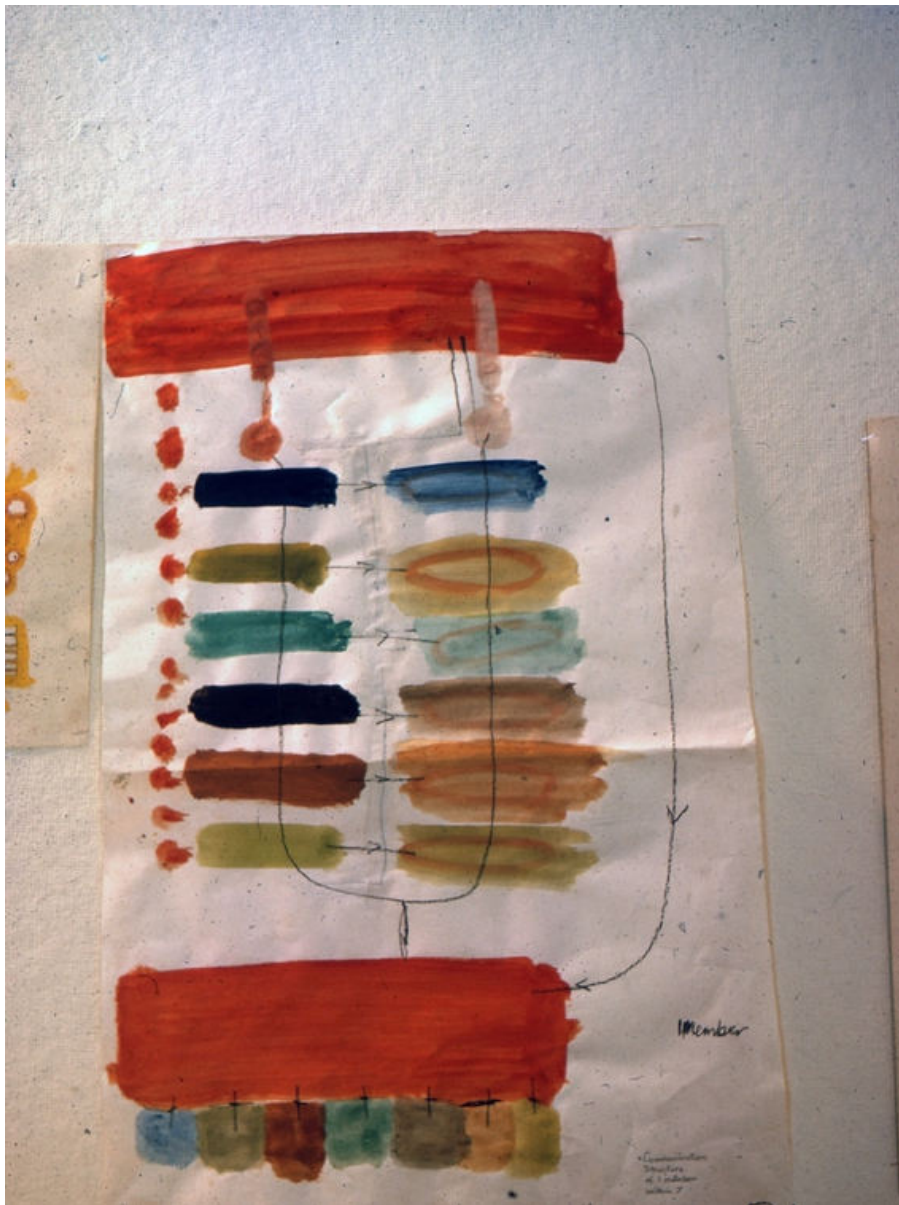


Fig. 83

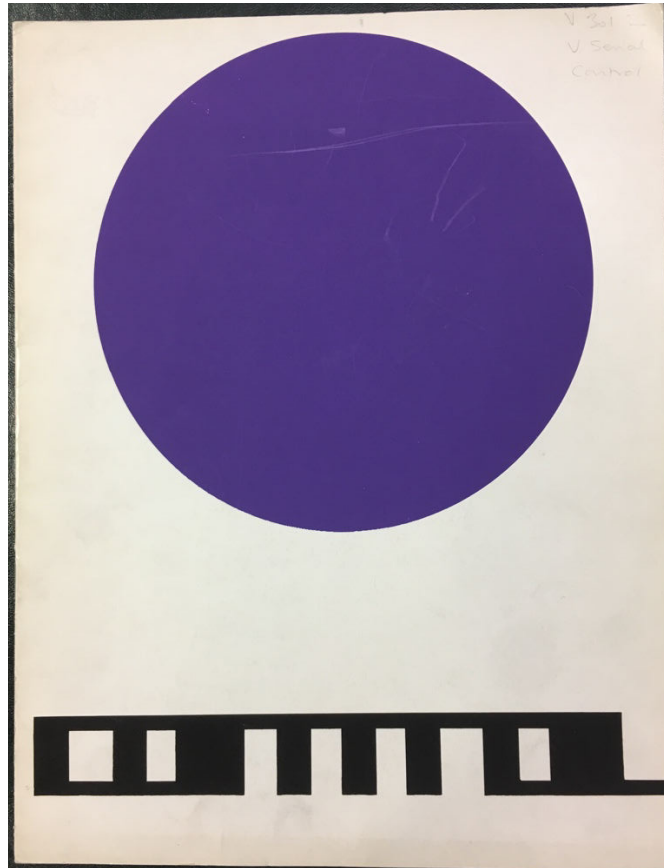


Fig. 84

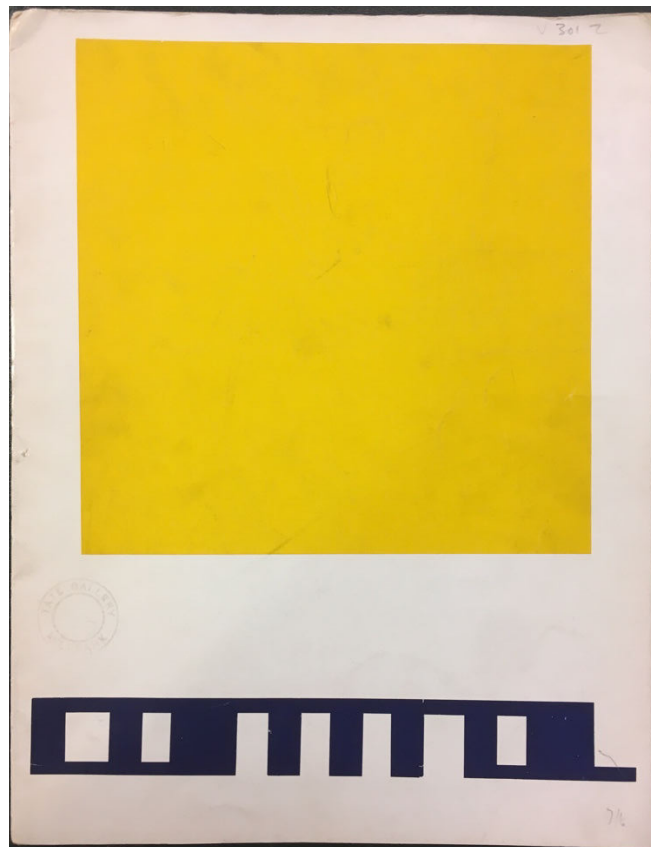


Fig. 85

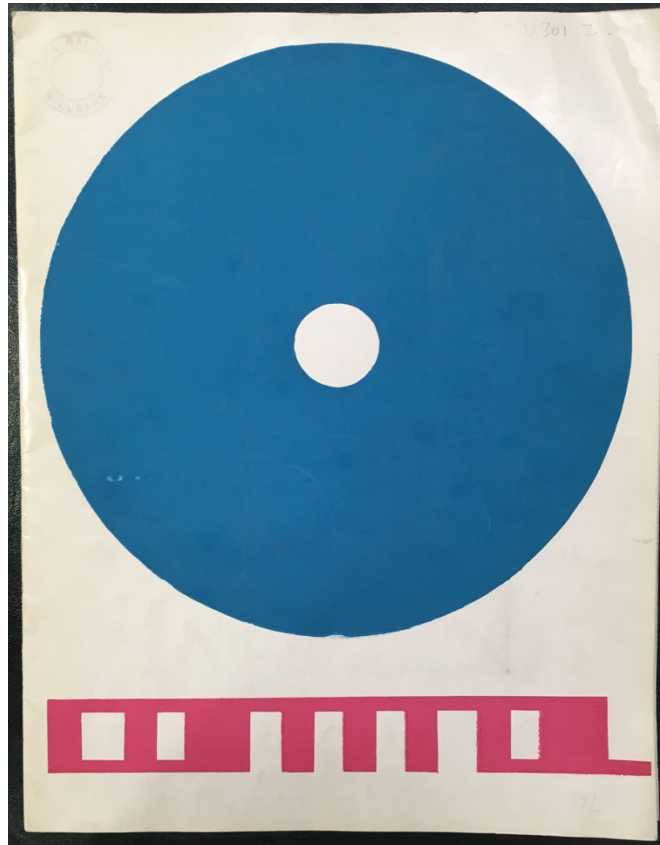


Fig. 86

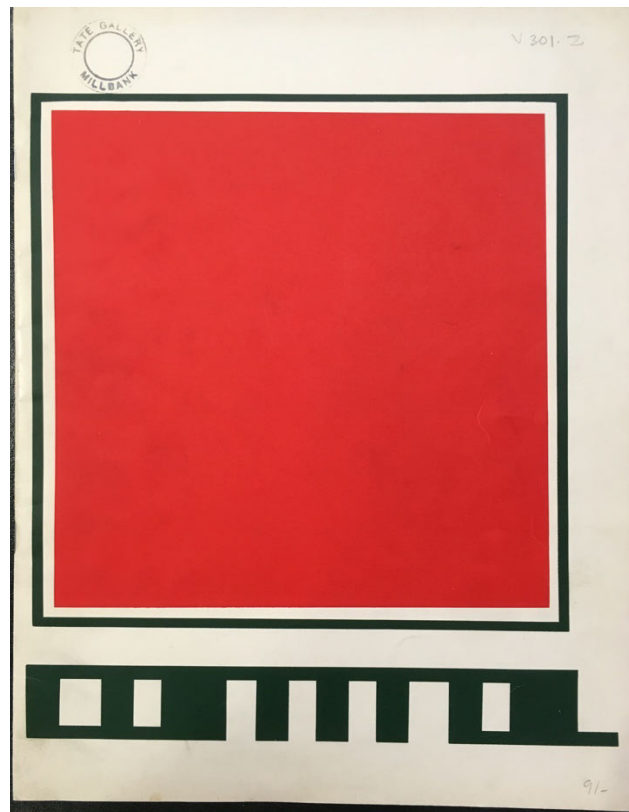


Fig. 87

To control ones environment is to assert ones existence. In controlling my identity I define it. The Free Man has control of every aspect of his world and creates his role within it ("remakes himself" in Nietzsche's terms). Although through science we strive for this total freedom, it may never be attained. Art, however, provides the means to win this freedom and to act it out—symbolically. In Art the will to control is expressed through processes of restricting experience and of creating in familiar relationships within a universe of visual discourse. In this way the Artist becomes the Free Man. Just as my own artwork feeds back to affect my subsequent behaviour, so in society generally the artist activity may function as some kind of ritual control mechanism. Both individual artworks and cultural clumps can act as behavioural triggers. But the cultural force not only controls a Social Situation it constantly assigns to it fresh goals. This is not a steady state control—it is one affecting a changing, fluid field. This is one kind of value, amongst others, that I want my public art to have. It requires the New, unfamiliar forms and unpredictable relationships. These come only out of creative behaviour—unlearned, non-routine constantly shaken up. It involves taking risks, stretching the intuition. There is a splendid paradox in Art that often the wildest, most far out, random unprogrammed activity can in the end produce work which may exercise the most profound and fruitful control on the human situation.
ROY ASCOTT

Fig. 88



Three Light Modulators. You are invited to project them and superimpose the images, and to devise your own ways of using them.

Fig. 89

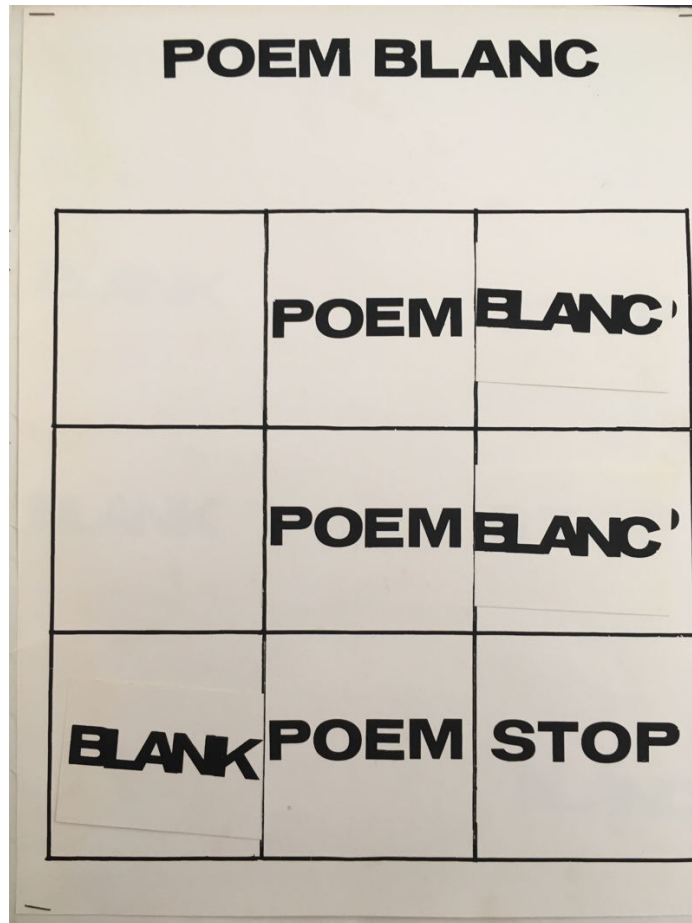


Fig. 90

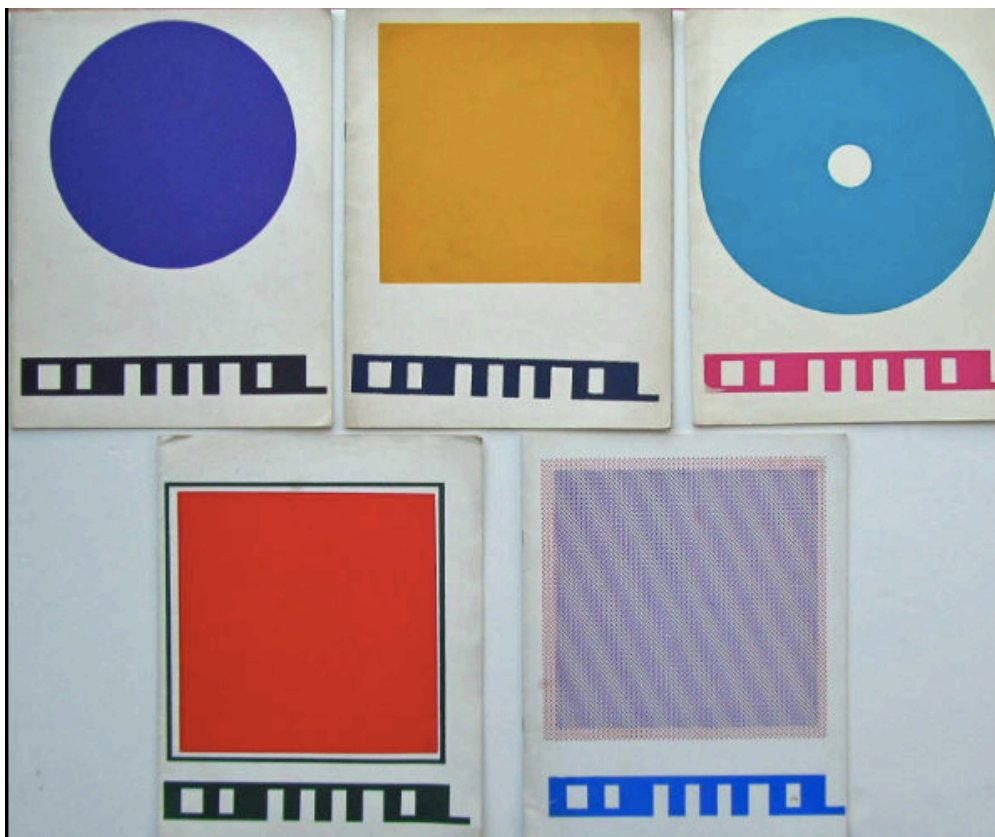
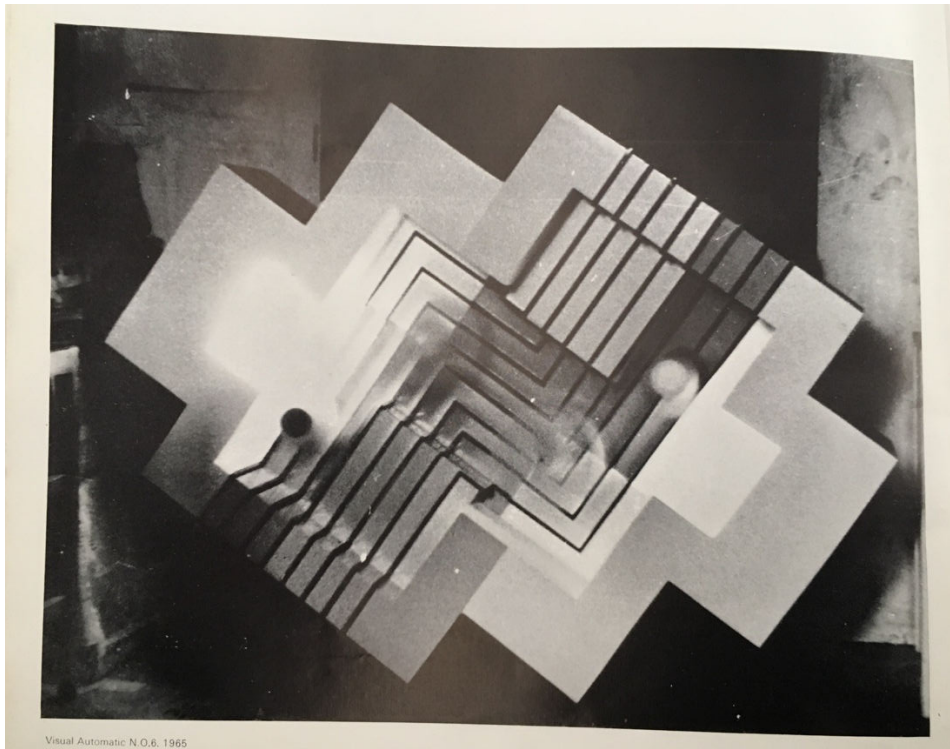


Fig. 91



Visual Automatic N.O.6. 1965

Fig. 92

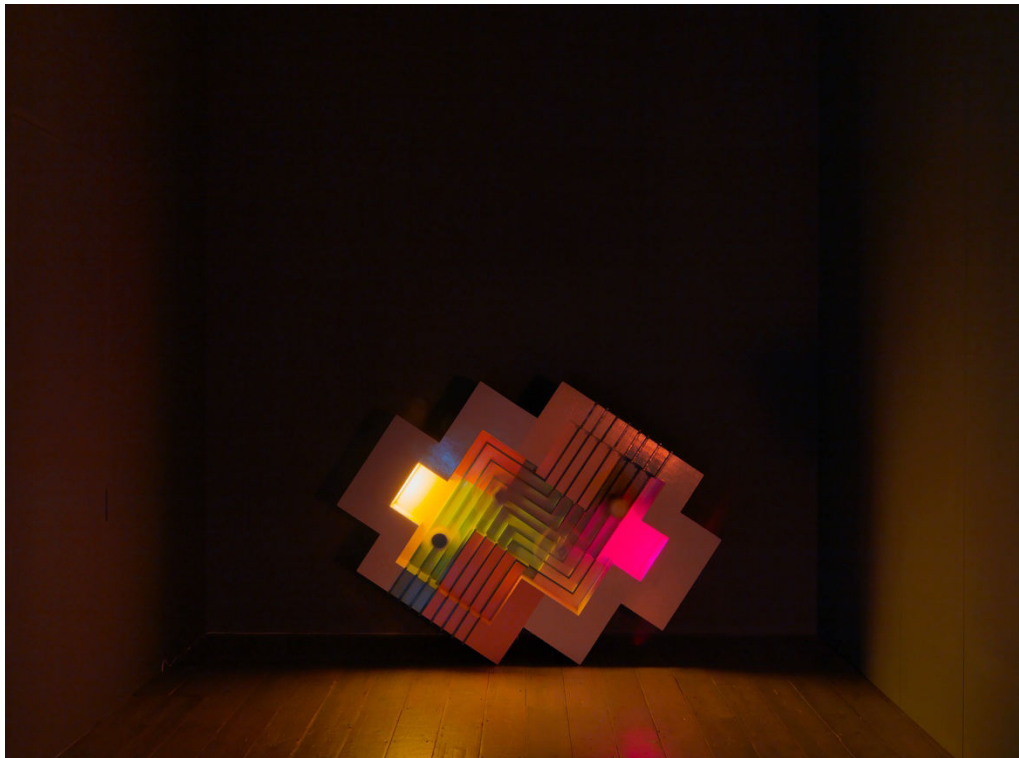


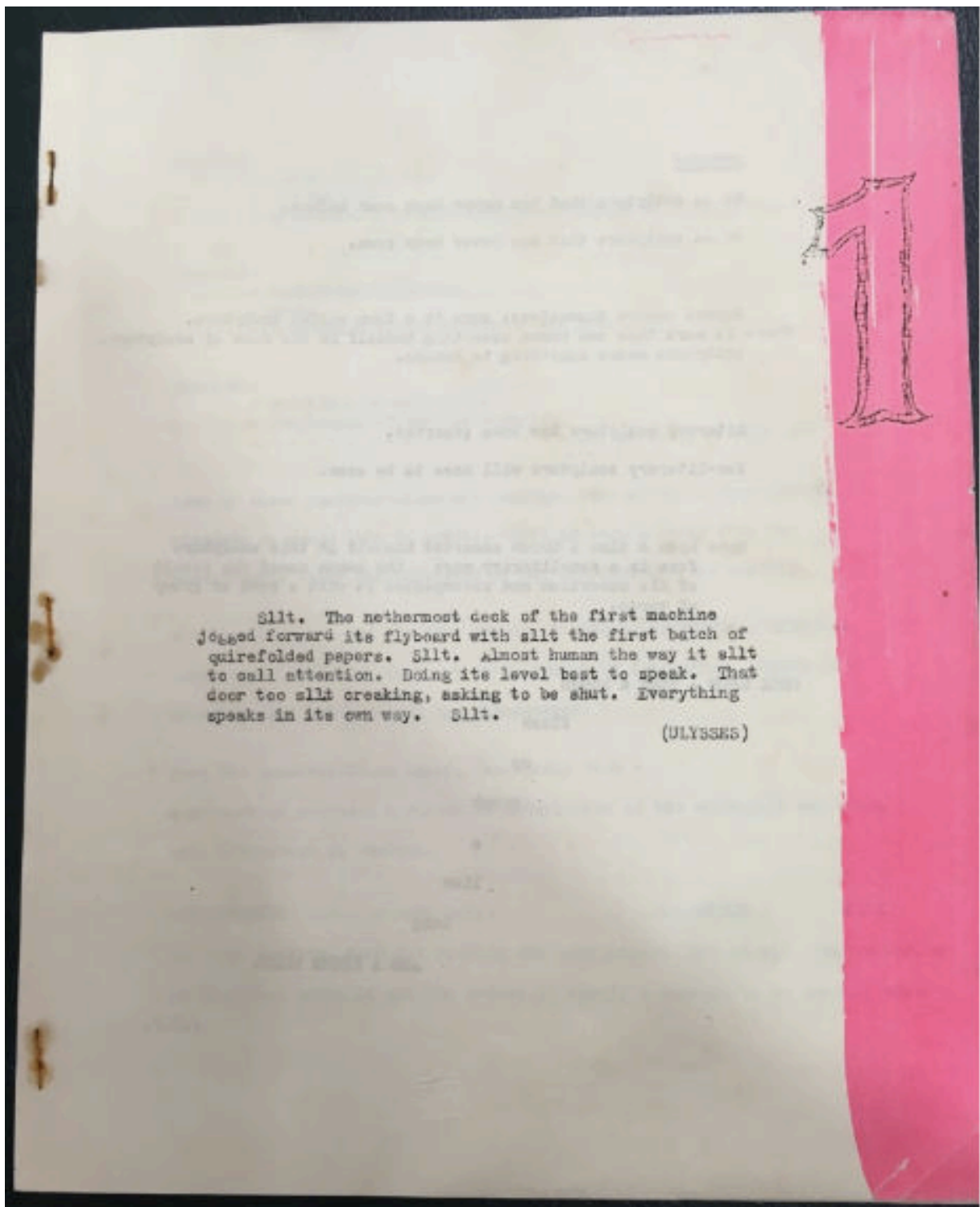
Fig. 93



Fig. 94



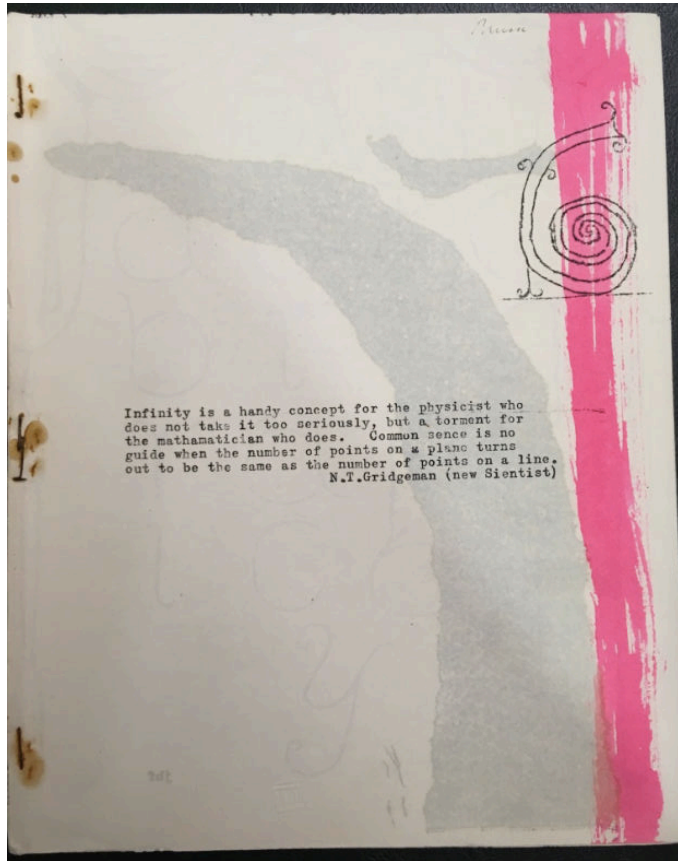
Fig. 95



Silt. The nethermost deck of the first machine
jogged forward its flyboard with silt the first batch of
quierefolded papers. Silt. Almost human the way it silt
to call attention. Doing its level best to speak. That
door too silt creaking, asking to be shut. Everything
speaks in its own way. Silt.

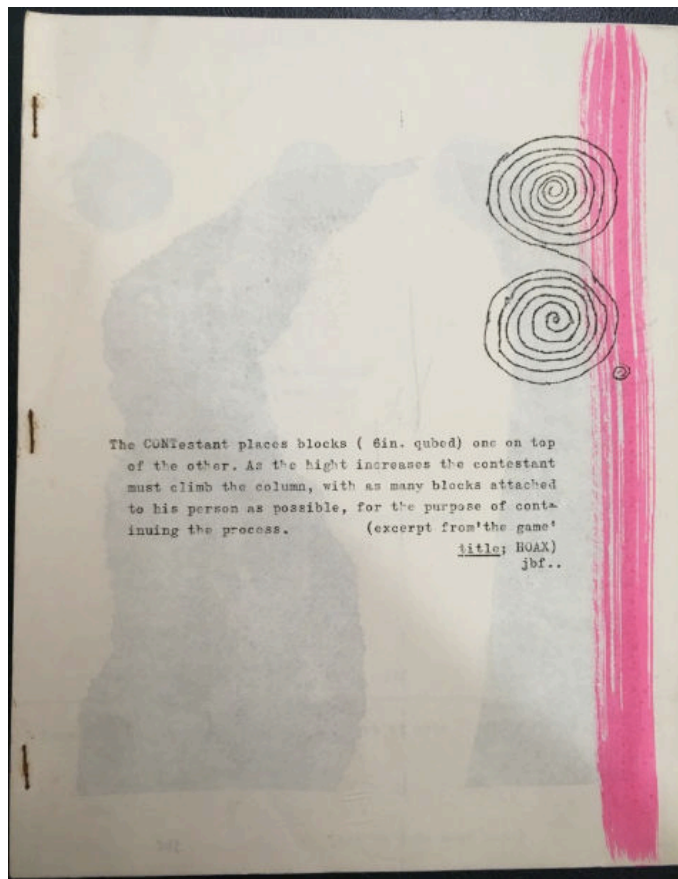
(ULYSSES)

Fig. 96



Infinity is a handy concept for the physicist who does not take it too seriously, but a torment for the mathematician who does. Common sense is no guide when the number of points on a plane turns out to be the same as the number of points on a line.
N.T.Gridgeman (new Scientist)

Fig. 97



The CONTESTANT places blocks (6in. cubed) one on top of the other. As the height increases the contestant must climb the column, with as many blocks attached to his person as possible, for the purpose of continuing the process. (excerpt from 'the game'
title: HOAX)
jbf..

Fig. 98

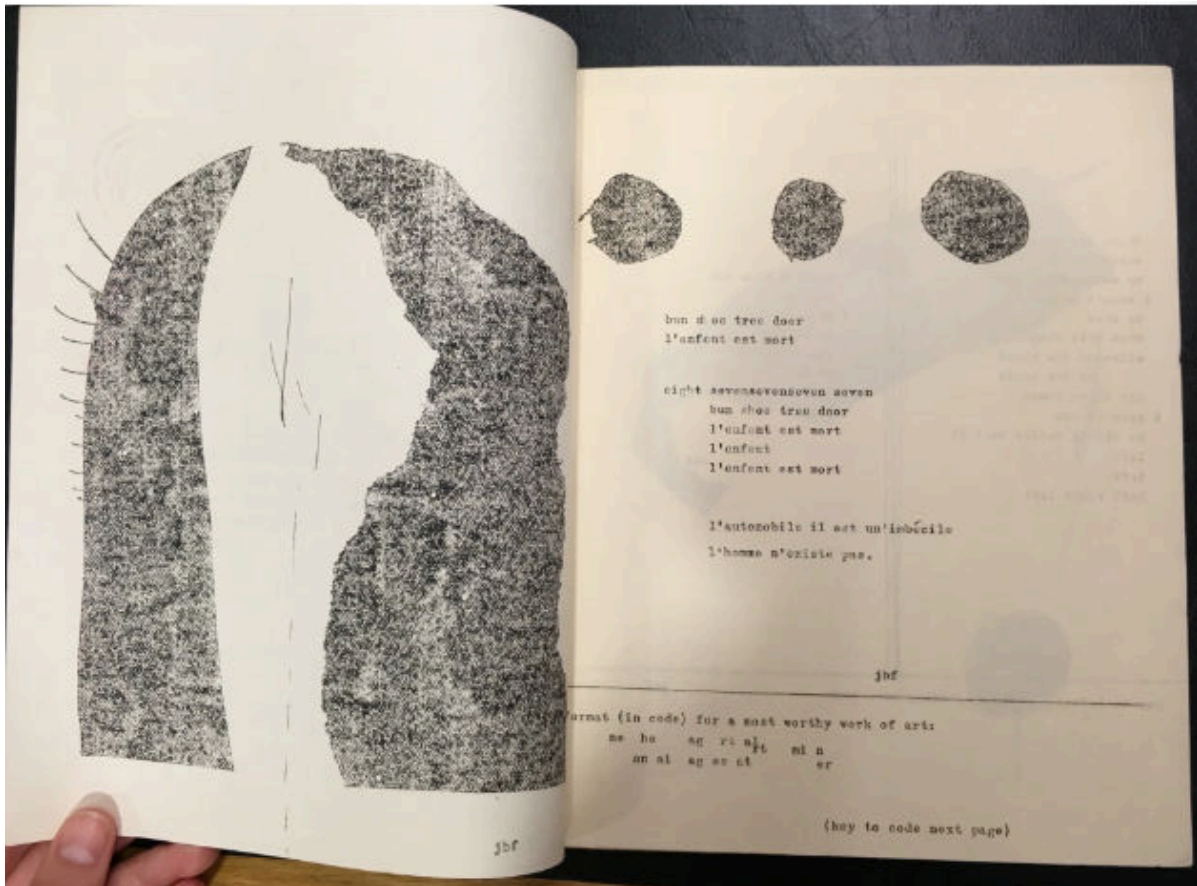


Fig. 99

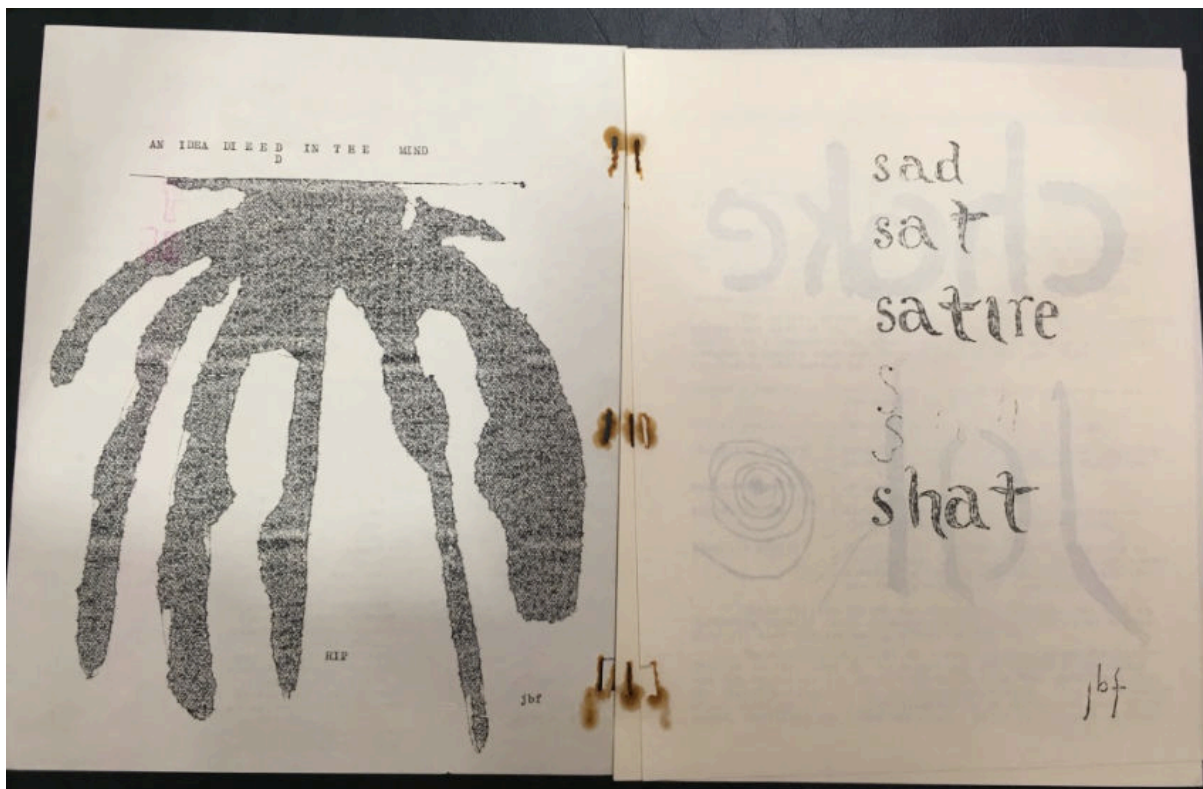


Fig. 100

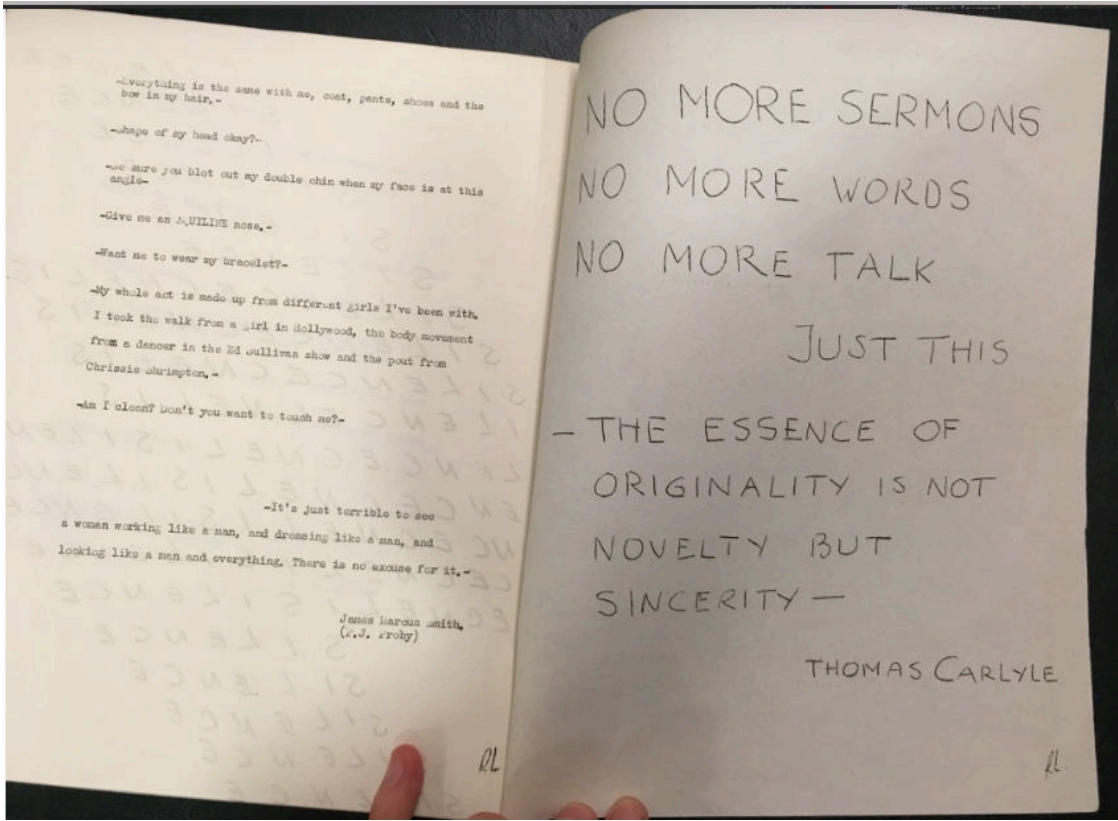


Fig. 101

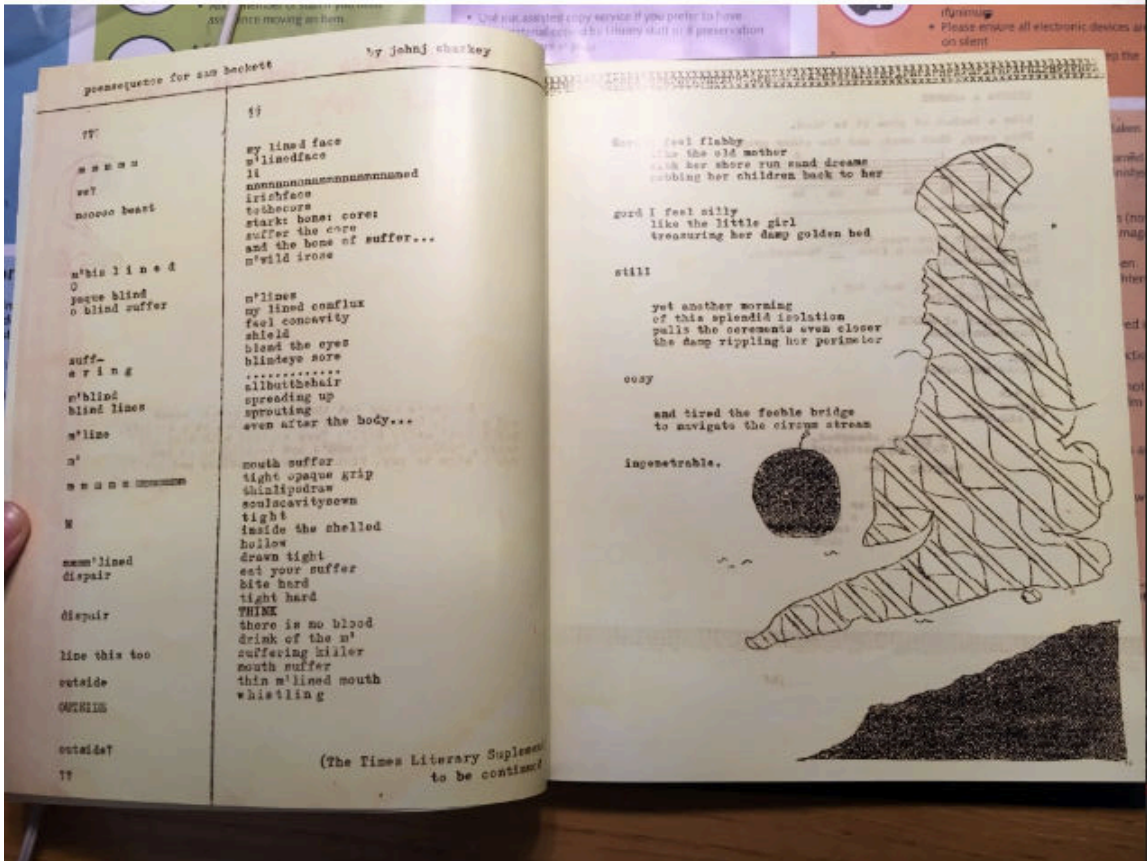


Fig. 102

VOLUME I NUMBER I

MAY 1969

Art-Language

The Journal of conceptual art

Edited by Terry Atkinson, David Bainbridge,
Michael Baldwin, Harold Hurrell

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Fig. 103

Art-Language

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Fig. 104

Art-Language

Edited by Terry Atkinson, David Bainbridge,
Michael Baldwin, Harold Hurrell
American Editor Joseph Kosuth

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Fig. 105

VOLUME 3 NUMBER 1

SEPTEMBER 1974

ART-LANGUAGE

DRAFT FOR AN ANTI- TEXTBOOK

*Ian Burn
Mel Ramsden
Terry Smith*

Price £1.00 UK, \$4.00 USA

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Fig. 106

Chapter 4

The careless purveyors of high culture are presented with clear alternatives. One of them is finally to be fixed as the harmless class, the dangerous harmless class, the social and historical scum; for the most part, the bribed flunkey (tool) of reactionary intrigue, the worst of all possible allies, absolutely venal and absolutely cunning, a wholly indefinite disintegrated mass thrown here and there, rich and poor, offal, organ-grinders, rag-pickers, mountebanks . . . the helpless dregs who turn in circles between suicide and a tedious madness, incapable of the uncritical violence which is their true heritage; a plague zone that can't be cleansed by the plague.

SUPPORT SCHOOL

Or they can realize that they are incapable of 'governing' themselves, struggle to reach, and restore to themselves a social and historical base, recognize that they can seldom find their way around the countryside; recognize that they are a non-working, not-working class - penny capitalists - and ask themselves what that means: become people in process.

Fig. 107

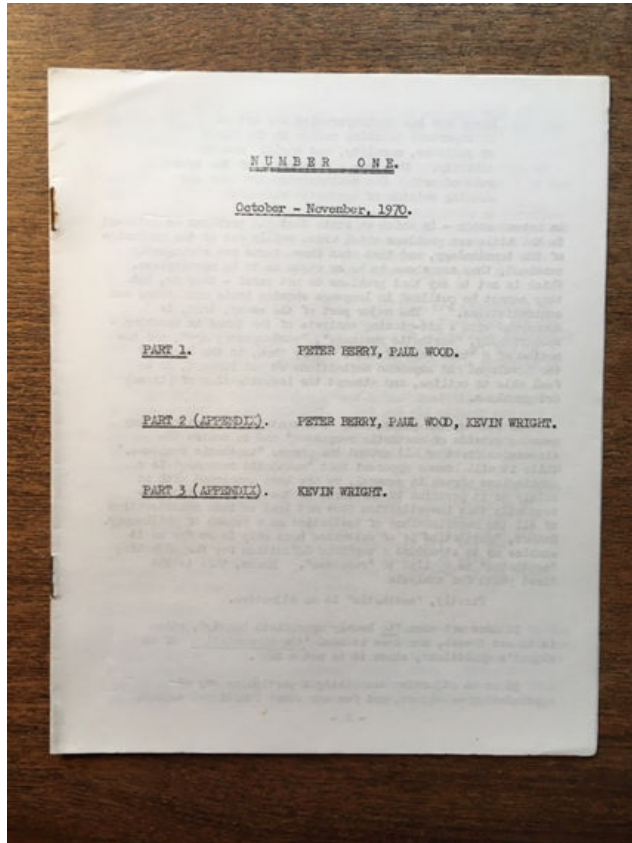


Fig. 108

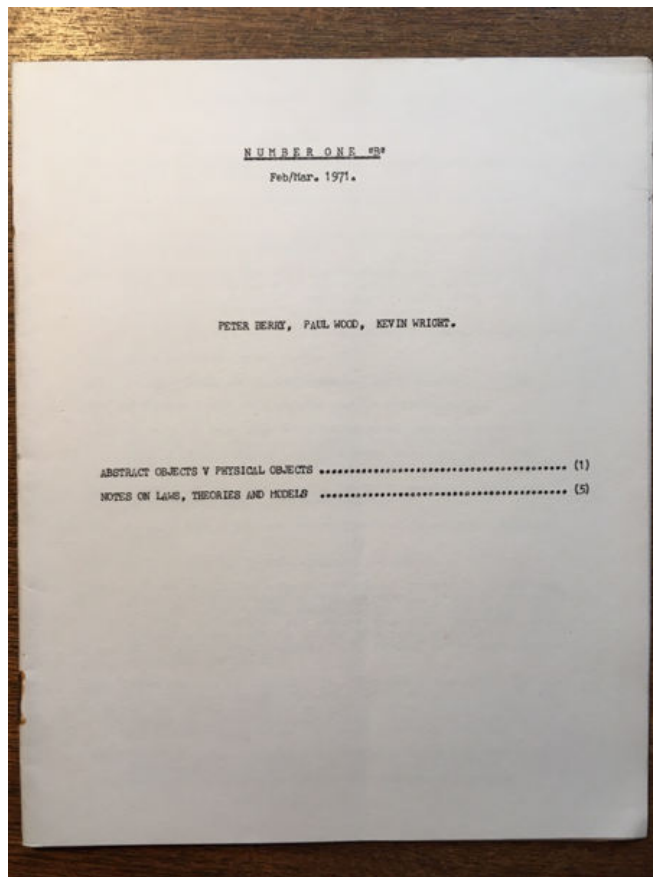


Fig. 109

ART : EDUCATION MATTERS

"A : Em" is the whole, of which the named instantials are its parts—but the parts are not of equivalent status. Broadly, it concerned to demonstrate (a) the centrality of the educational endeavour to "analytical art" (b) some prime groundings for such an endeavour and (c) to shed some light on the necessity for such overt educational engagement via a comparison with the directives and constraints of a de facto educational situation.

EDUCATIONAL VALUES AND EXPLANATION

"Educational values and explanation" is the primary cohering unit of "A : Em". At one level its values are argued for theoretically. In that these values are reflexive on argumentation though, the following are conceived as somewhat more than just a concretising heuristic ; rather they are themselves a prescriptive set, cohered in virtue of their embodiment of values upheld in "E. V. and E".

ART AND EXCLUSIVITY --- LOOKING AT ART CATEGORIALY

PRACTICAL CONSIDERTIONS

REMARKS ON ART EDUCATION

INTENTION, INTENSION, AND SIGNIFICANCE

PRACTICAL AND HISTORICAL RELATIVITY

E.V.T.R. : A COLLATION

Those values which have been held out in "E. V. and E" and instatiated in our practice, as prerequisites for an education are salvaged from the status of truistic-vacuous by a comparison with events of a de facto "education".

Value—incommensurability is evident.

SITUATION MAP

DIRECTORY

PETER BERRY

PAUL WOOD

KEVIN WRIGHT

Fig. 110

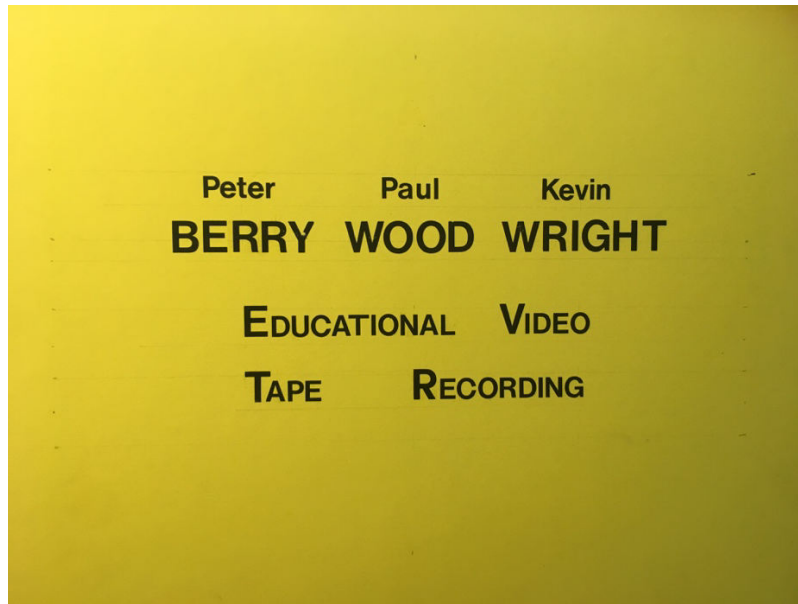


Fig. 111



Fig. 112

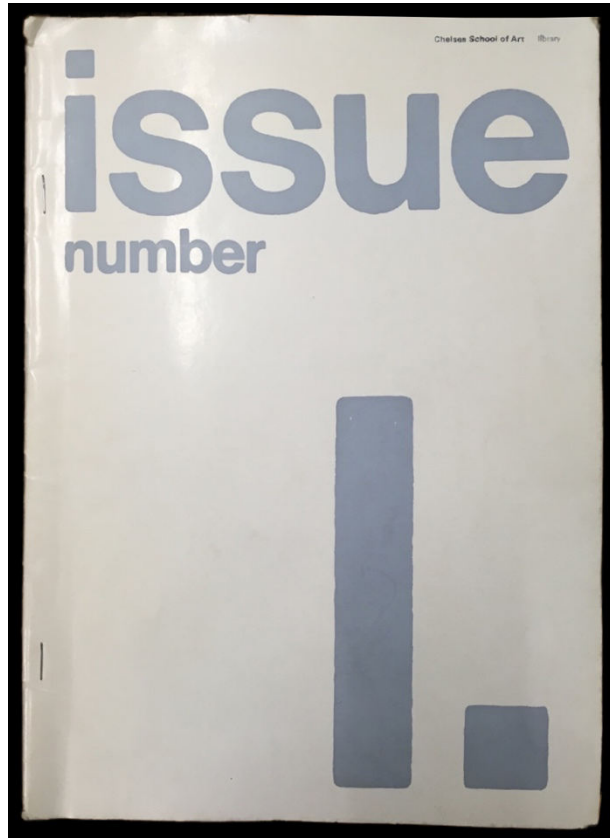


Fig. 113

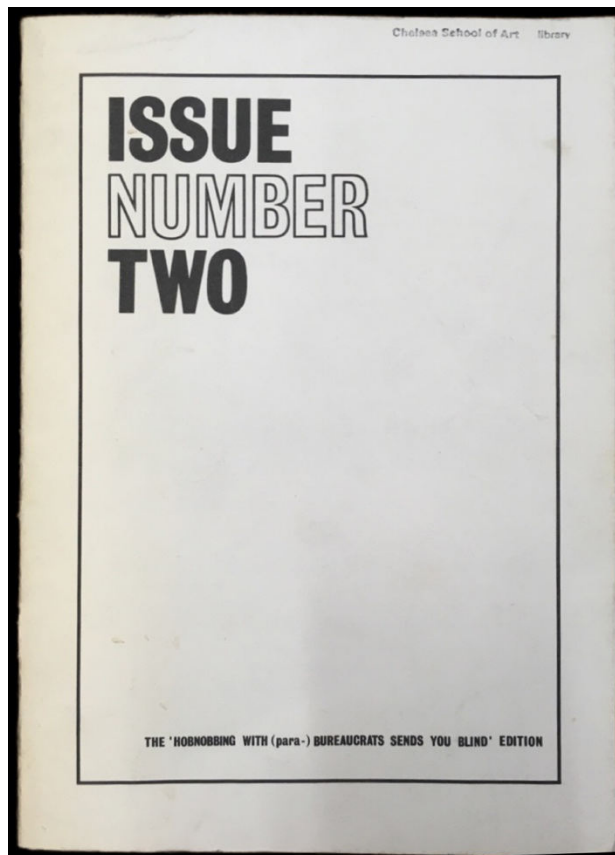


Fig. 114

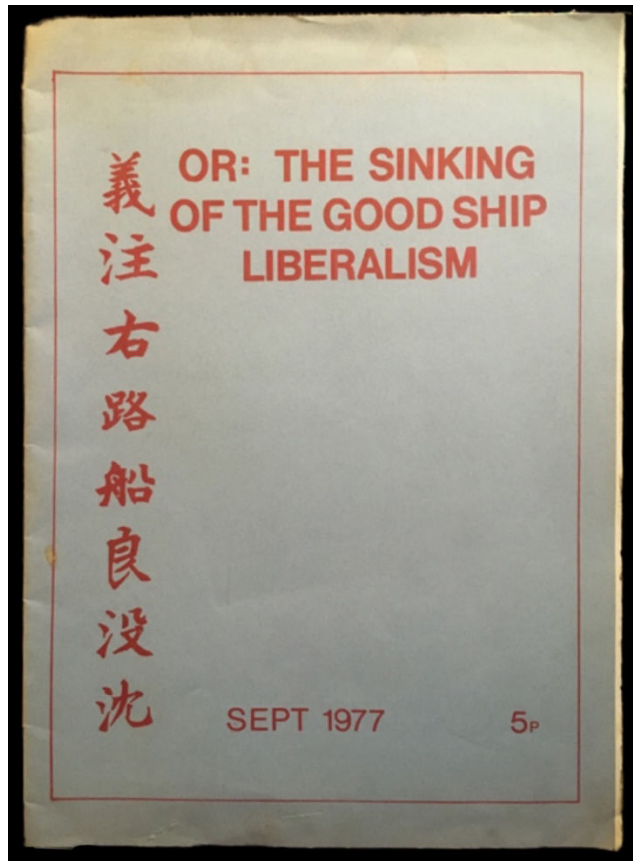


Fig. 115

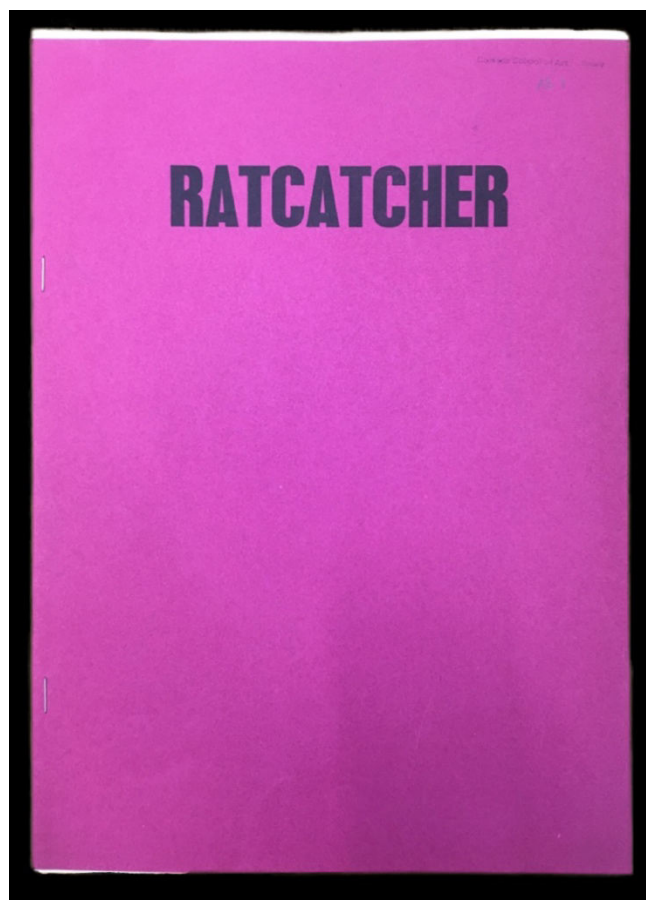


Fig. 116

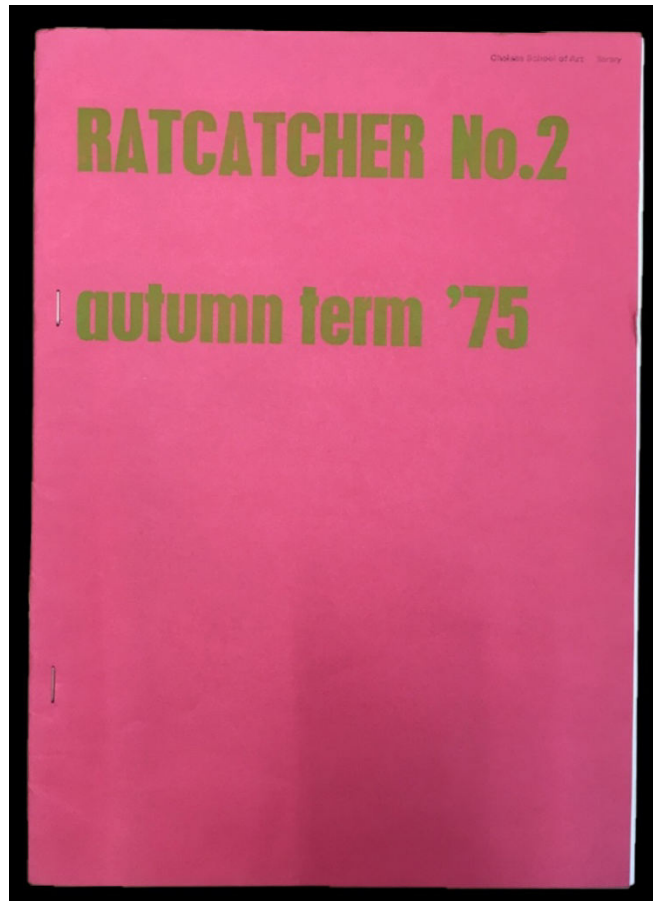


Fig. 117



Fig. 118

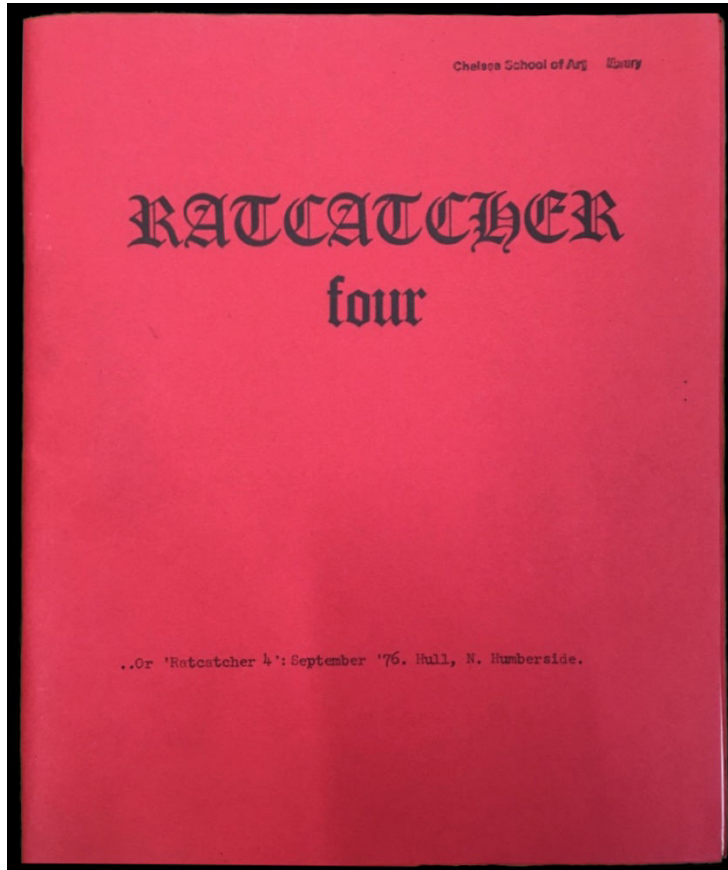


Fig. 119



Fig. 120

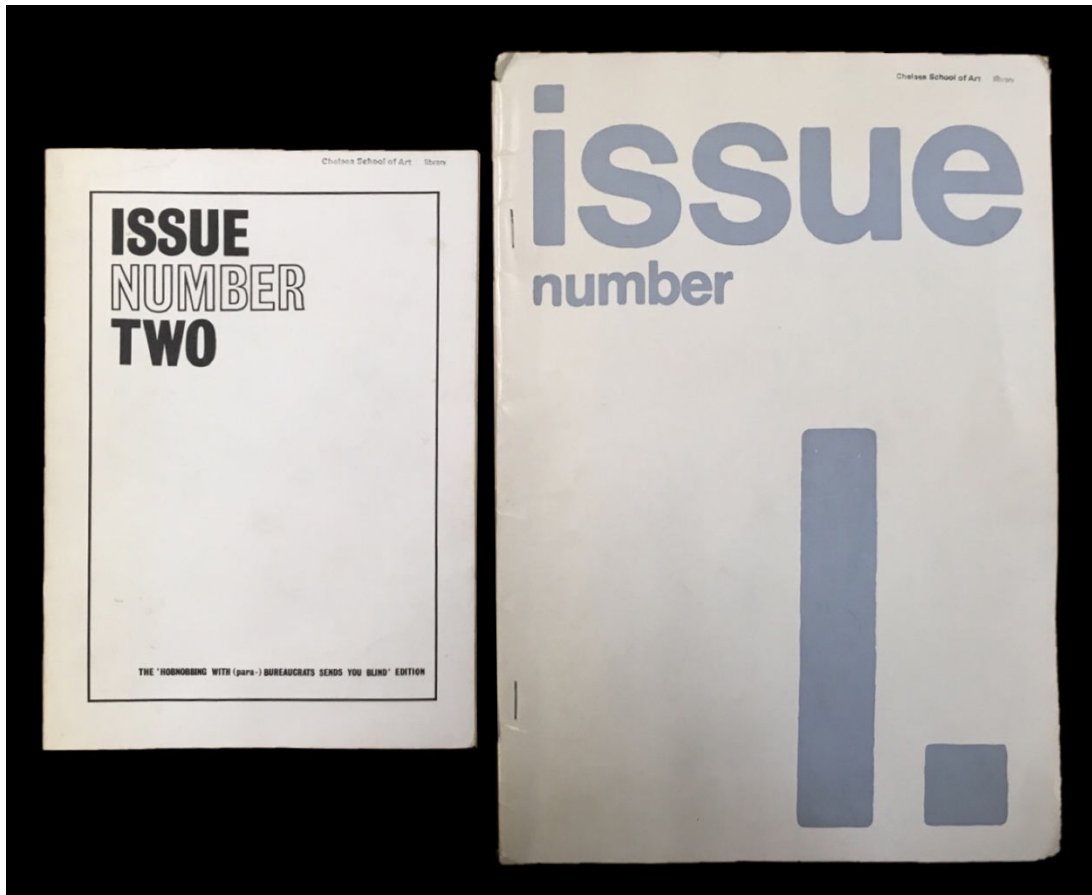


Fig. 121

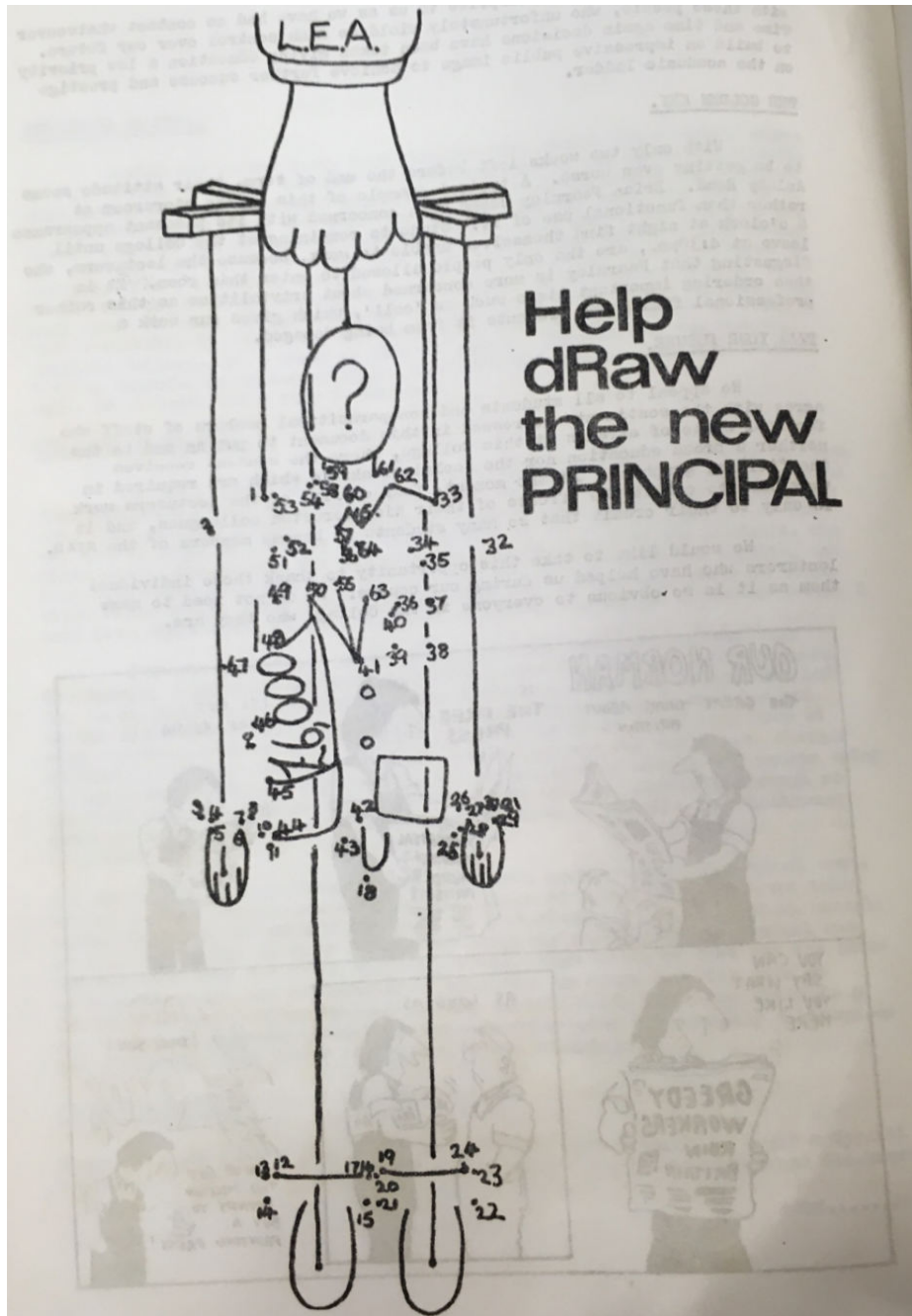


Fig. 122

NATURALISTIC FALACIES

- Education = Something i went fru at school
- Fantasies = Good bits of art
- No history = Open situation
 - Art = Therapy
- Open situa-
tion = No politics
- Talking a-
bout art = Wasting time while i could be
= doing it
- Lecturer
says I am = I am doing OK.
doing OK.
- Material
manipulat-
ion = Using my brain
- Successful
artists = Interesting artists
 - Art
- History = Having a favourite painter
 - NUS = A bunch of Marxists
- Collecti-
ve stude- = A silly parade for the benefit
nt action of newspaper photographers

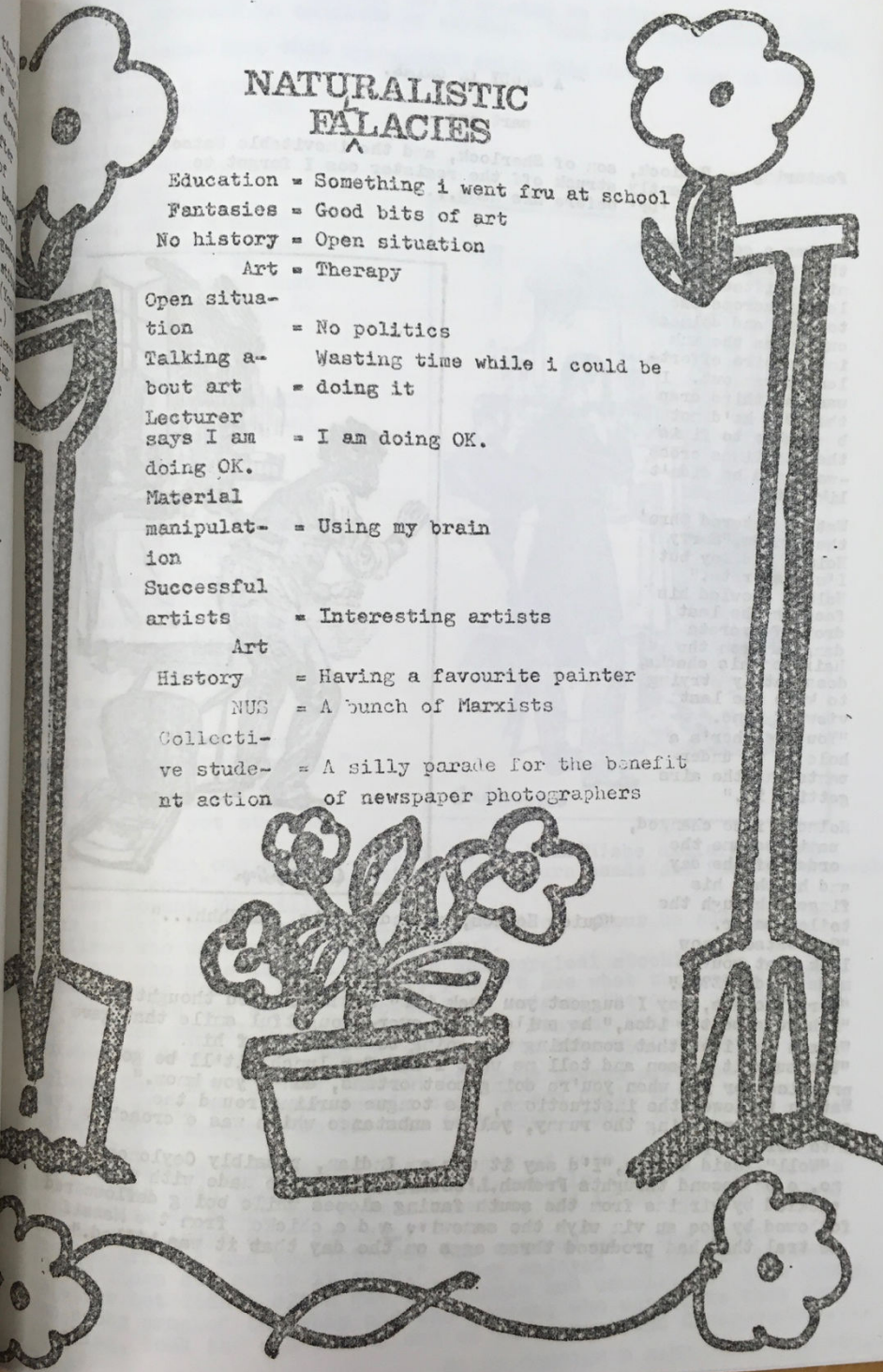
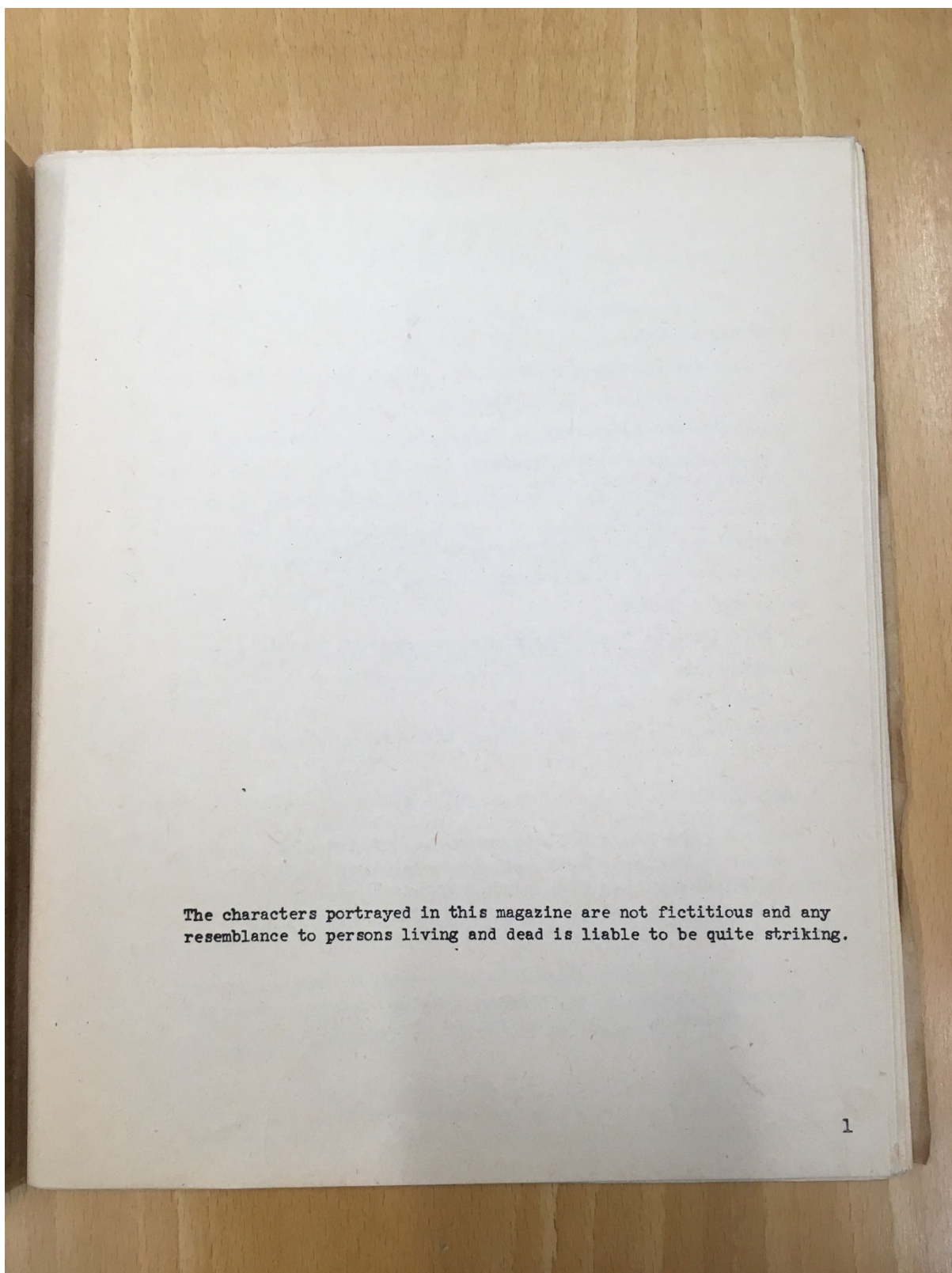


Fig. 123



The characters portrayed in this magazine are not fictitious and any resemblance to persons living and dead is liable to be quite striking.

Fig. 124

THE NOISES WITHIN
ECHO FROM A SIM-
CRACK, REMOTE AND
IDEOLOGICALLY
HOLLOW CHAMBER
OF THE EDUCATION
MACHINE: ART SCHOOL.

They comprise a mixed
bag of extracts from
magazines which flour-
ished only throughout
the authors' confinement
...

Fig. 125