



MUSEU
D'ART CONTEMPORANI
DE BARCELONA

The History of Exhibitions: Beyond the Ideology of the White Cube (part one)
Course in art and contemporary culture
Autumn 2009

This is Tomorrow

Presented by James Lingwood

19/10/2009 - MACBA Auditorium- 7 pm

*Spontaneously and democratically organised, THIS IS TOMORROW is an exhibition to prove a point. Leading British artists and architects of the younger generation have pooled their talents to prove that the ability of painters, sculptors, architects and designers to work harmoniously together did not die out with the cathedral builders or the Georgian interior decorators – as older critics and Royal Academicians maintain – but is flourishing still. Banded together in groups of three or more, they have taken over areas of the Whitechapel Gallery's empty floor space, on which to create whatever structure they please. **Lawrence Alloway***



This is Tomorrow, installation view, Group n. 2

This is Tomorrow, Whitechapel Art Gallery, 80-82 Whitechapel High Street, London
August 9 to September 9, 1956

12 groups and 37 artists : Robert Adams, Lawrence Alloway, Peter Carter, J.D.H. Catleugh, Theo Crosby, John Ernest, Germano Facetti, Ernö Goldfinger, Richard Hamilton, Adrian Heath, Nigel Henderson, Anthony Hill, Geoffrey Holroyd, James Hull, Anthony Jackson, Sarah Jackson, Kenneth Martin, Mary Martin, Richard Matthews, John McHale, Frank Newby, Eduardo Paolozzi, Victor Pasmore, Helen Phillips, Michael Pine, Toni del Renzio, Emilio Scanavino, Alison Smithson, Peter

¹ Lawrence Alloway. 'This is Tomorrow : At the Whitechapel Art Gallery, 9 August-9 September 1956' (press release of the exhibition), in ALTSHULER, Bruce (ed.). *Salon to Biennial - Exhibitions That Made Art History, vol. 1, 1863- 1959*, New York/London: Phaidon Press, 2008, p. 366.

Smithson, James Stirling, Leslie Thornton, William Turnbull, John Voelcker, John Weeks, Denis Williams, Colin St. John Wilson, Edward Wright

Curator : Theo Crosby

Total attendance : c. 19 000

An exhibition called *This is Tomorrow* – devoted to the possibilities of collaboration between architects, painters, and sculptors – might appear to be setting up a programme for the future. There are powerful precedents for placing art in a time-perspective that relies on the future to complete it. Early modern art is full of theories concerning the integration of all the arts, with realisation of the ideals scheduled for another time. But yesterday's tomorrow is not today – and the ideal of symbiotic art architecture has not been achieved.

(...) This spectator will have to receive, in addition to the overall effect, the competing messages of the dozen exhibits for, of course, the intentions of the individual groups differ from any total effect. The exhibits are the result of choices made under ordinary human conditions and not manifestations of universal laws. The freedom of the artist and architects concerned is communicated to the spectator who cannot rely on the learned responses called up by a picture in a frame, a house in a street, words on a page. As he circulates the visitor will have to adjust to the character of each exhibit (a walk through four cubes versus the sight of human symbols in a pavilion, and so on). This is a reminder of the responsibility of the spectator in the reception and interpretation of the many messages in the communications network of the whole exhibition. **Lawrence Alloway**²



The idea was that there were certain things that were new in our visual environment, such as cinema, the jukebox, Marilyn Monroe and comics. All these images from popular culture contrasted with the way we saw things that could be informed by straight - forward optical experience. The visual illusions were taken from books. They weren't decoration, they were just enlargements of images, and you felt them on that scale. So these things were put together and presented in as exciting a way as possible. The jukebox ran continuously, and people could make a choice without putting money in; but this resulted in such constant use that you never got what you wanted, because your choice would play an hour later. There were all these games with sound, optical illusion and imagery. One chamber in the fun house was even a kind of space capsule. There were portholes from science fiction which showed aliens looking through the windows. **Richard Hamilton**³

James Lingwood

Co-Director of Artangel with Michael Morris. Artangel has commissioned and produced ambitious one-off projects with contemporary artists in a range of media, from public sculpture and performance to new film and video. Amongst some 80 projects produced over the past decade and a half are Rachel Whiteread's *House* (1993-94), Matthew Barney's *The Cremaster Cycle* (1994-2002), Ilya and Emiai Kabakov's *The Palace of Projects* (1999), Michael Landy's *Break Down* (2001) in Oxford Street, Jeremy Deller's *The Battle of Orgreave* (2001) in South Yorkshire, Gregor Schneider's *Die Familie Schneider* (2004), Francis Alÿs' *Seven Walks* (2005), Roni Horn's *Vatnasafn/Library of Water* in Iceland (2007) and Roger Hiorns' *Seizure* (2008), as well as ambitious moving image installation with artists such as Kutlug Ataman, Atom Egoyan, Douglas Gordon, Steve McQueen and Tony Oursler. In 2006, Artangel produced *The Margate Exodus*, a reimagining of the Old Testament book of Exodus in an English seaside town. One centre-piece of this multi-faceted project was the 25 metre high *Waste Man*, conceived by Antony Gormley, constructed by the local community and burnt in public. In addition to his work with Artangel, Lingwood has curated exhibitions for national and international arts institutions including, Juan Muñoz's *Double Bind* (2001) in Tate Modern's Turbine Hall, *Field Trips – Robert Smithson* and *Bernd and Hilla Becher* at the Museu Serralves in Porto and Douglas Gordon's

² Lawrence Alloway, Reyner Banham, David Lewis. *This is Tomorrow*, London: Whitechapel Art Gallery, 1956, np.

³ From an interview with Richard Hamilton by Hans-Ulrich Obrist, 'Pop Daddy', Tate Magazine, Issue 4, (March April 2003), <http://www.tate.org.uk/magazine/issue4/popdaddy.htm>

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- MASSEY, Anne. *Back to the Future: Hamilton and the Independent Group*, lecture at Tate Gallery, 10 July 1992
- *Website dedicated to the Independent Group: <http://www.independentgroup.org.uk>
- *Whitechapel archives : <http://www.whitechapelgallery.org/archive> (contain correspondence with artists, galleries and owners, files about hanging, catalogue, transport, sponsorship, insurance and condition reports)
- *Exhibitions involving *This is Tomorrow*: *This is Tomorrow Today* (Clocktower gallery, New York, 1987), *The Independent Group : Postwar Britain and the Aesthetics of Plenty* (MOCA, Los Angeles; the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA), London; the University Art Museum (UAM), Berkeley; Instituto Valenciano de Arte Moderno, Centro Julio Gonzalez, Valencia, 1990-1991), *Introspective* (MACBA, Barcelone; Ludwig Museum, Cologne, 2003)

Document edited and compiled by Florence Ostende

References of images : ROBINS, David (ed). *The Independent Group : Postwar Britain and the Aesthetics of Plenty*, Cambridge, Mass.; London: MIT Press, 1990, p.138 (installation view, Group n. 2) p. 49 (Robbie the Robot with Lawrence Alloway on the right at the opening), p. 136 (floorplan showing the location of the 12 groups).