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**Architecture, Media and Archives: The Fun Palace of Joan  
Littlewood and Cedric Price as a Cultural Project**

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September 2020



## Contents

Abstract.....	1
INTRODUCTION .....	1
What is the Fun Palace?.....	1
Research context.....	14
Synopsis .....	19
Genesis.....	22
Acknowledgements.....	27
PART 1: MEDIA PRODUCTION.....	29
<b>Chapter 1: Marginalia as Anti-Publicity: <i>Sigma Portfolio</i> and <i>Bubble City</i>. Ludic Sites for a Mobile Fun Palace Project .....</b>	<b>31</b>
‘Joan Littlewood Presents ....’ within the <i>Sigma Portfolio</i> .....	34
<i>Bubble City</i> and the evolution of the playground idea .....	44
<b>Chapter 2: From Filmed Pleasure to Fun Palace.....</b>	<b>55</b>
Stage One: Documenting Pleasure .....	62
Stage Two: Releasing Pleasure .....	67
Epilogue: Broadcasting Pleasure.....	72
<b>Chapter 3: Grids: Self-organisation and Excess .....</b>	<b>75</b>
The Idea of Self-organisation in Britain 1960s.....	75
Servicing Network.....	80
Chart.....	82
Index .....	85
Programme .....	89
Operational Delirium .....	92
Vertigo .....	98
<b>Chapter 4: Journals: an Archive for Stratford Fair.....</b>	<b>101</b>
The Agency of Media .....	105
The Playground in Instalments .....	108
Recording and Reporting to the Archive .....	111

PART 2: THE RECEPTION OF THE FUN PALACE .....	115
<b>Preamble: Charting the Field .....</b>	<b>119</b>
<b>Chapter 5: Press Cuttings. News from the British Sixties .....</b>	<b>125</b>
Fun Palace is News, 1963-1966.....	127
The construction of a media persona .....	151
<b>Chapter 6: Scholarly Discourse .....</b>	<b>159</b>
The Alterity of Indeterminacy, 1960s and early 1970s.....	159
Constitution of the Fun Palace Archive.....	174
Price-Centered Scholarship since 1999 .....	183
Joan Littlewood in Scholars' Accounts .....	205
Conclusions .....	207
Postscript. Occupations? .....	210
<b>Chapter 7: Other News. Carnival Time .....</b>	<b>215</b>
News from the Stratford Fair, 1960s and 1970s .....	215
Keith Albarn's Fun Palace, 1968 .....	220
Activism and the Reception of Stratford Fair since 1990s .....	225
Conclusion .....	238
CONCLUSIONS: MEDIA AS CULTURAL PRODUCTION .....	241
List of Figures .....	255
Bibliography and Sources .....	260
Archives Consulted.....	260
Interviews.....	260
Online Resources .....	260
Books and Periodicals .....	264
Appendix 1 .....	273
Joan Littlewood: In Conversation with Murray Melvin.....	273
Appendix 2.....	286
Fun Palace Reception Index and Chart.....	286

## **Abstract**

This research represents a new kind of critical investigation of the renowned Fun Palace as a complex cultural project, one that exceeds its remarkable architectural significance. The Fun Palace maps an extensive network of practices and agencies involved in the project's complex constitution and constant regeneration. Initiated in London 1961 as an interdisciplinary collaboration between radical theatre entrepreneur Joan Littlewood and architect Cedric Price, it engaged main personalities throughout its development up until 1975, such as cyberneticist Gordon Pask, engineer Frank Newby, journalist Tom Driberg and trustee Buckminster Fuller, amongst other. It aimed to construct situations in which self-directed, pleasure-led and open exchange could transform mass-audiences into active citizens. By 1964 the Fun Palace had gained momentum, and a giant cybernetic infrastructure featured within the Civic Trust's plans for Lea Valley. By the end of the decade, and under the leadership of Littlewood, the idea was reconstituted into local activism to engage Stratford youth amidst violent redevelopment in the area neighbouring Theatre Royal, where Littlewood's Theatre Workshop was based. Over and above, the struggle for a site in the institutional map of London prompted the realization of the Fun Palace as a media event. Broadsheets, films, journals, grids and press cuttings, all these media actively produced and disseminated the Fun Palace's distinctive cultural agenda of emancipation through pleasure in Britain in the 1960s and early 70s. Meanwhile, an excited architectural scholarship celebrated the challenge that the Fun Palace issued to the determinism of modern architecture and planning.

Paying close attention to the role of Joan Littlewood in the project, this research analyses the conditions of production, circulation, storage and reception of these media as a way to unpack the complexity embedded in the Fun Palace's cultural agenda. On one hand, the radical plurality, ephemerality and dynamism of the project reflects transformations in British society from the immediate postwar period across the 1960s and 1970s and the pressures that these exerted upon interrelated areas of cultural production – architecture, theatre, education, leisure, (mass) media, and information and communication technologies. On the other hand, the analysis of the distinctive periodization and the modalities of the Fun Palace reception during its fifty-year long history and up until today, questions the agency of the uneven Fun Palace archive. Ultimately, through the interrogation of all this situated activity and agency, I argue for the central role that media plays in the constitution of the Fun Palace's complex cultural agenda.



## INTRODUCTION

### What is the Fun Palace?

*What is the "Fun Palace"?*

*If to play is to employ oneself in satisfying curiosity, vanity or pride, exercising the imagination, attempting new skills and making new decisions, then the Fun Palace is a playground. If it is acknowledged that the failure to develop human potential is not due to inborn apathy in the individual but lack of incentives and the overpowering effect of environments & educational systems which were not designed to release initiative but to stifle it, then the installation of testing grounds for more subtle systems is an urgent requirement.*

*19<sup>th</sup> century society worked on the principle of "higher education" for a minority, and that education designed merely to perpetuate the status quo; museums & art centres were built "to form & promote a taste for the beautiful...humanise, educate and refine practical and laborious people". These concepts have not changed and our society is perpetuating obsolete forms in which human energy can no longer be contained. The most important aspects of human development are still ignored by town planners and the problem of alleviating human misery, despair and apathy is so acute that every skilled teacher, cybernetician and artist must be recruited for the war on dullness [...]*

*Fun Palaces aim to extend the range of everyday activity, human-reagents will work on the sites to discover latent talents & qualities on which there has been no value set till now. Games & toys for learning and playing will be devised for people for all ages. Each site will arrange space for the pleasure of the users rather than establish a static design. It is not possible to create a proto-type, each site will soon prove a launching platform for more subtle experiment [...]*

Handwritten by Joan Littlewood, the rhetorical question 'What is the "Fun Palace"?' opens this draft report for Camden Pilot Project, one of the various Fun Palace developments aimed to – the report specifies - 'use of an area of public open space as a pilot project - in

content and operation – for some of the aspects of the “Fun Palace”.<sup>1</sup> In this, the playground is identified as the model for the Fun Palace’s cultural project, one aimed to the activation of everybody’s human potential through play and discovery as an alternative to prevailing elitist and static, and thus obsolete, forms of education for a minority.

### **What is the Fun Palace?**

The Fun Palace had received its premier in the British weekly magazine *New Scientist*, 14<sup>th</sup> May 1964. For ‘A laboratory of Fun by Joan Littlewood’, an invited contribution to the series ‘The World in 1984’, the theatre producer Joan Littlewood and the architect Cedric Price constructed the first public image of the idea. An axonometric line drawing of a spatial structure is described in the caption as an ‘isometric diagram showing full width and two out of the 14 bays in the length of the complex.’<sup>2</sup> Mottos such as ‘a university of the streets’, ‘a laboratory of pleasure’ and ‘a short-life toy’ animate the pithy statement that runs next to the drawing to introduce the overarching social ambition of the project: ‘Politicians and educators, talking about increased leisure, mostly assume that people are so numb, or servile, that the hours in which they earn money can be made little more than hygienically bearable, while a new awareness is cultivated during the hours of leisure. This is to underestimate the future (...).’<sup>3</sup> Joan Littlewood anticipates some glimpses of the Fun Palace’s project: the ‘fun arcade’ with technologies diverted from industry or war, ‘a science playground’ for lecture-demonstrations, ‘a plastic area’ for craft-making, ‘an acting area’. However, she advises: ‘the essence of the place will be its informality: nothing is obligatory, anything goes.’ In so doing, she extends a practice thoroughly cultivated in her ensemble Theatre Workshop: ‘there will be no rigid division between performers and audience – a generalisation of the technique used in Theatre Workshop for many years.’<sup>4</sup>

### **What is the Fun Palace?**

Theatre Workshop, a touring ensemble directed by Joan Littlewood and Ewan MacColl and founded in 1945, settled in the old Victorian Theatre Royal in Stratford, East London, February 1953. Theatre Workshop’s productions drew on the tradition of intense experimentation with avant-garde drama techniques – from Konstantin Stanilavsky’s

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<sup>1</sup> DR1995:0188:525:005:010, Cedric Price fonds CCA.

<sup>2</sup> Joan Littlewood and Cedric Price, ‘A Laboratory of Fun’, *New Scientist*, 14 May 1964, 432.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, 432.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, 433.

systemic psycho-physical approach to acting to Bertolt Brecht's epic theatre, amongst others – to tackle live social issues. Theatre Workshop grew out of Theatre Union, MacColl's and Littlewood's professional theatre formed in 1935 around a more nuanced political agenda than the agit-prop tradition in which MacColl was initiated and that still percolated through Littlewood and MacColl's short-lived Theatre of Action of 1934. 'The Theatre Union says' – as written in its manifesto - 'that in facing up to the problems of our time and by intensifying our efforts to get at the essence of reality, we are also attempting to solve our own theatrical problems both technical and ideological (...) the future of theatre, a future which will not be born in the genteel atmosphere of retirement and seclusion, but rather in the clash and turmoil of the battles between the oppressors and the oppressed.'<sup>5</sup>

In her autobiography, Joan Littlewood recalls the first impression of the East London premises that they secured for £20 a week: 'enormous gloomy space (...) dress circle, stalls, four boxes, two on either side of the proscenium arch and gallery. Neglected, decaying, but graceful.'<sup>6</sup> The first refusal of support through public funds arrived shortly, when the local borough turned down the company's proposition to become Newham's Civic Theatre. Produced with the barest minimum of resources, Joan Littlewood's radically experimental theatre would often be acclaimed abroad, although it was less so at home. 1950s productions of Shakespeare such as *Richard II* were praised by Russian theatre critics for, in this case, its 'freshness, honesty and impassioned craftsmanship'.<sup>7</sup> Littlewood's productions of *Volpone* and *Arden of Feversham* represented Britain at the 2<sup>nd</sup> International Festival of Theatre in Paris in 1955. Of the latter, the drama correspondent of *The Tribune* declared: 'I feel sure no English producer can surpass Miss Joan Littlewood at her best: the simplicity and economy of the sets, the lucidity and force of the speaking, the avoidance of gentility and prettiness – these are English virtues, though they be not much evidence elsewhere.'<sup>8</sup> Subtitled 'A British People's Theatre', the Theatre Workshop's self-published manifesto of 1958 confirmed its social agenda: 'Theatre Workshop is a company which survives critics and crisis by having the courage of its convictions. Among these is the belief that the art of theatre is still capable of development; that this art can and will be a necessary part of people's lives; that theatre should be grand, vulgar, simple, pathetic ... but not genteel, not poetical.'<sup>9</sup> The ambition to engage the local youth as part of Theatre Workshop's cultural

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<sup>5</sup> Stanley Mathews, *From Agit-Prop to Free Space: The Architecture of Cedric Price* (London: Black Dog Publ. Ltd., 2007), 54.

<sup>6</sup> Joan Littlewood, *Joan's Book: Joan Littlewood's Peculiar History as She Tells It* (London: Methuen, 1994), 440.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, 454.

<sup>8</sup> Theatre Workshop Manifesto, p. 5. TRSE Archive Collection.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, Introduction.

mission, would lead to the formation of a Children's Theatre on Saturdays and a Supporters' Club in 1954.<sup>10</sup>

While Theatre Workshop's sparkling comedies on vital themes made their way to London's West End theatres, these productions didn't arouse the sympathy of the Arts Council of Great Britain nor their funding. The list is long: the life in prison of *The Quare Fellow* and that of an English hostage in Ireland of *The Hostage*, both by playwright Brendan Behan; the working conditions on the building site represented in *You Won't Always Be on Top* by Henry Chapman; the complicated life of a pregnant teenager in *A Taste of Honey* by Shelagh Delaney; and the Cockney street-life musical *Fings Ain't Wot They Used T'Be* by Frank Norman. The transfers of these productions to West End theatres would shatter the company and strain Littlewood's efforts to keep the Theatre Workshop's programme at the Royal afloat. By 1960 she was claiming to have given up the theatre. However, after a venture into film with an adaptation of Theatre Workshop's *Sparrows Can't Sing, Oh, What a Lovely War!* was premiered at the Royal in February 1963. The musical, in which life in the trenches was recounted through a choreography of clown-pierrots and backed by news reels that reported the figures of World War I casualties, was internationally acclaimed. It debuted in New York in 1964 and was adapted for film in 1969. However, in the early 1960s Littlewood's energy was channelled towards the developing Fun Palace idea as an alternative to the shortcomings of institutionalised theatre in the Britain of the time.

*1961 was the year I met Cedric Price' – Littlewood recalls in her autobiography – 'the young architect with the keen mind and an interest in accommodating change. When I'd blown off steam about the current vogue for quaint old theatres, he hadn't said much, but had gone away and designed the "Fun Palace".'<sup>11</sup> Littlewood goes on to describe her first encounter with Price's drawing. It was 'almost inexplicable. I could make out filigree towers, varied areas at different levels, there were galleries, gantries and escalators – it looked airborne. "Can it be kept clean?"/ "It's a self-washing giant"/ "And those things?"/ "Moving walkways and catwalks. No, you are pointing at the radial escalators. They can be steered"/ "It is not easy to read"/ "It's a mobile, not a water-colour. And I am rather busy"/ "Good. I'll be off"/ I wanted to tell him I'd found the ideal site for the Palace, Glengall, on the Isle of Dogs (...) "There's six acres of disused land on the riverside" / It was no use trying to tell the Arc. He was puffing at his cigar*

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 3.

<sup>11</sup> Littlewood, *Joan's Book*, 701.

*with his head down, but the more I thought about it....land, by the tidal river  
– and that river the Sweet Thames.*<sup>12</sup>

Littlewood recalls how the name came up during a telephone call she made to Price in the middle of the production of *Oh, What a Lovely War!*: “How are you?” / “Working, and I think I have the name for your mobile” / “What is it?” / “The Fun Palace. It’s so wrong, it’s right” / “I’ll think about it, while you get on with it”. I hung up. When Gerry came home I wanted so much to talk about the ideas behind the Fun Palace (I quite liked that name) but he was only interested in his War play’.<sup>13</sup>

### **What is the Fun Palace?**

When I put the question to Theatre Workshop member and honorary archivist of Theatre Royal Stratford East, Murray Melvin, in December 2014 he succinctly situated the Fun Palace in direct response to the material and social conditions that surrounded Littlewood’s daily life in the Theatre Royal Stratford East: ‘It’s basis was science. Although it was fun. She used many scientific things to educate, especially for mathematics. She was cybernetic-mad [...] The Fun Palace came out of the children in this area, the poor children, you know, fifty or so years ago. She started organising the children. She was doing street things with the children [...] An out of that came the Fun Palace, as a bigger, a vast [...]. The Fun Palace has always been there in the back of her brain. However, it started with these kids.’<sup>14</sup>

### **What is the Fun Palace?**

In an informative obituary following the homage-symposium ‘Aiming to Miss’, held at the Architectural Association, London, in November 2003, the architectural patron and collector Niall Hobhouse framed the alterity of Price’s work within the architectural profession as the ‘the long-run Cedric Price project’.<sup>15</sup> And at its apex he situated the Fun Palace. Hobhouse defined the Fun Palace as an ever-expanding programme, whose restlessness wore out its architectural edges and distributed its authorship. Its life sprang out of the range of ambitions it united but never exposed in constructed form: ‘It seemed to me’ – claimed Hobhouse – ‘that the Fun Palace was famous because it was never built. Or rather that the almost infinite broadening of the programme, and the relentless effacement of the designer that went with

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid, 701–2.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 675.

<sup>14</sup> Authorised interview with Murray Melvin, 9 December 2014.

<sup>15</sup> Niall Hobhouse et al., ‘Cedric Price Disappears’, *AA Files*, no. 50 (2004): 73.

it, led, both in a sort of formal *reductio*, and also, in fact, to its not being built'.<sup>16</sup> 'Not-building' was Price's life-long radical form of practice, for the urge to build would always be subordinated to providing a timely response, but one whose form was always an open-ended process of inquiry. Thus, Hobhouse recalled how he and Price formally executed and succeeded in his last commission: 'together we built nothing (...) Like the Fun Palace, the true originality of the project lay in its proceeding towards abstraction. It was always less of a building than a diagram – an open structure for the display and orchestration of ideas, on which its designer could hang new ones as he found them, and wherever it suited him. By this familiar and tireless process the fabric nevertheless became denser and more solid by degrees – and the figure of the architect beyond harder and harder to make out'.<sup>17</sup>

### What is the Fun Palace?

The Canadian Centre for Architecture (CCA) in Montreal is a renowned international research centre and gallery committed to critically exploring architecture's history and cultures. In 1995, the Cedric Price fonds – which is currently reported as the most in-demand collection amongst researchers and which includes the majority of the Fun Palace materials – was constituted there. The archive's 'finding aid' describes the Fun Palace initiative thus: 'the Fun Palace Project, an interactive and adaptable, educational and cultural complex to be located in London, England. The project was commissioned by Joan Littlewood, to be erected on disused public land slated for redevelopment and intended to be dismantled after 10 years.'<sup>18</sup> Produced predominantly between 1961 and 1974, the archive provides as well an alternative media-based description: '275 drawings; 228 reprographic copies; 20 panels; 1 artefact; 1 film reel; 1 roll; 1.13 l.m. textual records; 0.04 l.m. photographic materials.'<sup>19</sup> Such a range diversifies further when one meets the letters, minutes, draft reports, memos, notes, telegrams, punch cards, questionnaires and press cuttings that crowd the project's textual records boxes. Not equalled in other projects, the Fun Palace media constitutes a key indicator of the complexity embedded in its production.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 71.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 73.

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.cca.qc.ca/en/archives/380477/cedric-price-fonds/396839/projects/399301/fun-palace-project#fa-obj-310194>.

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.cca.qc.ca/en/archives/380477/cedric-price-fonds/396839/projects/399301/fun-palace-project>

<sup>20</sup> In particular, the film reveals itself as a singular feature of the Fun Palace initiative when looking at other main projects of Cedric Price's office. For instance, the 'extent and medium' of Price's built Inter-Action Centre (1971) is described as '403 reprographic copies; 219 drawings; 16 maps; 5 panels; 3 models; 2.43 l.m. textual records; 0.16 l.m. photographs'; Generator's (1976) as '361 reprographic copies; 260 drawings; 10 artefacts; 6 models; 3 files; 0.65 l.m. of textual records; 0.03 l.m. of photographic materials'.  
<https://www.cca.qc.ca/en/archives/380477/cedric-price-fonds/396839/projects>.

## Where is the Fun Palace?

*The Fun Palace was wherever Joan was.*<sup>21</sup>

The reformulation of the opening question suggested by this comment of Theatre Workshop member Ken Campbell, included in Peter Rankin's biography of Joan Littlewood *Dreams and Realities*, became a guide for me within the exuberance of the Cedric Price fonds. I arrived at CCA on April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2015. During an intense three-week research visit, I could peruse an important range of materials – from archival records related to a number of Price's projects, his lectures and sections of his library – in the centre's comfortable and quiet reading room and with the exquisite attention and support of the staff at the Collection department. I was however far from exhausting the excesses of Cedric Price fonds by the time I left. My scrutiny of the archive's finding aid, in preparation for the research visit, gave a first clue as to where the explicit and implicit presence of Joan Littlewood might be traced, both in the 'Fun Palace Project' file as well as in other sections of the archive. For instance, attention to several records related to Stratford Fair were identified in the Fun Palace Project's textual records' box DR1995:0188:525:004: '(...) draft notes on Children's Learning Garden, financial record of Summer Fair 1974, planning application forms, sketches of temporary project at Salway and Great Eastern Roads, grant application, questionnaire, report on land redevelopment, "Bubble City" publication by Joan Littlewood, renovation proposal for Theatre Royal, poster, kids village colouring book, and application for children's playground.'<sup>22</sup> The finding aid also implied potential relations between the Fun Palace and projects such as: "Donmar", a rehearsal studio in Covent Garden, London, for the Fun Palace Trust', "Open Space Utilisation Programme E15 (OSUP)" for client Joan Littlewood'; and 'Tunisia (report on Tourism)', the latter included in a 'Early Work and Miscellaneous Records' section.<sup>23</sup> In fact, it would be those situations in which Littlewood evaded the finding aid that her characteristic hand-writing would erupt and bring the nicest surprises to the daily routine at the archive – for instance, a humorous handwritten memo in one of Price's typical pre-formatted office sheets from the Oxford Corner House project, which finding aid notes 'drawings, correspondence, specifications, contract document, reports, feasibility studies, sketches, diagrams, office memoranda, notes, minutes of meetings, list of files, and list of

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<sup>21</sup> Peter Rankin, *Dreams and Realities*: The Official Biography. (London: Oberon, 2014), 252.

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.cca.qc.ca/en/archives/380477/cedric-price-fonds/396839/projects/399301/fun-palace-project.CCA>.

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.cca.qc.ca/en/archives/380477/cedric-price-fonds/396839/projects>.

REF. OL. CON. COME. HERE

TO Re Communications report,  
SEE - HEAR - OR NEAR. #3

WHERE

MEMORANDUM ENQUIRY FOR THE ATTENTION OF GRAND-... RC NUN

COPIES TO: GOD THEOPHRASTUS - BOMBASTUS - PARACLAUSUS WILFRYD WERBURGH TRUVIUS OTTO HARP.

DATE PLANE TO VRS LIFE REMAINING. OUR REF. NUT. SACHL. YOUR REF. CARGE - HOLE. SEE. IN HOUSES

PAGES + BRIDES SHOULD BE NUMB-LOADED. See LASLITE - WIGNER (NOBBIE) T.B.P.↑ WHATS THE USE OF SYSTEM USING AND PADS ONLY (PAPER) (SODAS) A LITTLE MAG. THINK COULD INCLUDE ONE OR TWO LESS OLD - PAPER - ARCHIVES. NOT ABOUT MOONS - GALAXIES SCANDAL - CORNERS AND THE CORNER OF THE STREET THE OTHER PATTERNS ON EACH HANOR. YES.↑

PHIL EX. SEBAG'S BEST SHOP - THROG LANE CLUBS MUST GO. THIS REPORT WAS WRITTEN BY AN "INTELLIGENT MURK DRIVEN BY AN ASTY WASP AND SOME PAGES ARE SPHATIALIZED WITH NEGATIVES THIS DOES NOT EXIST G.P.O. TALK IP - RINTERS HET-CCO-CILA. "Oh the barely expectalists"

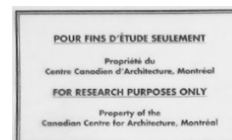
B'DWAY Ho P CHURCHALL PD - NAUSEA. yep. { I THINK I COULD SUGGEST IF I HAD A CO. SO WISH.

CARRIAGES - FERRY - RINGS. ? NEW WORLD PLEASE. AND WERBURGH (ST) WAS MORE GAY THAN THIS DEFINITION. yep.

WILL PEOPLE PAY FOR WORKY OR ACTIVITIES ? LIST OF DELIGHTS STARTS AGAIN AT END SAME OLD GAMES SORRY TO SAY PEOPLES WILL HAVE TO BE TOLD WHAT TO ASK - OR SUGGESTIONS MADE ABC HOW TO ASK, WHAT TO ASK, STIMULATORS NEEDED

SIGNED NO. WHERE CHECKED BY yep - first stage

**FIGURE I.1:** 'REF.OL.CON.COME.HERE' memo, Oxford Corner House Feasibility Study, c.1965. Folder DR1995:0224:342:002, Cedric Price fonds, Canadian Centre for Architecture (CCA).



consultants.<sup>24</sup> Addressed to 'Le Grand Anti-Arc' and referenced to 'OL.CON.COME.HERE' – a play of words on the acronym for the Oxford Corner House – she warns of the parasitic 'con' built-in the brief 'All Can Come Here' and offers her timely critique of this 'communications report' commissioned by 'Oh the lovely capitalists'<sup>25</sup>. In it, Littlewood appears to foresee traces of obsolete thinking in the misrepresentation of universally accessible pleasures within the framework of a profit-driven enterprise of the tea company Lyons & Co – 'cake hole', to which Price cannot but concur with his humble annotations 'yep' or 'yes - first stage'<sup>26</sup> [FIGURE I.1]. Littlewood's distinctive calligraphy became soon a rubric for the Fun Palace within Price's archive. Among the lectures' folders there is an uncanny drawing annotated by Littlewood in the reverse. Titled 'Stanley Tiegerman & Richard Haas',<sup>27</sup> apparently it relates to the visionary project Great American Cemetery, the outcome of the collaboration between architect and muralist and commissioned for the centennial project of the Architectural League in New York, March 1981 [FIGURE I.2].<sup>28</sup> 'Worried that you missed this masterpiece of architectural necrophilia' – writes Littlewood to Price to share her hesitant attendance to a forthcoming hearing. She adds: 'J.L, not as Ga-Ga as presented'. The drawing situates her note in 1981. On 24 March, 1981, Cartoonist Richard Cole had portrayed her energetic figure protecting a standalone Theatre Royal for *The Telegraph Sunday Magazine* article 'Where is Joan Littlewood?' [FIGURE 6.6]. The note to Price reckons Littlewood's personal struggle of preserving Theatre Royal amidst ongoing redevelopment plans in Stratford and after the death of her partner and Theatre Workshop manager Gerry Raffles in 1975. She closes the note 'Fear + dread having to appear personally on the 13<sup>th</sup> [June]. Shall I, Shan't I? It's just what these 2 wretches want – it might terminate this expensive nightmare but – publicity – I hate it'.<sup>29</sup> Encountering such an archival record is an event in itself and elicits further interrogation about her ambivalent attitude towards media, a key institution that she grudgingly accepted as constituent of British society. Meanwhile it also registers the enduring collaboration between Littlewood and Price, initiated with the Fun Palace.

The search for Littlewood's archival records would also lead me towards other institutions. A revelatory compilation of heterogeneous footage related to Joan Littlewood held at the

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<sup>24</sup> DR1995:0224:342:002, Cedric Price fonds, CCA. <https://www.cca.qc.ca/en/archives/380477/cedric-price-fonds/396839/projects/402952/och-feasibility-study>

<sup>25</sup> DR1995:0224:342:002, Cedric Price fonds, CCA. <https://www.cca.qc.ca/en/archives/380477/cedric-price-fonds/396839/projects/402952/och-feasibility-study>

<sup>26</sup> Folder DR1995:0224:342:002, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

<sup>27</sup> 'Sub-series: Lectures, conferences (Inc. T.V & Radio) 1955-2003', Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

<sup>28</sup> Paul Goldberg, 'Design Architecture; a Meeting of Artistic Minds', *New York Times Magazine*, 1 March 1981.

<sup>29</sup> Folder DR2004:1430, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

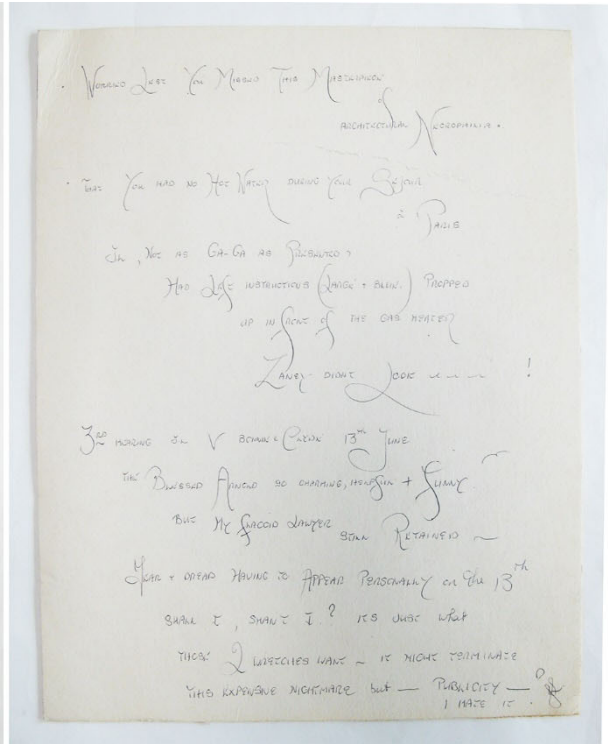
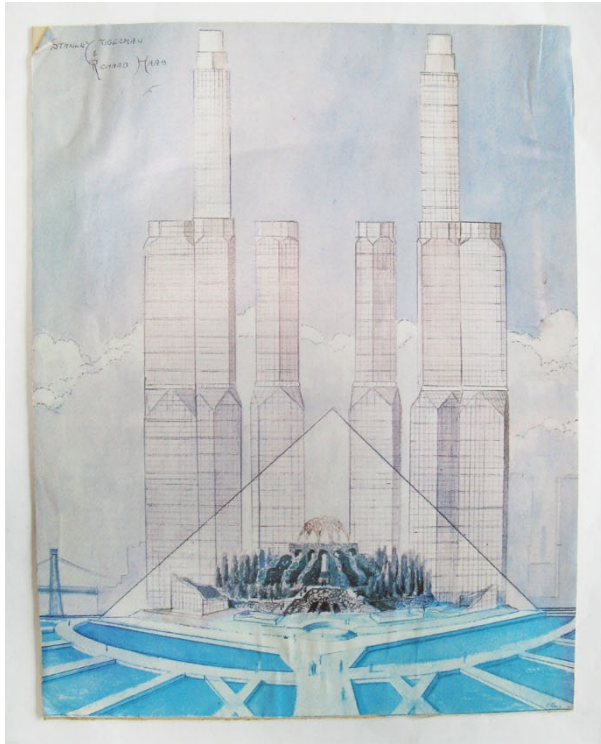


FIGURE I.2: 'Stanley Tiegerman & Richard Haas' memo. Folder DR2004:1430, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

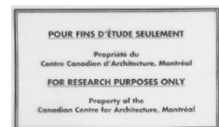


FIGURE I.3: 'Joan Littlewood Compilation', 27 August 2008, British Film Institute National Archive.

British Film Institute conveys the main role local children played in the whole Fun Palace project [FIGURE I.3]. In it, an interesting edit-out scene shows three children dressed in pierrot costumes improvising with a suitcase and drum in a waste ground. They are first shown sitting on a pile of rubble and watching – the cameraman briefly pans to them. Apparently cast as extras, they mime the scene scripted for the Fun Palace film, one in which three Fun Palace clowns – Victor Spinetti, Barbara Windsor and Brian Murphy – play with the props. The compilation includes as well excerpts from a television broadcast related to Bubble City – the Fun Palace related fund raising event that Littlewood organised for the City of London Festival in 1968 – showing Londoners of all ages bouncing at their leisure amidst inflatables in Tower Square.<sup>30</sup>

I scheduled several visits to Theatre Royal Stratford East between 2014 and 2015. Even if the body of archival material found there was, to my surprise, significantly shallower than the robust collection held in Cedric Price fonds at CCA, the whole research experience was permeated by alternative, live stimuli. After a brief introduction in December 2014, Murray Melvin received me on February 2015, when he led me through the intricate premises before leaving me with the four folders of the Fun Palace that this archive holds and a nice cup of tea. The following day he attended my questions and showed me photographic material from Theatre Workshop and its booklet manifesto. The conversation run next to 'The Joan Littlewood's Library', a three column full-height wooden structure with books arranged in over 26 thematic categories – topics are as varied as 'dance', 'philosophy', 'science', 'folklore & English customs' or 'art, architecture & design', alongside 'theatre', 'plays' and 'literature'. The direct experience of the place that triggered the Fun Palace idea situated many preoccupations of Littlewood. The Victorian Theatre Royal, with its fixed stalls and accessible stage, reverberated the struggle for a more fluid audience-actor interaction, one that she overcame with her programme of 'rolling entertainment', as friend and biographer of Littlewood Peter Rankin has argued.<sup>31</sup> Rather than a mecca, Littlewood's stage was a hallway where actors would first meet their audience on their way to the dressing rooms – and they could catch up after the show in the lively bar at ground level. Running with an all-day licence during the 1970s – as Murray Melvin noted – the bar offered locals in distress due to redevelopment, a place to cobble together their identity.<sup>32</sup> A generic shopping mall wraps today Theatre Royal and shelters your way to the underground station. I stayed around for the evening show *Oh What a Lovely War!* which mis-en-scene brought to life the beginnings of the Fun Palace.

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<sup>30</sup> 'Joan Littlewood Compilation', 27/08/2008, 92 min, 16/35mm, col/bw, pos/neg mt/com, British Film Institute National Archive.

<sup>31</sup> Rankin, *Dreams and Realities*, 174.

<sup>32</sup> Murray Melvin, authorised interview with the author, 3 February 2015.

Even in this small sample, the range of descriptions and reflections orbiting around the Fun Palace reveal a differentiated material production. Historically situated, the Fun Palace maps an extensive network of practices and agencies involved in the project's active constitution and constant regeneration. Joan Littlewood and Cedric Price are main protagonists, but so are institutions such as Theatre Workshop [since the 1950s], the British Press [during the 1960s] and the CCA [since the late 1990s], amongst others and alongside many individuals. The Fun Palace, as the title of my research claims, is an intricate cultural project that operated in London between 1961 and 1975, which is not reducible to any building programme. The noun 'project' refers to a systematically designed and dynamic set of practices and associated events that resist unification, while their 'cultural' quality embodies the radical complexity on which the initiative thrived, one that expanded its still significant architectural expression.

A keyword for the British cultural theorist Raymond Williams, this conceptualization of 'culture' problematizes the aesthetized domain of the arts in favour of a more porous system of reference grounded in the whole way of life in a particular society. In studying the complexity of meanings historically attached to the word 'culture', Williams differentiates three usages: '(i) the independent and abstract noun which describes a general process of intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic development, from C18; (ii) the independent noun, whether used generally or specifically, which indicates a particular way of life, whether of people, a period, a group, or humanity in general (...); (iii) the independent and abstract noun which describes the works and practices of intellectual and especially artistic activity'.<sup>33</sup> Williams points out the restrictions that attend the latter, modern, sense – restrictions to do with its elite connotations that imply a superior kind of knowledge, one that differentiates high art from popular entertainment. Instead, Williams insists upon culture as 'a constitutive social process',<sup>34</sup> one compounded by general responses in human thought – which are driven by certain intention – to changes in specific and real material (physical) social practices. The central questions for Williams' understanding of culture are, on the one hand, the connection between these real practices and 'symbolic' (or cultural) production and, on the other, the dynamic quality of that connection, for culture is always a complex of lived relationships. And it is that complex that cultural analysis sets out to uncover. In articulating its method of

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<sup>33</sup> Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (London: Fontana/Croom Helm, 1976), 88.

<sup>34</sup> Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, Marxist Introductions ; No. 392 (Oxford: University Press, 1977), 19.

research, Williams claims: 'we should not look for the components of a product but for the conditions of a practice'.<sup>35</sup> He turns research on culture into a cultural practice itself.

Following Williams' notion of culture, the understanding of the Fun Palace as a complex cultural project invites a critical investigation of the nature of its practices, their means of material production and related forms of social relationship, which are themselves situated in the field of British social experience of the 1960s and 1970s. For all this situated activity and agency constitutes the Fun Palace. The radical plurality, ephemerality and dynamism of the project inscribes in its practices the mobility of that society, and the pressures that this mobile quality exercised upon the interrelated productive realms of architecture, theatre, (mass) media, information and communication technologies, leisure and education.

This research turns towards the archive of the Fun Palace in order to unpack the multiplicity of its cultural practice, one that resists rather than facilitates the reduction of the Fun Palace into an architectural initiative. The central role that Littlewood played in the constitution of the complexity of its cultural project is crucial in situating this research within the ever-growing scholarship on the project. In re-opening the question 'what is the Fun Palace', my ultimate aim is to keep the research alive – as is the Fun Palace. Taking the array of media that inhabit the archive of the project as object of study, the analysis looks into the conditions in which these were produced, stored, selected, circulated and received – as well as those conditions under which they continue to be reanimated. Furthermore, the mode of inhabitation of these media objects in the archive is itself productive, for they turn the archive into a site of representation of the Fun Palace. The archive of the project is an uneven territory, however. The dominant role of the Cedric Price fonds at the CCA has no counterpart on Joan Littlewood's side, for her legacy is only partially accessible and subsists distributed across collections in several institutions, such as the Theatre Royal Stratford East, the British Film Institute, the Arts Council of Great Britain Archive at the Victoria & Albert Museum Collection, the Michael Barker Collection of Joan Littlewood and the Theatre Workshop at the Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas, Austin, and private collections such as Peter Rankin Estate and Clive Barker Personal Archive. This research investigates the way in which the form of a selection of the Fun Palace media inscribes interrelated material social practices and agencies, all of which constitute the complexity of the Fun Palace project. The media-specific analysis attempted in the pages that follow interrogates the ways in which medium and work are relationally constructed,<sup>36</sup> yet with the particular understanding of 'medium' as an active social practice, with specific intentions and agencies

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<sup>35</sup> Raymond Williams, *Culture and Materialism: Selected Essays* (London; New York: Verso, 2005), 48.

<sup>36</sup> N. Katherine Hayles, *Writing Machines* (Cambridge; London: MIT Press, 2002), 6.

that are historically situated, as Williams has argued.<sup>37</sup> The question addressed to the corpus of media held in the archive of the project, and to the institutions organising it, is concerned with relationships between its form and the structure of the social milieu within which it emerges, develops, circulates and is received.

## Research context

Over a hundred scholarly events, in formats as diverse as exhibitions, symposiums, conferences, even competition and course briefs, consolidate the increasing popularity of the Fun Palace since 1999. Largely architectural, scholarship works to sharpen Cedric Price's role in the project and informed by historically situated preoccupations of the discipline. Thus, during the late 1960s and 1970s, British historians such as Reyner Banham and Royston Landau hailed the alterity that the Fun Palace's brought to institutionalized British postwar architecture and planning, still buttressed to modernist canons, by means of the under specification of its program and the heuristic expediency of its method. By 1976, the project reached international reputation as a visionary megastructure in Banham's recollection and was likened to utopian propositions by Japanese Metabolists, Archigram's Plug-in urban imagery, Constant's situationist New Babylon, Yona Friedman's spatial cities, etc. These associations have endured in architectural historiography with a renewed interest in the Sixties culture of emancipation.<sup>38</sup> Others focus on specific critical propositions of the Fun Palace such as its programmatic flexibility and formlessness,<sup>39</sup> and on the criticality of its process-driven rhetoric.<sup>40</sup> Recurrent exhibitions reproduce parts of Cedric Price fonds,<sup>41</sup> even some attempt to revitalize its smell.<sup>42</sup> Meanwhile, the project's cybernetic core increasingly excites scholarly contributions to digital design cultures.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 163.

<sup>38</sup> See for instance Simon Sadler, *The Situationist City* (Cambridge, MA; London: MIT Press, 1999), 135; Christoph Grafe, *Architecture, Culture and Democracy in Two European Post-war Cultural Centres*, (Architectura & Natura Press, 2014), 322.

<sup>39</sup> Adrian Forty, *Words and Buildings: A Vocabulary of Modern Architecture* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2000), 146; 170.

<sup>40</sup> Tim Anstey, 'Architecture and Rhetoric: Persuasion, Context, Action', in *Architecture and Authorship* (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2007), 25.

<sup>41</sup> Bernabás Calder, 'Cedric Price: Thinking the Unthinkable' (The Lighthouse, Glasgow, 2011); Hans Ulrich Obrist, Lorenza Baroncelli, 'Lucius Burckhardt and Cedric Price - A Stroll through a Fun Palace' (Swiss Pavilion, Venice Biennale, Venice, 2014); Obrist, H.U., 'A Prelude to the Shed' (The Shed, New York, 2018).

<sup>42</sup> Stefanie Hessler, Rebecca Uchill, Carsten Höller, 'Pattern Recognition. A Background for Carsten Höller's Smelling Dots (Portrait of Cedric Price). *Future Anterior* 13, no.2 (2016) 44-55.

<sup>43</sup> See for instance Molly Wright Steenson, *Architectures of Information* (PhD, Princeton University, 2014); Arianne Lourie Harrison, *Architectural Theories of the Environment: Posthuman Territory* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 14; Antoine Picon, *Digital Culture in Architecture. An Introduction for the Design Professions*, (Boston, MA:

Within this broad range of scholarly events, there are a number of close studies of the Fun Palace project, such as the monographies *The Work and Radical Visions of Cedric Price* by Swiss scholar Tanja Herdt (2017),<sup>44</sup> *Cedric Price Works 1952-2003: A Forward-Minded Retrospective* (2016) by Samantha Hardingham (2016),<sup>45</sup> Stanley Mathews's *From Agit-Prop to Free Space: The Architecture of Cedric Price* (2006),<sup>46</sup> the paper Mary Lou Lobsinger's 'Cybernetic Theory and the Architecture of Performance: Cedric Price's Fun Palace' (2000),<sup>47</sup> and the exhibition curated by Mark Wigley 'Out of the Box: Price Rossi Stirling + Matta-Clark' at CCA in 2003.<sup>48</sup> Both extensive and intensive, a certain kind of consensus emerges within this range of scholarly discourse which relates to the contexts and sources nurturing it. The Fun Palace is actively discussed by architectural scholars with an interest in Cedric Price's practice and his archive. Such scholarship develops mostly within European and North American institutions, in which the CCA plays a crucial role, for it is not only custodian of the most extensive body of material resources of the Fun Palace project, but it also actively stimulates study of it through scholarly events such as exhibitions, publications and symposiums. This institution constantly makes time high to speak about the project.

Herdt's *The Work and Radical Visions of Cedric Price* is particularly illustrative of how architectural scholarship frames the significance of the Fun Palace within Price's design practice and how Cedric Price fonds becomes disseminated. It discusses thoroughly the Fun Palace as a plural initiative consisting of the major Fun Palace project, the pilot development for Camden and the community playgrounds in Stratford, along with other main projects of Price, with the ambition to unpack Price's systemic design approach – one in which design, technological, social and environmental conditions operate as an integrated and dynamic whole. The specific technological, cultural and urban-infrastructure agendas of the Fun Palace extend seamlessly in contemporary and later projects of Price, such as the infrastructural educational complex Potteries Thinkbelt, the architectural education network Polyark, the speculation on an alternative to British planning of Non-Plan, the policy-aimed improvement of health and safety conditions on the building site of the McAppy project, the structural investigation of the London Zoo Aviary, and that of the control technology of

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Birkhaeuser, 2010) 36; Andrew Pickering, *The Cybernetic Brain: Sketches of Another Future* (Chicago, ILL: University of Chicago Press, 2010) 367-368.

<sup>44</sup> Tanja Herdt, *The City and the Architecture of Change: The Work and Radical Visions of Cedric Price* (Zürich: Park Books, 2017).

<sup>45</sup> Samantha Hardingham and Cedric Price, *Cedric Price Works 1952-2003: A Forward-Minded Retrospective* (London; Montreal: Architectural Association; Canadian Centre for Architecture, 2016).

<sup>46</sup> Stanley Mathews, *From Agit-Prop to Free Space: The Architecture of Cedric Price* (London: Black Dog Publ. Ltd., 2007).

<sup>47</sup> Mary Louise Lobsinger, 'Cybernetic Theory and the Architecture of Performance: Cedric Price's Fun Palace.', in *Sarah Williams Goldhagen and Réjean Legault (ed.), Anxious Modernisms (Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal, 2000)* 119–39.

<sup>48</sup> Mark Wigley et. al., 'Out of the Box: Price Rossi Stirling + Matta-Clark' (Canadian Centre for Architecture, 23 Oct. 2003- 6 Sept 2004) <https://www.cca.qc.ca/en/events/2715/out-of-the-box-price-rossi-stirling-matta-clark>

Generator, amongst others. A significant range of Fun Palace media illustrate the discussion, including initial sketches, charts, a sample punch-card and questionnaire, and publicity drafts – along with well-known images of the project such as the Lea Valley site photomontage, the 1964 broadsheet, and the typical plan and section. Herdt offers a focused investigation of Price's contribution to the Fun Palace project – and conversely, the Fun Palace's contribution to Price's life-long project. In so doing, she reinforces the Fun Palace's architectural image, albeit one that is significantly stretched by the systemic form of Price's practice. The material is questioned from a Price-centred locus that vaults over the range of the Fun Palace's media offerings, and thus overlooks the nuances that this material affords to reconstruct the Fun Palace's cultural agenda and to discover the crucial role that Littlewood played in it.

Stanley Mathews's *From Agit-Prop to Free Space* unpacked Price's social vision through the study of a narrower selection of his projects than Herdt. Alongside Price's Potteries Thinkbelt project, Mathews offered the first historical account of the Fun Palace. Drawing on archival sources and a series of interviews Price in 1999 and 2000 amongst others, Mathews' reconstruction is a thorough but linear chronicle of events in which the Fun Palace initiative emerged, developed and waned. Its biographical departure is valuable in situating the agit-prop origins of Joan Littlewood's theatre and the popular Theatre Workshop productions that followed, alongside Price's own idiosyncrasy and early career as contextual reference for the project. An important commentary by Mathews on the community-oriented origins of the Fun Palace, which is most revelatory of the project's cultural ambition, draws on an unpublished sketchbook note from Theatre Workshop member Harry Greene, dated December 1953. As Greene records, 'we often talked about a more rounded education for kids to encompass 'life skills' and to encourage community centres to extend all activities for the whole family, including drama, music, dance and 'family' skills ... [Joan] wants to discuss an extension of the idea for a communal area or building for not only drama, but inter-sports, games, to explore science and technology, and communication skills.'<sup>49</sup> Mathews contextualizes the note within Littlewood's early efforts to engage local children in Theatre Workshop productions - for instance as extras for the adaptation of Stevenson's novel *Treasure Island* - as a way to explore the agency of theatre to connect with the Stratford community. Yet, such an insightful observation and archival material is kept in the notes section. Furthermore, the absence of Littlewood in the conclusions confirm the study's Price-centred focus - only Jude Kelly's 'What the Dome Could Have Been Like', *New Statesman*, 17 January 2000, invites briefly Littlewood's name in the closing discussion.<sup>50</sup> The account is weighted towards the

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<sup>49</sup> Harry Greene, unpublished sketchbook, December 1953, in Mathews, *From Agit-Prop to Free Space*, 263.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid*, 256.

major Fun Palace architectural project and Camden Pilot, although he also gives space to a few architectural projects that cluster within the shadow of the Fun Palace project. The study mentions in passing Joan Littlewood's Stratford Fair, and elaborates upon two of Price's projects: the feasibility study for Oxford Corner House, 1966, an iteration of the investigation into the electronic servicing of media for entertainment and learning that the Fun Palace initiated; and the Inter-Action Centre, 1973-1977, a built kit of parts and open framework that served as a community arts centre, commissioned and run by the related activist group under the leadership of Edward Berman. Along with Price positioned at the argument's centre of gravity, it is important to note how the story is built around an interest in what happened and when, but not in the media forms that tell that story. Mathews draws on a significant number of press cuttings held in Cedric Price fonds to reconstruct the increasingly critical reception the initiative accrued in press as the end of the project. However, the kind of questions raised to this material deviate from the significance of their form. For their mode of existence as a collection is the outcome of a specific critical cultural practice orchestrated by Littlewood and Price aimed at activating British mass readership.

Alongside Mathews, a key reference for Fun Palace scholarship is Mary Lou Lobsinger's 'Cybernetic Theory and the Architecture of Performance: Cedric Price's Fun Palace'. Published in 2000, the paper draws on records from Cedric Price fonds to reassess the culturally inflected technological mediation in the project, and in particular its encounter with the cybernetic principle of self-organization, and to point at the analytical tool of the diagram as its most relevant contribution to architectural theory. It is the paper's assortment of diagrammatic representations of the Fun Palace, most of these published for the first time, and how these media resonate the technological culture of the project what has been particularly insightful for specific sections in this research.

Complementary to these major architectural studies of the Fun Palace, scholar Juliet Rufford explores the gap that Fun Palace's radical idea of fun as interactive performance opened with Arts Council cultural policy in "'What Have We Got to Do with Fun?": Littlewood, Price, and the Policy Makers'.<sup>51</sup> Similarly close to Littlewood, theatre scholar Nadine Holdsworth has situated Joan Littlewood's Stratford playgrounds and fair events that followed the Fun Palace project - alongside her theatre practice in Holdsworth's succinct *Joan Littlewood* (2006),<sup>52</sup> part of the Routledge performance practitioners series, and expanded in later papers.<sup>53</sup> In so doing, she helps to dissolve the dominant presence of the Fun Palace's

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<sup>51</sup> Juliet Rufford, "'What Have We Got to Do with Fun?": Littlewood, Price, and the Policy Makers', *New Theatre Quarterly* 27, no. 04 (2011): 313–28.

<sup>52</sup> Nadine Holdsworth, *Joan Littlewood*, Routledge Performance Practitioners (London: Routledge, 2006).

<sup>53</sup> Nadine Holdsworth, 'Spaces to Play/Playing with Spaces: Young People, Citizenship and Joan Littlewood', *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance* 12, no. 3 (2007): 293–304.

architectural image in the plurality of this community-driven initiative that Littlewood facilitated, in the mobility of her theatre practice, the zest of her personality and the sharpness of her criticality.

Supported by CCA and Architectural Association (AA), London, the encyclopaedic two-volume *Cedric Price Works 1952-2003: A Forward-Minded Retrospective* (2016), edited by Samantha Hardingham and the CCA, offers an ambitious and significant publication of a selection of the Cedric Price fonds. An invaluable resource for further scholarship on Price, it covers a comprehensive list of his projects and the series of talks and articles, both main dimensions of Price's life-long production.<sup>54</sup> It circulates an excellent range of Fun Palace media – including sketches, diagrams, structural details, comparative site drawings and final drawings, as well as promotional drafts, minutes, questionnaires, a section of the film script and a photograph of the related working model, as well as several photomontages created for publicity. Attention to such breadth of material had been foregrounded by scholar Mark Wigley's curatorial approach to Price's section of the exhibition 'Out of the Box: Price Rossi Stirling + Matta-Clark' at CCA in 2003. Indeed, associated to the exhibition, the article 'Cedric Price's Fun Palace. "Anti-Buildings and Anti-Architects"', *Domus*, January 2004, was illustrated with a range of archival material not seen before, such as photographs of the remains of an elemental model used for the Fun Palace film encased in a cigar box, the model in flare-flames and the rusty film canister, alongside publicity material, a questionnaire linked to the punch-card index and the activity affinity chart that it helped to build, sketches of an unfinished perspectival space, a photograph of the model used to generate publicity-related montages, and the self-declaration memo 'Anti-Architect no. 1'.<sup>55</sup> Wigley discusses Price's design practice as a form of research and the constituent role that the Fun Palace plays in it. Ultimately, Wigley's exhibition – and related article – opens up the archive in order to challenge the image of radical, but yet, a physical structure, which the project's scholarly reception had constructed until then. However, the significance of the Fun Palace's radical endeavor remains tethered to Price's research-led architectural practice.

Mathews' historical account of the Fun Palace, its contextualization within Price's life-long design approach by Herdt, Lobsinger's critical analysis of its organizational principles, Rufford's study of the project's clash with cultural policy and Holdsworth's on Littlewood's Stratford Fair, these are all most valuable studies of complementary aspects of the Fun Palace. Additionally, Wigley and Hardingham have disseminated a plurality of media to cast light upon the breadth and depth of the Fun Palace's cultural agenda, yet to unpack Price's

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<sup>54</sup>A total of 112 projects, out of the 184 listed in the finding aid of the Cedric Price fonds, have been included in Samantha Hardingham's publication.

<sup>55</sup> Mark Wigley and Howard Shubert, 'Il Fun Palace Di Cedric Price = Cedric Price's Fun Palace', *Domus*, no. 866 (January 2004): 14-23.

complex architectural practice. However, opportunities to investigate the significance of the Fun Palace's manifold cultural practices from a position that focuses the main role of Joan Littlewood in the project on the one hand, and does so through a close study of the range of media that the archive of the project holds on the other hand, remain yet open.

This study selects a number of media objects and related practices to investigate the cultural politics investing the Fun Palace's production, circulation, storage and reception to argue for the complex cultural significance of the project through a close understanding of Littlewood's role in it. In so doing, this study contributes to expand on the one hand, the Fun Palace image constructed by architectural scholarship in the over fifty-year long reception of the project, and on the other, the significance of Littlewood's radical cultural practice as inscribed in it.

## Synopsis

Two sections structure my study of the Fun Palace's cultural agenda. The first examines the conditions of production and circulation of a selection of the project's media, namely, the Fun Palace's broadsheet, the pamphlet *Bubble City* and the existing footage and scripts for the Fun Palace film, as radical publicity practices of the Fun Palace, the Stratford Fair's journals as distributed archive, and the ephemeralization of architectural form conveyed in the project's gridded diagrams. The second part explores the conditions and modes of reception of the Fun Palace, by analysing the various media within which the project has been disseminated from the 1960s up until today, and by questioning the rule of the archive in reception practice.

The first section is made up of four chapters. The first examines two 'ludic' media – Alexander's Trocchi's *Sigma Portfolio* and Joan Littlewood's *Bubble City* pamphlet – within which the Fun Palace project evolved. The analysis of these media examines, on the one hand, the transference of qualities from content to format, and from site to idea, and on the other, the role of play in defining what Trocchi calls a 'metacategorical method' in order to explore the broader cultural agenda of the Fun Palace.

Based on archival material as yet untouched by scholarship, Chapter 2 reconstructs the Fun Palace film and interprets it as a critical communicative model in which conditions of contemporary leisure are dramatized. The analysis focuses on three key aspects of the film: the juxtaposition of images articulated shot-by-shot; the structural opposition between the main documentary of London pleasures and the part-improvised and part-scripted closing

comic piece; and finally, its status as a media event intended to clash with the 'flow' (as defined by Raymond Williams) experienced by commercial television audiences.

Under the auspices of the Fun Palace Trust, Joan Littlewood's Stratford Fair – the later development of Littlewood's idea for the Fun Palace – aimed to reclaim public land compromised by local government slum clearance in East London through community-led and temporary playgrounds. Scholarship to date has discussed the Fair as a trigger for the political imagination of local youth, but not the central role that media played in the constitution of its public agenda. Chapter 3 explores the distributed form of Stratford Fair's media archive as an active site of representation of the event. Recorded and circulated through monthly journals, these fleeting events generated affects that fostered attachment and identity amidst locals, while its archive maintains a latent regenerative potential and invites plural historiography.

Situated within the historical time of the punch card and animated by the idea of self-organization, the Fun Palace took the form of an interactive and evolving system regulated through feedback gathered from participants as the means to pursue the project's emancipatory ideals. Mediated by the figure of the grid – as service network, chart, index and programme script – information and organization emerge as the new objects of design. Architectural practice becomes reconstituted into systems design to incorporate uncertainty in its brief. Crucially, embedded in the agenda of the Cybernetics Committee constituted to design it, self-organization became realized within the material corpus of its work. Chapter 4 looks closely into the various deployments of the figure of the grid in the Fun Palace to unpack the complex interplay between self-organization and under-specification in the 1960s culture of emancipation.

The second part of the thesis addresses the dissemination of the Fun Palace and the history of the project's reception across public, professional and scholarly audiences. A Preamble attends to the task of collecting and mapping the plurality of reception events for the Fun Palace up until today and sets the structure for the chapters that follow. These events relate to situations in which the project is discussed by agencies other than Littlewood and Price. An index, which is included in the Appendix section of the thesis, classifies them attending to the kinds of media, target audience, agencies involved and chronology. Based on the data gathered in the index, a chart renders a visual expression of the quantity of the reception events in chronological order for two kinds of audience, scholarship and wider public. The index and chart that result from this first approach to the material gathered bring to focus a general periodization rather than the detail of the multiple representations of the project, descriptions that are unpacked in the remaining chapters.

The collection of press cuttings – mostly from the 1960s – that is held in Cedric Price fonds is examined in Chapter 5, to reflect upon this active practice of the Fun Palace as a way to reach out to mass-audiences at the time. The dissemination of the Fun Palace in this specific media form is an active production event. A carefully scripted publicity strategy by the Fun Palace organization turns promptly the Fun Palace into news in British press to activate its aesthetized mass public and challenge the increasing mercantilization of this institution.

The next chapter delves into the abundant scholarship that exists on the project up until today. Following the distinctive periodization that emerged from charting the field and outlined in the preamble, Chapter 6 unpacks the distinctive valences and underlying conditions informing the scholarly production of the Fun Palace in each of these periods. Thus, during the 1960s and early 1970s scholarship heralded the alterity that the project's subscription to the idea of indeterminacy posed to architectural discourse. Following a dip in circulation during the 1980s and 1990s, a renewed scholarly interest in the project since 1999 inscribes, I argue, the asymmetrical form of the Fun Palace archive, and more specifically, the hegemony of Cedric Price fonds over Fun Palace discourse.

The final chapter addresses a number of *mimetic* images that, inspired by the spirit of carnival, challenge the stable image of the project produced by architectural scholarship. Prompted by the inaccessibility of Littlewood's ephemeral and shattered archive, a series of carnivalesque images set to imagine one. Crafted by independent agencies for wider public, the emergent quality of these images hold open the regenerative potential of the project's cultural ethos.

A final note regards the way the structure of this thesis document accommodates different modes of discourse and of media. Along the main body of text bringing my own voice to the discussion of Fun Palace material, and the footnotes grounding it in their specific archive and in other primary and secondary sources, the images to which the discourse often closely refers to and cross-references are located on independent pages. The ambition is to preserve a certain autonomy of this archival material in a way that allows for direct engagement and independent interpretation by the reader. Additionally, the flow of the main sections in the thesis is punctuated by a third voice, namely, that of the transcription of selected excerpts from an interview former Theatre Workshop member Murray Melvin – the full transcript of which is in the Appendix. Melvin's musings tether the text to his living memories of the Theatre Workshop years and contribute to the reconstruction of Littlewood's world within the pages that follow.

## Genesis

As student, practitioner and lecturer in architecture, I learned about the Fun Palace project as part of Cedric Price's body of work, along with other relevant projects of his such as Potteries Thinkbelt. A versatile project easily encountered in architectural media since 2000, Joan Littlewood was often presented rather neutrally as the Fun Palace client. Instead, Stanley Mathews' close study of the Fun Palace, alongside Littlewood's scholars Nadine Holdsworth and Robert Leach, offered a first introduction to this radical experimenter, the ambition of her work and its landscape of references. With her eyes fixed on the struggles of the common man, woman and child in Britain since 1930s, Littlewood produced a theatre that promiscuously collected and tested ideas from masters – from the avant-garde theatre of Konstantin Stanislavsky, Bertolt Brecht, Vsevolod Meyerhold, Erwin Piscator, to Rudolf Laban's modern dance theory and Emile Jaques-Dalcroze's Eurhythmics, to Charlie Chaplin's slapstick cinema – bonding them with the popular traditions of the music-hall, the agit-prop street theatre and the living newspapers. A direct sense of her vitality, humour, determination and hectic life was only available via anecdotes in her episodic autobiography *Joan's Book* - first published in 1994, available in paperback since 2003 and in its 4<sup>th</sup> edition by 2016. A developing curiosity about Littlewood's complex character and her critical role in the Fun Palace project led theoretically and empirically the research process. As the introduction outlines, Littlewood guided my archival work in a number of institutions, as well as the complementary interviews conducted to TRSE archivist and ex-Theatre Workshop member Murray Melvin, scholar Nadine Holdsworth and theatre producer, writer and activist Stella Duffy. Through a constellation of concepts, questions, theories and methodologies the range of key archival materials and insights gathered gained perspective. In the following paragraphs I will outline my engagement with secondary literature, how Littlewood and Price informed some of these choices, and ultimately, the contingencies that made the dialogue between materials and references precipitate.

Early on, the study of the cultural dimension of play lent this research the term 'ludic'. From the conceptualization of play as a major civilizing force by Johan Huizinga's *Homo Ludens*<sup>56</sup> and by Jose Ortega y Gasset's meditations on the vitality of an sportive life,<sup>57</sup> to the taxonomy of games advanced by Roger Caillois to study modern culture,<sup>58</sup> these early reading facilitated an understanding of play – and that of the playground of which the Fun

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<sup>56</sup> Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955).

<sup>57</sup> José Ortega y Gasset, *Meditación de la técnica* (Madrid: Revista de Occidente, 1957).

<sup>58</sup> Roger Caillois, *Man, Play, and Games* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1962).

Palace is a case – as a mode of interrogation of dominant consumer culture and the locus to test alternatives. Related to this, Mikhail Bakhtin’s analysis of the historical transformation of laughter in *Rabelais and His World*,<sup>59</sup> conceptualized the universal, gay and regenerative potential of carnivals forms and folk culture that so directly mobilised Littlewood’s work. But also, there was the historical specificity of Bakhtin’s own text, written not only to expose the dialectical mode of modern cosmology by showing how different the Renaissance laughter was from the individualized, caustic tone of Romantic grotesque under Enlightened authoritarianism. Ultimately, Renaissance laughter was for Bakhtin – as it was for Littlewood – an uncompromised and open model, for the novel in Bakhtin’s struggle with the monotony of Social Realism, and for theatre in Littlewood’s own struggles with British theatre censorship and barred access to institutional funding.

A second line of enquire engages Bertolt Brecht’s work, as a firm, direct ground for Littlewood’s social agenda. She had played some of Brecht’s and Hanns Eisler’s songs for Theatre of Action in 1930s and premiered *Mother Courage* in Britain 1955 – a year before his death. Littlewood shared Brecht’s anxiety ‘to teach the spectator a quite definite practical attitude, directed towards changing the world’, as muses one of Brecht’s notes on *Mother Courage*.<sup>60</sup> She adopted and adapted his epic technique – gestural, alienating, montaged, and instructive. Moreover, just as Brecht would take up his revolutionary activity beyond the stage – ‘at precisely calculated places in the desert of contemporary life’,<sup>61</sup> as his intellectual friend and critic Walter Benjamin notes on Brecht’s works for radio – Littlewood would roll hers into the production of the Fun Palace and its public promotion. Thus, a number of readings became key points of reference for this thesis, both Brecht’s texts - ‘Modern Theatre is the Epic Theatre’, ‘Theatre for Pleasure or Theatre for Instruction’, ‘The Street Scene’, ‘Masterful Treatment of a Model’, ‘The Film, The Novel and Epic Theatre’ among others, part of the collection *Brecht on Theatre* edited and translated by John Willet in 1964 – and Walter Benjamin’s own readings of Brecht’s work – ‘What is Epic Theatre?’ and ‘The Author as Producer’, which circulated in *New Left Review* in 1970. Benjamin conceptualized epic theatre as the model for a revolutionary literary practice, one that bonded literary technique with political tendency. Just as Brecht introduced me the role of ‘montage’ in Littlewood’s productions, Benjamin’s texts named ‘operative’ the quality of the Fun Palace’s set of practices, and in particular its publicity. Benjamin introduced the kind of questions that

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<sup>59</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1968).

<sup>60</sup> ‘Indirect Impact of the Epic Theatre’, Bertolt Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic* (London: Methuen Drama, 1964), 57.

<sup>61</sup> ‘From the Brecht Commentary’ Walter Benjamin, *Understanding Brecht: Walter Benjamin* (London: New Left Books, 1977), 27.

a materialist analysis pursues, namely, what is the position of a work within the social production relations of its time?<sup>62</sup>

Crucially, I found in Raymond Williams' cultural analysis of British society in the 1960s and 1970s a key companion to unpack this question further and to expand my vocabulary on materialism. Importantly, Williams' subjects lived *in solution* within the contemporary social milieu in which the Fun Palace operated. Littlewood, Price and Williams were addressing from complementary positions the struggle for growth of British ordinary citizens within the expanding consumer culture as it penetrated the nation's obstinately classist institutions. Thus, Williams' sociology of British mass media drew attentively the material conditions that would dialectically speak to Fun Palace's publicity practices. *Communications* (1962),<sup>63</sup> *Television* (1975),<sup>64</sup> 'Means of Communications as Means of Production' (1978),<sup>65</sup> all these texts cast light upon the multiple ways in which the Fun Palace's publicity was 'operative'. Marshall McLuhan's texts didn't – a position that Williams challenged as technological determinism. Crucially, Williams' model of cultural analysis built a number of key concepts - 'hegemony', 'selective tradition', 'structures of feeling' - that proved productive for the analysis of the production and reception of the Fun Palace.

Alongside Williams, cultural readings of the riches of everyday life have aided the development of an eye for minor forms, ordinary materials, trivial annotations, and subtle tactics. Just as writer George Perec summoned us to question the 'common things', the infra-ordinary,<sup>66</sup> I encountered in common media the seeds of the Fun Palace's revolutionary practice. Thus, readings on everyday culture were complemented with media scholarship to build up specific arguments around Fun Palace's archival material that was being retrieved. For instance, Michel de Certeau's scrutiny of ordinary tactics, and in particular those associated with memory,<sup>67</sup> alongside Aleida Assmann's studies on cultural memory,<sup>68</sup> brought to focus the relevance of certain subversive journals – held both in Cedric Price fonds and in the Theatre Royal archive – in consolidating the public memory of Stratford Fair and in projecting questions upon our own present readings of the project. The concept of 'cultural techniques' by media theorist Bernhard Siegert,<sup>69</sup> lend a versatile frame for the

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<sup>62</sup> 'Author as Producer' in Walter Benjamin, *Brecht on Theatre*, 87.

<sup>63</sup> Raymond Williams, *Communications* (London: Penguin, 1962).

<sup>64</sup> Raymond Williams, *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* (New York: Schocken Books, 1975).

<sup>65</sup> Raymond Williams, *Culture and Materialism*.

<sup>66</sup> 'Approaches to What?', Georges Perec, *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces*, Revised edition, (London: Penguin Books, 1999), 209–11.

<sup>67</sup> Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley, CA; London: University of California Press, 1984), 82–90.

<sup>68</sup> Aleida Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Western Civilization: Functions, Media, Archives*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

<sup>69</sup> Bernhard Siegert, *Cultural Techniques: Grids, Filters, Doors, and Other Articulations of the Real*, First edition., Meaning Systems (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015).

selection and discussion of the agency of common media objects that the Fun Palace produced. Not only Siegert deployed it in a range of case studies, he also situated it in the lineage of the German media theory, yet one with a distinctive technical focus in relation to Williams' materialism. Ultimately, the conceptualization of mediation by French philosopher Michel Serres' 'theory of the quasi-object' opened a more general understanding of media as a binding agent for the Fun Palace organization.<sup>70</sup>

At all events, what makes a story is often serendipitous. And so, the chapters in this thesis crystallized as well through fortuitous encounters – the discovery of an uncharted archival record, a timely call for papers, an insightful concept or reference found in a footnote, an anecdote slipped in an interview. Chapter 1, and to some extent the whole thesis, is the outcome of one of these complex coincidences. The finding of the Fun Palace's broadsheet within the situationist publication *Sigma Portfolio* by Alexander Trocchi while perusing the National Library of Scotland's catalogue – where I often worked – took a new significance within the concurrent call for papers 'Spaces of Information' in the journal *Architecture and Culture*, February 2015.<sup>71</sup> The editorial project by Stephen Walker and Ruth Blacksell invited papers that interrogated practices, materials and audiences of architecture understood as media practices in order to construct the concept of 'spaces of information'. The call laid a context to explore the 'ludic' quality of some Fun Palace publicity, substantiated in the circulation of the Fun Palace broadsheet just found and some marginalia recently gathered during a visit to Theatre Royal archive. The call's attention to media revealed a lens to select and explore the bulk of archival materials that were being gathered as the research evolved. Meanwhile, the paper became published, benefitting from the suggestions made through the editorial process, as well as from its live presentation at the related symposium in the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London some months later.<sup>72</sup> Similarly, the investigation of Stratford Fair in Chapter 4 gained momentum when it was presented at the Architectural Humanities Research Association conference 'Architecture, Festival and the City' in 2017, organised by Christian Frost, Maria Jose Martinez and Jieling Xiao, and developed further for publication in *Architecture and Culture*.<sup>73</sup>

On February 3, 2015, *Oh What a Lovely War!* was on stage at Theatre Royal Stratford East – part of the London's celebrations of Joan Littlewood's centennial anniversary. It brought to life the many anecdotes and insights of Littlewood's life and work that Murray Melvin shared

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<sup>70</sup> Michel Serres, *The Parasite* (Baltimore ; London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982).

<sup>71</sup> Ruth Blacksell and Stephen Walker, 'Architecture and the Spaces of Information', *Architecture and Culture* 4, no. 1 (2016): 1–8.

<sup>72</sup> Ana Bonet Miro, 'Sigma Portfolio and Bubble City: Ludic Sites for a Mobile Fun Palace Program', *Architecture and Culture*, Architecture and the Spaces of Information, 4, no. 1 (16 March 2016): 137–61.

<sup>73</sup> Ana Bonet Miro, 'On Playgrounds and the Archive. Joan Littlewood's Stratford Fair, 1967-1975', *Architecture and Culture* 6, no. 3 (12 April 2019): 387–98.

in an interview that morning. In the stalls, actors in pierrot costumes were chatting informally with the public as we were taking our seats. 'Songs, a few battles, jokes' - was claimed the show to be about. The play carnivalized the war struggle, for instance through the alliteration of 's' in the lyrics we sang. The Brechtian legacy of thinking through laughter and the use of montage as well as a sense of Bakhtin's festive, collective laughter, all resonated throughout the show.

Soon after I had undertaken crucial archival work at Cedric Price fonds, CCA, I came across raw footage of ordinary life London 1963 associated with Littlewood and the Fun Palace film. It had recently been made available online via the British Film Institute player. In Cedric Price fonds I had seen some fragmentary footage showing three pierrots in costumes, along with several draft scripts, a related drawing, and a few correspondence associated with the film. One of these scripts – a catalogued record titled 'Pleasure Film: Assembly' – seemed to be suggesting a sequence for Littlewood's short films. The reconstruction of the Fun Palace film and the discussion of its relevance became the focus of Chapter 2. This particular object of study informed a number of additional readings, related to film theory among others, while I got acquainted with Littlewood's only feature film *Sparrows Can't Sing* (1962), almost contemporary to the Fun Palace. Crucially, William's criticism of advertising and television set the questions for the film records to speak materially. The film chapter found an audience later on in the editorial project 'Architecture and ephemerality', *ARQ: Architectural Research Quarterly*, coordinated by Adam Sharr.<sup>74</sup>

The range of archival records of the project and library references found within Cedric Price fonds, has been crucial to substantiate all sections of this research. The collection of press-cuttings held in this, complemented by searches on newspapers' online databases and by physical records held at the National Library of Scotland, expanded further the argument of the project's operative publicity in Chapter 5. Equally important, the many drawings of the project produced by Cedric Price's office lent the occasion to discuss the attachments of the project to the idea of technology at the time that were constitutive of the Fun Palace grids. For their discussion in Chapter 3, Jean Francois Lyotard's musings on the relevance of open forms of knowledge production grounded the agonistic kind of conversation held within the Fun Palace organization as it emerged from a number of uncatalogued notes by Littlewood.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Ana Bonet Miro, 'From Filmed Pleasure to Fun Palace', *Arq: Architecture Research Quarterly* 22, no. 3 (2018): 215–24,

<sup>75</sup> Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984).

Ultimately, Caillois' and Jean Baudrillard's references to cultures of vertigo facilitated an understanding of the cultural conditions at play in which the Fun Palace grids took part.<sup>76</sup>

Alongside the many archival holdings found, the final chapters of the thesis grew out of reflections on the distinctive form and organization of the different sections of the Fun Palace archive and its impact on the broad circulation of the project up until today. These reflections are in debt to Williams' theorization of how hegemonic forces shape selective traditions,<sup>77</sup> my own living experience in the archives and a few anecdotes gathered through interviews and informal conversations on how these collections took shape. Resources for the contemporary reception of the project have been patiently collected by tracking online databases, word of mouth and casual encounters with the project's images since the research's inception. The compilation of an index of the Fun Palace circulation up until today and the use of diagrams to graphically analyse its patterns and situate historically these media events in relation to the progressive constitution of the archive, these research grids celebrate Cedric Price's diagramming and indexing, a jolly practice that the Fun Palace set in motion and still inspires architects today.

## Acknowledgements

This research could not have been possible without the generous support received from a number of institutions, from colleagues and from my family. I am grateful for the financial support received from the British Spanish Society in 2014 and from the Edinburgh College of Art staff scholarship scheme since 2015.

I would like to express my gratitude to the different institutions that have granted access to the archival records of the Fun Palace and to the staff that made the research in them an exciting experience. In particular, I would like to thank Renata Guttman and the team at the Collection Reference for guiding me thorough the collection and to Maristella Casciato, Associate Director of Research at the CCA in Montreal. My thanks also to Caroline Dagbert, who has facilitated promptly the digital reproduction of a selection of material for academic publications. I am grateful to staff at the British Film Institute, Architectural Association and Royal Institute of British Architects for facilitating research in these institutions. Ex-Theatre Workshop member and honorary archivist Murray Melvin alongside Associate Producer at

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<sup>76</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *The Ecstasy of Communication*, Semiotext[e] Foreign Agents Series (New York: Semiotexte, 1988).

<sup>77</sup> Williams, *Marxism and Literature*.

the Theatre Royal Stratford East London Karen Fisher, have been invaluable in opening up Joan Littlewood's world to me. It became live through the insights that Murray Melvin generously shared with me in different conversations. I would also like to thank Nadine Holdsworth and Samantha Hardingham for sharing their scholarship and questions. I would also thank Ana Miret and The Grove Community Garden for their kind support in setting up the 'Fun Forest' in Edinburgh, a contribution to the ongoing cultural campaign 'Fun Palaces', initiated in 2014 by Stella Duffy and Sarah-Jane Rawlings.

Opportunities to disseminate parts of this research have provided the occasion to critically reflect upon the work and to incorporate most valuable criticism from editors, reviewers and colleagues. In particular, I would like to thank Stephen Walker and Ruth Blacksell, whose editorial 'Spaces of Information', *Architecture and Culture*, 2016, prompted the understanding of the key role of media in this research and facilitated the first opportunity for its publication. My gratitude goes as well to Adam Sharr, and to María José Martínez Sánchez, Christian Frost and Jieling Xiao for their support and editorial work during the publication of Chapters 2 and 4 respectively.

It is within the culture of research at Edinburgh School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture that I have grown up as a researcher interested in culture. In particular, the Research Seminar Series programme, organised by Mark Dorrian, the Brown Bag lunch seminar series, organised by Alistair Fair and Ola Uduku, and the Postgraduate Research Methods course organised by Ella Chmielewska, all these events have laid a framework to prompt and share the research-in-progress and receive constructive criticism from friends, colleagues and peers.

This research initiated out of conversations with Cruz López Viso at the Postgraduate Research Programme, Polytechnic University of Madrid, and ventured in unexplored territories for me under the supervision of Mark Dorrian and Soledad García Ferrari at the University of Edinburgh, to whom I am deeply grateful. Mark Dorrian's inspiring guidance and mentorship, timely criticism and generous editing have turned this project into a most rewarding experience. Finally, this work would not have been possibly completed without the emotional support of my parents, husband and children, who kept asking me 'what is the Fun Palace?' while doing all the work at home.

## **PART 1: MEDIA PRODUCTION**

***Joan Littlewood, Fun Palace and Theatre Workshop: In Conversation with Murray Melvin.*** Transcript of interview excerpt I, Theatre Royal Stratford East, London, 9 December 2014

Murray Melvin: [...] The Fun Palace came out of the children in this area, the poor children, you know, fifty or more years ago. She started organising the children; she was doing street things with the children. An out of that came the Fun Palace, as a bigger, a vast ... [initiative?]. The Fun Palace has always been there in the back of her brain, but it started with these kids.

*Ana Bonet: Was it in the 1950s?*

MM: Oh, yes, early 1950s. I came in 1957 [...] The company right from the beginning always did. Joan is - in England we call - the mother of theatre in education. It started here. Whereas every theatre now has a theatre-in-education section, it is Joan's. It started here with the kids out there. Moreover, whenever they toured, they did things with children, always. She was children mad. She thought that was more important because it was passing back one's knowledge to the younger generation. She would not care about us old ones; she was more interested in the young ones.

## Chapter 1: Marginalia as Anti-Publicity: *Sigma Portfolio* and *Bubble City*. Ludic Sites for a Mobile Fun Palace Project

The Fun Palace was a complex cultural project that emerged out of the London scene of the 1960s as an interdisciplinary collaboration initiated by the radical theatre producer Joan Littlewood and architect Cedric Price,<sup>1</sup> which gathered together major personalities of the time such as the cyberneticist Gordon Pask, the polymath Richard Buckminster Fuller and the psychologist John Clark, amongst others. In it, advanced scientific systems thinking met with contemporary critical and anarchic artistic practice and the hedonist mood of freedom of the leisure society.

This 'interactive and adaptable, educational and cultural complex'<sup>2</sup> was animated by specific conceptions of play. Indeed, 'learning', together with 'pleasure and fun', are the main categories that would be used to classify the project in Price's 1984 monograph<sup>3</sup>. Pleasure and fun, according to Price, are a function of choice and of the 'calculated uncertainty' that the project made available for the user<sup>4</sup>. However, this idea of fun and pleasure does not exhaust the broader concept of play that was embedded in the Fun Palace, for play, in Littlewood's and Price's vision, is driven by a critical intentionality. It is this essential mimetic quality of the Fun Palace Project that I will refer to as 'ludic'. According to Roger Caillois, 'mimicry' is the illusory display of fantasy and simulacra. And the role of its representational effects in modern societies – which are governed by measure, effort and skill – is to provide a mirror image through which the serious performance of society can be questioned. The health of society depends precisely on the availability of mimetic situations through which alternative possibilities can be critically rehearsed.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Joan Littlewood and Cedric Price conceived the Fun Palace as a comprehensive project – which occasionally refer also as programme. It emerges, for instance, from her description of Donmar development, one of the different initiatives clustered around the Fun Palace: 'it is essential that such a club is established in the near future as part of the preliminary Fun Palace programme'. Joan Littlewood and Cedric Price, in 'Proposed Use of Donmar Rehearsal Rooms as Experimental Theatre & Late Night Meeting Place for Talk and Entertainment', c.1964, DR1995:0212:060, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

<sup>2</sup> 'Scope and Content, Descriptive Summary, File 46: Fun Palace Project, Series 2: Projects', Collection Online Cedric Price fonds, CCA. <https://www.cca.qc.ca/en/search/details/collection/object/39930>.

<sup>3</sup> Cedric Price, *Cedric Price: The Square Book* (Chichester: Wiley-Academy, 1984).

<sup>4</sup> Cedric Price, 'Autumn Always Gets Me Badly', (London: Architectural Association, 1989), 33' 55", AA Photo Library.

<sup>5</sup> Roger Caillois, *Man, Play, and Games* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1962).

The Fun Palace was a mobile project. Born as a 'university of the streets' in the early 1960s,<sup>6</sup> it struggled to find a site in the institutional map of London, so by the end of the decade had evolved into a set of educative and ludic activities linked to the construction of temporary playgrounds in the open spaces of Stratford East in London. The broader scope of the project was about the construction of situations where playful exchange could activate audiences. And the role of architecture in it was to be defined and questioned, as Price recalls from Littlewood's brief: 'you tell me whether architecture can help'.<sup>7</sup> According to Price, 'she wanted to see some situation which might have been a social situation, an economic situation, a political situation, where the ability for random humour and beastliness could result in a productive exchange which was not measurable, but just fun when it happened'.<sup>8</sup> From the 'Fun Palace Project' to the 'Stratford Fair', the whole project was governed by the Fun Palace Trust, and took on different expressive forms along the decade. The 'Fun Palace Project' evolved in parallel as the 'Major Fun Palace', the most ambitious expression of the project in architectural terms, and the test-bed 'Camden Pilot Project', which released the social and educational content of the idea in urban public spaces.<sup>9</sup> But simultaneously to these, the less influential 'Donmar Development' – a combination of a rehearsal room for experimental theatre, and a late night club for discussion and entertainment –<sup>10</sup> was as well supported by the Trust. Two more undertakings followed these, and although the Trust was not involved in them, they were closely related to the Fun Palace idea: Littlewood's 'Living Theatre' summer course at Hammamet, Tunisia, and Price's 'Feasibility Study for an Information Hive' in the Oxford Corner House, London.

The Fun Palace project was materialized in an evolving set of representations distributed across different publications during the 1960s. These published representations succeeded in building a broad range of cultural 'situations', borrowing from a Situationist glossary of terms. These were not only media, but critically engaged networks actively operating to overcome institutional frames in search of a utopian freedom. Considered here as 'sites of information', each of these activist contexts not only recorded the transformation of the Fun Palace, but also fundamentally enhanced and informed its meaning in specific ways. It is *within* this diversity of media that the mobile Fun Palace could expand beyond the object-like

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<sup>6</sup> Cedric Price and Joan Littlewood, 'The Fun Palace', *The Drama Review*, no. 3 (1968): 127.

<sup>7</sup> Mathews, *From Agit-Prop to Free Space: The Architecture of Cedric Price*, (London: Black Dog, 2007) 66.

<sup>8</sup> Cedric Price, 'Chat', *Architectural Design* 41 (April 1971): 231–32.

<sup>9</sup> Cedric Price and Joan Littlewood, 'Fun Palace, Camden, London', *Architectural Design* 37 (November 1967): 522.

<sup>10</sup> Littlewood and Price, 'Proposed Use of Donmar Rehearsal Rooms as Experimental Theatre & Late Night Meeting Place for Talk and Entertainment', c.1964, DR1995:0212:060, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

condition that its image had acquired in architectural discourse into a more critical event of wider cultural significance.<sup>11</sup>

This representational dissemination of the Fun Palace project resulted in divergent outcomes. While official institutional culture succeeded in ignoring such an unwieldy proposal, the idea positively evolved within alternative sites. By 1964 the Fun Palace Project had gained momentum, and a colossal 'laboratory of pleasure'<sup>12</sup> was depicted on the vacant site of Mill Meads, within the publication *A Lea Valley Regional Park* produced by the Civic Trust.<sup>13</sup> In the same year, the eleventh issue of the *Sigma Portfolio*, the editorial project of the British writer and Situationist member Alexander Trocchi, referred to the idea under the title 'Joan Littlewood Presents'.<sup>14</sup> However, by 1969 the ambitious Fun Palace Project had disappeared from the Civic Trust's official *Report on the Development of the Regional Park with Plan of Proposals*.<sup>15</sup> Instead, a little pamphlet entitled *Bubble City*,<sup>16</sup> was to be the vehicle through which Littlewood's idea of the playground evolved.

This chapter examines the ludic quality of two of these alternative 'sites of information', the Fun Palace broadsheet within Trocchi's *Sigma Portfolio* and the pamphlet *Bubble City*, and relates these to broader cultural theories and events. On one hand the chapter looks into the transference from content to format, and site to idea; and on the other, it assesses the role of the ludic in defining a 'metacategorical method' to unveil the broader cultural scope behind the Fun Palace's 'metallic laughter'- to borrow Italo Calvino's description of Brecht's work.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> The key concept 'site of information' that starts developing here to analyse the Fun Palace's media practices grows out of an editorial project, namely Stephen Walker's and Ruth Blacksell's 'Architecture and the Spaces of Information', for the journal *Architecture and Culture*, February 2015. With an interest in the way art practices in the 1960s moved away from the gallery to appropriate architectural and editorial space as site of critical action, the call invited papers that interrogated practices, materials and audiences operating in the joint territory of 'spaces of information'. Loose archival documents related to the Fun Palace's multifaceted publicity practice gained a particular relevance from this vantage point.

<sup>12</sup> Price and Littlewood, 'The Fun Palace'.

<sup>13</sup> *Civic Trust and England Lea Valley Regional Park, A Lea Valley Regional Park, an Essay in the Use of Neglected Land for Recreation and Leisure*. (London: Civic Trust, 1964).

<sup>14</sup> Alexander Trocchi, *Sigma Portfolio: A New Dimension in the Dissemination of Informations* [sic] (London: Alexander Trocchi, 1964).

<sup>15</sup> Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, *Report on the Development of the Regional Park with Plan of Proposals* (Enfield: Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, 1969).

<sup>16</sup> Joan Littlewood, *Bubble City* (London: The Fun Palace Trust, 1968).

<sup>17</sup> In the obituary written in 1956, Italo Calvino praises Bertolt Brecht's Epic Theatre, for its 'scientific passion' together with his commitment to activate critical participation of the audience, in Italo Calvino and M Barenghi, *Saggi: 1945-1985* (Milan: Mondadori, 1995), 1301. Indeed, Brecht defined his critically driven Epic Theatre as opposed to the prevailing dramatic theatre of his time as: 'narrative' (versus plot); 'turns the spectator into an observer'; but 'arouses his capacity for action'; 'forces him to take decisions(...)'; 'argument' (versus suggestion); 'reason' (versus feeling), (Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre*, 37). The sustained influence of the Brechtian legacy on all Littlewood's undertakings, including the Fun Palace as well as her theatrical experiments, went back to her participation in Ewan MacColl's Theatre of Action in the 1930s, and consistently informed her productions onwards at Theatre Union and the later Theatre Workshop. Their manifestos explicitly address a critically driven approach to theatre, which dealt with real problems of its time and aimed to activate thinking in the working class audience. While Theatre Union's manifesto claims for a theatre which 'in facing up the problems of our time and by intensifying our efforts to get at the essence of reality, we are also attempting to solve our own theatrical problems both technical and ideological (Mathews, *From Agit-Prop to Free Space*, 54). Theatre Workshop's

## **‘Joan Littlewood Presents ....’ within the *Sigma Portfolio***

The connection between the Fun Palace idea and Trocchi’s Project Sigma has not been sufficiently attended to in architectural scholarship. Either the Fun Palace has been related to other Situationist undertakings such as the utopian New Babylon,<sup>18</sup> or - when explicitly addressed - the link with the British Situationism of Alex Trocchi has been claimed to be based on affinities that ‘grew from common ideological and artistic roots’.<sup>19</sup> However, the Fun Palace was a major reference for Trocchi’s Project Sigma, and its influence is specifically detectable across the diverse set of folders bound as the *Sigma Portfolio*: Folder number 11 titled ‘Joan Littlewood Presents...’, contains a reproduction of the Fun Palace broadsheet, which is defined as ‘an early impression of an idea (...) for a consciously constructed environment’; Joan Littlewood and Cedric Price were part of Trocchi’s array of ‘pool cosmonauts’ - we find their names within the list of ‘public relations’ of the Project Sigma, in folder no. 17; In folder no. 5 titled ‘General Information’, Trocchi writes about the ‘metacategorical method’ of ‘Joan Littlewood’s experiments’, a method that is shared by the Sigma network; And finally, Trocchi explicitly refers to his proposed university as ‘hav(ing) much in common with ‘Joan Littlewood’s “leisuredrome” (if she will forgive my coining a word).’<sup>20</sup> If the Fun Palace Project found a place in the *Sigma Portfolio*, then, an analysis of this complex site of information might inform our understanding of both Sigma and Fun Palace.

The *Sigma Portfolio* was an editorial project of international scope initiated in London in 1964 by Alexander Trocchi, a British poet and affiliate of the Situationists. ‘Sigma’, he explained,

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supports a ‘not genteel, not poetical’ theatre in which ‘our critics and supporters were miners, cotton workers and steel workers who haven’t much time for mere artistic experiment’ (Joan Littlewood, ‘Theatre Workshop. A British People’s Theatre’, n.d., 1, Theatre Royal Stratford East Archive Collection). The material for Littlewood’s critical approach was scientific- based, as Murray Melvin claimed: ‘Whenever you played with Joan there has to be a reason, and it was usually knowledge-based (...) a scientific reason’ (Melvin, M., authorised interview with the author, 9 December, 2014). Trocchi shares this interest in Brecht’s critical theatre, as he explicitly addresses ‘his “distance-theory” of acting, a method calculated to inspire a more active and critical kind of participation’ (Alexander Trocchi, ‘Invisible Insurrection of a Million Minds’, *Sigma Portfolio*, no. 2 (1964): 3).

<sup>18</sup> New Babylon or the Fun Palace are examples of the utopian content of megastructures according to Reyner Banham. Quoting the description of the former project by Constant as published in *Architectural Design* (June 1964), Banham suggests that ‘you could insert the word Fun Palace in it without making any injustice either to this or to the Fun palace Project’ (Reyner Banham, *Megastructures 1*, ARTNET Public (London, 1974), min. 48:35, Lecture Series, AA Photo Library). Instead, Simon Sadler point at the differences between both: the Fun Palace illustrate the ‘detail and practicality of British experimental architecture’ while New Babylon ‘seem to lack that rigor’ (Simon Sadler, *The Situationist City*, 133–134). However, in their studies there is not an explicit connection between the Fun Palace and Trocchi’s *Sigma Portfolio*.

<sup>19</sup> Mathews, *From Agit-Prop to Free Space*, 113–14.

<sup>20</sup> Alexander Trocchi, ‘Sigma: A Tactical Blueprint’, *Sigma Portfolio*, no. 3 (1964): 5.

was 'merely a word, a tactical symbol, a dialectical instrument'<sup>21</sup> to refer to a 'cultural attitude (...) assumed by a vast number of men and women who have never heard of the sigma project'.<sup>22</sup> Under the sign of this summative mathematical function, an anonymous, inclusive and invisible cultural revolt was anticipated. 'Modifying, correcting, polluting, deflecting, corrupting, eroding, outflanking',<sup>23</sup> this underground tremor was progressively to transform the consciousness of a million minds. As part of the project, an action-university was to be among the first constructed situations for an invisible insurrection. Described as a 'vital laboratory for the creation (and evaluation) of conscious situations',<sup>24</sup> Trocchi's proposal bears many resemblances to the anti-institutional approach to education of the Fun Palace project. The ultimate aspiration in both the Project Sigma and the Fun Palace, was to stimulate personal and social growth as a major emancipatory force. And growth is, in both projects, a function of the quality of the conversation initiated. The *Sigma Portfolio* was a 'site of information' designed to evolve this conversation, and therefore, part of the realization of the Project Sigma itself. But, considering the inclusion of the Fun Palace in it, it can be seen as well as a partial realization of the latter.

At the beginning of the 1960s, Raymond Williams's cultural critique was precisely linking social growth to the quality of the conversation held within social institutions such as the media. Since society is a form of communication where experience is described and shared, media should go beyond the narrow frame defined by trade and power relations and offer opportunities for learning and growth as well. Only within public and democratic fora, can a free, independent and critical conversation evolve. However, in his diagnosis of the institutional panorama of British communications, the concentration of power and the drive to sell emerge as major impediments to growth. The resulting 'synthetic culture' - 'one which exploits indifference, lack of feeling, frustration and hatred' - could only be combatted through education for personal development and choice, under the proper institutional support.<sup>25</sup>

Sites such as the *Sigma Portfolio* could be seen - following Williams's argument - as those for learning and growth in themselves. Indeed, the design of the *Sigma Portfolio* enacts the resistance to this -in Williams' terms- 'synthetic' condition by providing what Trocchi describes as 'an entirely new dimension in publishing, through which the writer reaches his public immediately, outflanking the traditional trap of publishing-house policy'.<sup>26</sup> His public was an anonymous collective distributed across the globe, and therefore a mode of 'effective

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<sup>21</sup> Alexander Trocchi, 'Project Sigma: Cultural Engineering', *Sigma Portfolio*, no. 22 (1964).

<sup>22</sup> Alexander Trocchi, 'Pool Cosmonaut', *Sigma Portfolio*, no. 37 (1964).

<sup>23</sup> Trocchi, 'Invisible Insurrection of a Million Minds', 2.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, 6.

<sup>25</sup> Williams, *Communications*.

<sup>26</sup> Alexander Trocchi, 'Subscription Form', *Sigma Portfolio*, no. 12 (1964).

communication' was needed in order to reach it. *Sigma Portfolio* was cheaply produced in Trocchi's house at St Stephen's Gardens, London. Typed folio-sized papers, duplicated onto coloured sheets of foolscap and stapled, they were posted to several hundreds of people.<sup>27</sup> They reported 'sigmatic'<sup>28</sup> activity through a multi-format collection of tactical pamphlets which gave voice to manifestations of the international counter-culture. Included were letters and poems from 'Beat' contributors; manifestos such as 'The Invisible Insurrection' (*Sigma Portfolio* .no. 2) or 'Manifesto Situationiste: Sigma Edition' (*Sigma Portfolio* .no. 18); personal essays such as 'Revolt: McClure' from the American poet Michael McClure (*Sigma Portfolio* .no. 21), or the 'The Present Situation' from the anti-psychiatrist R.D. Laing (*Sigma Portfolio* .no. 6); as well as data related to the Project Sigma such as 'Public Relations' (*Sigma Portfolio* .no. 17) or 'Subscription Form' (*Sigma Portfolio*.no. 12). Together with these, *Sigma Portfolio* incorporated two other formats. One was 'The Moving Times' (*Sigma Portfolio*.no. 1), a title courtesy of the writer and Sigma contributor William Burroughs, whose format also echoed his use of cut-ups [FIGURE.1.1]. It aimed to bring together world-wide contributions 'relevant to our moving times' in an A2 broadsheet format, a sort of 'poster-perversion' of the official newspaper. It was to be posted within the advertising space of the London Underground network, but also in certain alternative bookshops, coffee-shops and art galleries, 'wherever it can conveniently be exposed' as Trocchi affirms.<sup>29</sup> Indeed, due to its public nature, a certain 'subtlety of subversion' was essential.<sup>30</sup> The other format was 'Potlatch' (*Sigma Portfolio* .no. 4), a folio-sized pamphlet which echoed the Lettrist publication of the same name. It initiated an interpersonal polemic, 'with all kinds of layers and laminations and possibilities for satire', and due to its private quality, there was 'no limit to what it could become'.<sup>31</sup>

The Fun Palace's broadsheet arrived in *Sigma Portfolio* no. 11 'hot from the writer's pan', in its spirit of direct communication.<sup>32</sup> The broadsheet had been produced for the Lea Valley Press Conference held on July 20, 1964, when the report entitled *A Lea Valley Regional Park* commissioned by the East London Boroughs to the Civic Trust was presented at a public event amidst dignitaries, including the Duke of Edinburgh and the local government minister. The broadsheet was designed to explain for the first time what the Fun Palace was in a direct way to such an official culture, while simultaneously, its multi-format design

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<sup>27</sup> Andrew Murray Scott, *Alexander Trocchi: The Making of the Monster* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1991), 126.

<sup>28</sup> Alexander Trocchi, 'Manifesto Situationiste: Sigma Edition', *Sigma Portfolio*, no. 18 (1964): 4.

<sup>29</sup> Alexander Trocchi, 'Letter to C. Price', July 1964, folder DR1995:0188:525:002:003, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

<sup>30</sup> Alexander Trocchi, 'Potlatch', *Sigma Portfolio*, no. 4 (1964): 2.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, 6.

<sup>32</sup> Trocchi, 'Subscription Form', 1.

MOVING TIMES

# The Moving Times

**Comment**  
project sigma

**William Burroughs**  
**Robert Creeley**  
**Alexander Trocchi**  
**Uncle Tom Cobbley**  
... etc.

**general editor : A. Trocchi**  
**associate editor : J. Nuttall**

**the real climate**  
by Kenneth White

**the barbecue**  
by Alexander Trocchi

**martin's folly** by William Burroughs

**TOP FIFTY**  
BOOKS & RECORDS

**LEONARDO CARTOON**  
THE THEATER

PROJECT SIGMA PROJECT SIGMA PROJECT SIGMA

title by courtesy of  
W. Burroughs  
price 2/- U.K.  
25 Cents U.S.A.

FIGURE 1.1: Alexander Trocchi, "The Moving Times" broadsheet, p. 1, *Sigma Portfolio: A New Dimension in the Dissemination of Informations*, no. 1, 1964. Special Collections, National Library of Scotland.

reached alternative contexts such as Sigma. The archival record 'pamphlets distributed to',<sup>33</sup> dated the same day of the Press Conference, registers this ambivalent intent within the Fun Palace communications. A list of thirty-eight names represents the array of diverse actors and agencies involved in the distribution of the Fun Palace broadsheet: here representatives of London County Council (LCC), left-wing politicians and journalists share space with the main authors and collaborators, but also with a plural set of contributors such as the architectural critics Reyner Banham and Roy Landau, Theatre Workshop's actor Brian Murphy, and of course, Alex Trocchi. The distribution list of the broadsheet shows not only the expanded conversation stimulated by the Fun Palace project at the time, but also more specifically the Fun Palace network in operation. If intensity of commitment is indicated by the number of broadsheets assigned to each name, Littlewood's principal role is defined by the 100 units that she received. Alex Trocchi appears to be a main agent, with '30 +36' broadsheets assigned,<sup>34</sup> which are over the sixty of Theatre Workshop member Brian Murphy, the thirty of Price's chief assistant Stephen Mullin, and the twenty-four of the Labour Party member Ian Mikardo. The rudimentary delivery methods rely on 'post' or 'hand', which Sigma had identified as 'effective communications', and evidence the close exchange, even touch, within the Fun Palace network. The 'confidential' label written in many textual records of the project, or warnings such as Price's 'no drawings of the (Fun Palace) project can be issued before August 1963',<sup>35</sup> inform further the thesis of a slow, unmediated and stealthy communication of the Fun Palace idea within the network. The Fun Palace broadsheet emerges here as an inchoate 'site of information' in itself, intertwined with Trocchi's *Sigma Portfolio*.<sup>36</sup> The shared interest in the stimulation of appetites for learning beyond formal structures would lead to later encounters, such as the Anti-University in London in 1968.<sup>37</sup> In it, the Sigma network was fully operating (amidst new voices such as Gustav Mezger's Auto

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<sup>33</sup> Littlewood and Price, 'Pamphlets Distributed to', c.1964, folder DR1995:0188:525:002, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

<sup>34</sup> In an updated version of the record 'pamphlets distributed to' 30 pamphlets are added to Trocchi, which shows the intensification of the collaboration between Sigma and Fun Palace networks. 'Pamphlets Distributed to 19641205', 5 December 1964, folder DR1995:0188:525:003, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

<sup>35</sup> Description of the Fun Palace Project as part of Price's proposal for the National Theatre and Opera House Competition. Cedric Price, 'Description of Relevant Work. Entertainment Centre Development, London, Sheet 8', 19 June 1963, DR1995:0207:001:005, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

<sup>36</sup> The intertwining of the Fun Palace and Sigma 'sites' goes beyond the publication of the broadsheet in *Sigma Portfolio* no. 11. In a meeting between Price and Trocchi plans for 'sigmatic Christmas Cards—some of which could contain F.P drawings of written information' are mentioned, as well as 'forms of further co-operation agreed' Alexander Trocchi, 'Letter to C.Price', 24 October 1964, folder DR1995:0188:525:002:003, Cedric Price fonds, CCA..

<sup>37</sup> Anti-University, as its manifesto claims, was a 'revolutionary experiment', which was 'founded in response to the intellectual bankruptcy and spiritual emptiness of the educational establishment' of the Western World. It offered a 'meeting ground for discussion (and) discovery 'to radical artists, activists and intellectuals in order to foster 'social integrity and commitment'. 'Catalogue of Second Quarter. Anti-University of London', 1968. Folder DR1995:0320, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

The diagram shows the requirements of the ideal site. Although equally applicable to Liverpool, Tokyo, Chicago or Odessa, the first complex is to be built in London. The following sites are amongst those under investigation.

1. A site within the Civic Trust's Lea Valley plan in East London.
2. A Thames side site in Central London.
3. The forecourt area of a combined main-line terminal and underground station.
4. A central city site within an existing commercial and entertainment area.

The deliberate temporary nature of the complex enables a wide range of sites to be investigated since it allows long-term plans for the site to be prepared while the site is fully used. For the same reason the complex will act as a unique 'field study' in the realm of urban planning.

### For your delight

Joan Littlewood, with architects, designers, engineers, 24 hours a day, space, light, movement, air, sun, water, in a new dimension.

Joan Littlewood, with architects, designers, engineers, 24 hours a day, space, light, movement, air, sun, water, in a new dimension.

## Joan Littlewood presents the

# FIRST GIANT SPACE MOBILE IN THE WORLD

it moves in light turns winter into summer....toy....

## EVERYBODY'S what is it?

The whole project is governed by a Trust at present being established.

Trustees include Lord Harewood, Professor Buckminster Fuller, Yehudi Menuhin, Professor Ritchie Calder.

Space, enclosures, equipment and time will be available to international, national and private organisations.

In addition to the Trust's advisers and staff, National and local authorities will co-operate in the detailed formulation of the activities.

Direction will be in the hands of teachers, scientists and artists.

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**ARRIVE AND LEAVE** by train, bus, monorail, hovercraft, car, tube or foot at any time YOU want to - or just have a look at it as you pass. The information screens will show you what's happening. No need to look for an entrance - just walk in anywhere. Nodders, foyers, queues or commissionaires: it's up to you how you use it. Look around - take a lift, a ramp, an escalator to wherever or whatever looks interesting.

**CHOOSE** what you want to do - or watch someone else doing it. Learn how to handle tools, paint, babies, machinery, or just listen to your favourite tune. Dance, talk or be lifted up to where you can see how other people make things work. Sit out over space with a drink and tune in to what's happening elsewhere in the city. Try starting a riot or beginning a painting - or just lie back and stare at the sky.

**WHAT TIME IS IT?** Any time of day or night, winter or summer - it really doesn't matter. If it's too wet that roof will stop the rain but not the light. The artificial cloud will keep you cool or make rainbows for you. Your feet will be warm as you watch the stars - the atmosphere clear as you join in the chorus. Why not have your favourite meal high up where you can watch the thunderstorm?

**WHY ALL THIS LOT?** "If any nation is to be lost or saved by the character of its great cities, our own is that nation!" - Robert Vaughan 1843

We are building a short-term plaything in which all of us can realise the possibilities and delights that a 20th Century city environment owes us. It must last no longer than we need it.

**FIGURE 1.2:** Cedric Price and Joan Littlewood, Fun Palace Promotional Brochure, 1964. Black and red ink on reprographic copy paper, 36.2 × 59.8 cm. DR1995:0188:001:023. Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

POUR FINS D'ÉTUDE SEULEMENT  
Propriété du  
Centre Canadien d'Architecture, Montréal  
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Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal

Destructive Art), and Price became involved as visiting faculty, evidencing the sustained interaction and growth between Sigma and the Fun Palace networks.

What the broadsheet successfully represented was the major architectural realization of the Fun Palace idea, the 'Major Fun Palace'. It is worth analysing the ludic quality of the Fun Palace broadsheet as it relates to the broader context of the *Sigma Portfolio* to understand the 'metacategorical method' operating here. What is evident is a playful transfer from content to format, and ultimately to idea. Play, as the anthropologist Gregory Bateson explains, is a form of 'metacommunication'- or communication across different levels where denotative and connotative meanings are exchanged simultaneously - whose principal quality is paradox. Play, as happens with fantasy as well, is not an action, but a frame for those actions which really do not mean what they appear to mean. Essentially, as Bateson claims, human communication needs paradoxes to evolve, and the role of play (and fantasy) is to provide the frame for this to happen.<sup>38</sup>

Like the *Sigma Portfolio*, the Fun Palace broadsheet [FIGURE. 1.2] is itself a multiple assemblage of information aimed at a plurality of audiences. A folded A2-sheet divides the space into different sections which are allocated to a playbill, a double page drawing, a narrative description of the experience, a programme of activities offered, and technical information regarding the current state of the Project's development as well as management procedures and credits. Such a multi-layout media matches an environment itself designed to be 'multilateral rather than comprehensive'.<sup>39</sup> In the first section, a playbill advertises the show: 'Joan Littlewood presents the / FIRST GIANT / SPACE MOBILE/ IN THE WORLD/ it moves in light / turns winter into / summer (...) toy (...) / EVERYBODY's / what is it?'.<sup>40</sup> This draws on the tradition of the fair and its 'carnavalesque laughter' – festive, universal and ambivalent, in Mikhail Bakhtin's terms that lay at the core of the Fun Palace idea.<sup>41</sup> The play element knits together the festive content and ludic purpose of the experiment. On the one hand, the colossal mechanism is 'the first (...) in the world' to offer such superlative fantasy and accessible fun to everyone. On the other hand, it raises a sharp critique of the institutionalized world, a world for which fun is nothing more than a 'voluntary greed marketable commodity'.<sup>42</sup> On the reverse side of the broadsheet, a double-page

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<sup>38</sup> Gregory Bateson, 'A Theory of Play and Fantasy', in *Steps to an Ecology of Mind: Collected Essays in Anthropology, Psychiatry, Evolution, and Epistemology* (Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 177–93.

<sup>39</sup> Cedric Price and Joan Littlewood, 'Fun Palace, Camden, London', *Architectural Design* 37 (November 1967), 522.

<sup>40</sup> Littlewood and Price, Fun Palace Promotional Brochure, 1964. DR1995:0188:001:023, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

<sup>41</sup> Bakhtin's thesis on 'carnavalesque laughter' would not reach English audiences until 1968. Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, 12–13.

<sup>42</sup> Price, 'Autumn Always Gets Me Badly' in 'Cedric Price Talks at the AA'. *AA Files*, no. 19, Spring (1990): 27–34

diagrammatic 'cut-away view' draws the field of play. In it, the programmatic zones such as 'inflatable conference hall' or 'news panel' overlap onto the line drawing, as instructed by Littlewood.<sup>43</sup> This diagrammatic communication can only express rules of the game, whereas the play experience itself is communicated in a colourful narrative description that, in the lower strip of the page, accompanies the drawing. 'Choose what you want to do' is the essence of the fun-as-pleasure experience, according to Price.<sup>44</sup> An offer of 28 pleasures, such as 'Battles of flowers' or 'Genius Chat', leads on to what seems to be the summative phrase of the playbill: 'for your delight'.<sup>45</sup> But the ludic critique is equally represented here: The fun experience continues to evolve underneath a large fading title in art-deco red capital letters, with the name 'Fun Palace' covering the whole strip.<sup>46</sup> We can read here how the ironic mood affects the whole experience inside this 'giant space mobile'. Play, both as pleasurable narrative and as critical mood, are the figure and ground map of the strip, and by extension, the quality of the whole environment which the Fun Palace aims to build. It is in this double sense of play which is a feature of many of Littlewood's theatrical productions, where we find precisely the 'metacategorical method' upon which Trocchi plans to outflank bureaucracies subtly to initiate their cultural revolt.

However, as with 'The Moving Times', the irony spread across the various messages included in the Fun Palace broadsheet had to be carefully pitched due to its public nature. The design had to bridge the gap between official and alternative audiences: As 'The Moving Times' had to be accepted on the advertising boards of the London Underground network, similarly, the Fun Palace had to satisfy the authorities overseeing the plans for Lea Valley Regional Park Development. Here a first 'sigmatic' quality of the Fun Palace project emerges in the need to be audience inclusive. Inclusiveness is fostered through the multi-format communication strategy of the broadsheet, with its diverse set of sections on display. Inclusive is as well the space announced as 'everbody's (...) toy' in the playbill, designed to be highly accessible 'by train, bus, monorail, hovercraft, car, tube or foot'.<sup>47</sup> Similarly, the eclectic collection of texts gathered together in 'The Moving Times' and the varied formats within *Sigma Portfolio* demonstrate Trocchi's inclusive approach as clearly distinct from Guy Debord's exclusive Situationist vision,<sup>48</sup> and helps us to appreciate the position of the Fun Palace against the polarized field of Situationist polemics.

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<sup>43</sup> Littlewood and Price, 'Draft Section for the Fun Palace Promotional Brochure', c 1964, DR1995:0188:525:001:004, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

<sup>44</sup> Price, 'Autumn Always Gets Me Badly'.

<sup>45</sup> Littlewood and Price, Fun Palace Promotional Brochure, 1964.

<sup>46</sup> The name chosen: 'Fun Palace' is pregnant with mockery, as Cedric Price recalls: 'Surely, we thought with such a nonsensical, nauseatingly fey title, we could hide or hang any use on it we wished', activities which he had defined as 'disparate, free-choice, free-time voluntary'. Cedric Price, 'Cedric Price Talks at the AA'.

<sup>47</sup> Littlewood and Price, Fun Palace Promotional Brochure, 1964.

<sup>48</sup> Scott, *Alexander Trocchi*.

A second property of the Fun Palace project that is closely linked to this inclusive ethic is the accessibility of the communication and the space itself. Both the Fun Palace broadsheet and the *Sigma Portfolio* aimed at a direct communication between author and audience, one in which mediation could be minimized. As a media event, the Fun Palace broadsheet could overcome bureaucratic organization through the subscription and postage model of distribution within the Sigma network, or even be immediately handled within the Fun Palace network. As a designed space, an unmediated environment emerges within the lines written in the broadsheet. The narrative strip directly points at us with capital letters: 'YOU', while claiming that the project had 'no doors, foyers, queues or commissionaires'.<sup>49</sup> It opens to us a democratic space embedded in the ideal of freedom where there is 'no obligation to buy'.<sup>50</sup> A subtle mediation is, however, present within the words describing the experience in the broadsheet: an 'artificial cloud will keep you cool or make rainbows for you'.<sup>51</sup> Indeed the idea of a cybernetic system underpins the design with the aim of indicating a means towards effective social emancipation.

Two cultural references come to mind when discussing accessibility as direct and non-mediated communication between authors and audiences. Immediacy is, via the Brechtian legacy, part of the claim for a critically-engaged authorial agency, for which authors become producers and argument activate thinking on the part of the audience about the relations of production that underpin daily experience.<sup>52</sup> Littlewood, Price and the Sigma network are operative writers, as these 'sites of information' are operative media in accordance with Walter Benjamin's discussion of Brecht's theatre. Alternatively, critical readings of the slow and tactile mode of operation of these 'sites of information' emerge drawing on Paul Virilio's theorizations on media. In his view, the militarized speed governing new media actually outpaces any resistant position, producing 'an immobile spectator of action, not a mobile participant'.<sup>53</sup> It has been argued that such an immediate communication within Sigma's 'site of information' becomes an important part of the way experience was actively shared.<sup>54</sup> If the highly technological appearance of the Fun Palace Project seems to imply an impersonal and machinic relay of information, it was - on the contrary - the slow and covert ways in which confidential information was stealthily handled and passed on that was crucial to the

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<sup>49</sup> Littlewood and Price, Fun Palace Promotional Brochure, 1964.

<sup>50</sup> 'Littlewood's Handwritten Draft of Fun Palace Promotional Literature, Page 3', c 1964, DR1995:0188:525:001:005, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

<sup>51</sup> Littlewood and Price, Fun Palace Promotional Brochure, 1964.

<sup>52</sup> Benjamin, *Understanding Brecht*, 88.

<sup>53</sup> Sean Cubitt, 'Virilio and New Media', in *Paul Virilio: From Modernism to Hypermodernism and Beyond* (London (UK), United Kingdom: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2000), 127–42.

<sup>54</sup> Michael Gardiner, *From Trocchi to Trainspotting. Scottish Critical Theory Since 1960* (Edinburgh University Press, 2006).

affective bonding together of the members of the network and the positive impact it maintained throughout the decade.

Mobility is the third sigmatic property that emerges from the broadsheet. The giant space mobile is actually inviting us to move with it, as with the similar claims of 'The Moving Times' in the *Portfolio*.<sup>55</sup> Movement is used as a metaphor for the stealthy self-transformation named 'learning' in the Fun Palace or '(r)evolt' in Sigma. As Trocchi affirms in his Invisible Insurrection manifesto 'we must reject the conventional fiction of "unchanging human nature". There is no such permanence anywhere. There is only becoming'.<sup>56</sup> In spatial terms, an environment designed to last no more than ten years stands for the temporary nature of the design:<sup>57</sup> 'it must last no longer than we need it'.<sup>58</sup> The condition of perpetual provisionality and contingency of the Fun Palace idea enacts Littlewood's own mobile condition, with her frequent changes of postal address as the internal memo 'JL Movements Autumn 1964' manifests.<sup>59</sup> In the broadsheet this is reinforced by the constant lack of a stable physical site for the palace's construction. A sort of feasibility study included in one of the sections, defines the 'ideal site', speculates about its location across the globe and lists four possibilities 'under investigation' in London. But, of course, many equals none. Instead, the materializations of the Fun Palace idea were to occur, in an ever-evolving state of flux, in the imprints it left in different hosting media such as the *Sigma Portfolio*.<sup>60</sup> In a sense, the multiple representations included in the Fun Palace broadsheet extend to the non-structured assemblage of the *Sigma Portfolio*, and testify to an irreducible plurality and mobility that resists any representational stabilization of the idea itself, considered here in its broader cultural scope.

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<sup>55</sup> Alexander Trocchi, 'The Moving Times', *Sigma Portfolio*, no. 1 (1964).

<sup>56</sup> Trocchi, 'Invisible Insurrection of a Million Minds', 1.

<sup>57</sup> Price and Littlewood, 'The Fun Palace', 130.

<sup>58</sup> Littlewood and Price, Fun Palace Promotional Brochure, 1964.

<sup>59</sup> 'Internal Memo, JL Movements Autumn 1964', August 11, 1964. Folder DR1995:0188:525:002:003, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

<sup>60</sup> Together with the broadsheet, a seemingly unfinished film produced by Mithras Films, London in 1964 was part of the promotional media designed to communicate the Fun Palace project within an expanded audience. Shot in black and white on 16mm format, it consists of an intermittent documentary of scenes about everyday pleasures enjoyed by ordinary men, intertwined by clownery. In line with Littlewood's theatrical productions and the British Free Cinema of the 1950s, the low tech and improvised assemblage of effective immediacy, reinforces the claim for freedom for the ordinary man 'Fun Palace Film', c 1964, DR2003:0006, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

## **Bubble City and the evolution of the playground idea**

The withdrawal of the Fun Palace Project from the Lea Valley Regional Plan in 1966 is a story carefully elaborated by Stanley Mathews.<sup>61</sup> It occurred, not surprisingly, soon after the publication in 1965 of the Labour Party's White Paper 'A Policy for the Arts: the First Steps'. Despite its well-received intentions to democratize the living arts and activate public participation in them, at the same time the proposal relied on the Arts Council for the implementation of its ambitious programme. In Cedric Price's view, such an 'extraordinarily conservative organization (...) is scarcely the ideal medium of patronage to achieve the breakthrough to total enjoyment of the arts implied in the White Paper'.<sup>62</sup> The lack of institutional support, from the Arts Council as much as from the planning authorities, constituted a moment of crisis for the Fun Palace project itself. But at the same time, this brought more opportunity to renew it in alternative formats. A letter of c. 1965 from Joan Littlewood to Mrs Peggy Jay, the Chairman of the Parks Committee of the recently-formed Greater London Council (GLC), sets out the wide-ranging educational scope of the project, assuring its ongoing active condition through renewed contexts outside London, and Littlewood's determination to keep developing it:

*I have been occupied for the last 9 months 1. With starting a Fun Palace in Tunisia, 2. With making enough money to support the work for this experiment in London (...)/The need for street corner education-toys, like the Fun Palace, is I think understood and I do not underestimate the virtue of English democracy but I am sad that old infra-mafia-movement which haunts bureaucracies should be holding up the chance of new systems of education starting here. /London should have been the first place and our brightest brains should be diverted to the problems of the future, while the old Jesuits deal so cleverly with the mess made of the past. / Of course, I have no intention of giving up the campaign here (...).<sup>63</sup>*

From 1965 onward, the Fun Palace project would inspire a wide range of experiences enhancing different assets according to the sensitivity of its leadership. The first opportunity available for a pilot Fun Palace, in Littlewood's view, took the form of a one-month training course on 'free, living and authentic theatre' at the International Summer School, Le Centre Hammamet? (...)The Fun Palace is necessary anywhere'.<sup>64</sup> On his part, Cedric Price could

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<sup>61</sup> Mathews, *From Agit-Prop to Free Space*.

<sup>62</sup> Cedric Price, 'Observations on "A Policy for the Arts" Government White Paper', in Ellis Hillman ed., *Essays in Local Government Enterprise* (London: The Merlin Press, 1965), 173–74.

<sup>63</sup> Littlewood, 'Letter to Mrs. Peggy Jay', TRSE Archive Collection.

<sup>64</sup> Littlewood, *Joan's Book*, 727–28.



**FIGURE 1.3:** Theatre Royal Stratford East in the 1970s. Theatre Royal Stratford East Archive Collection.

Culturel in Hammamet, Tunisia.<sup>65</sup> 'We've no place for a Pilot/ I wouldn't say no to test more closely the Fun Palace idea in his Feasibility Study for an Information Hive in the Oxford Corner House, London, between 1965 and 1966. However, according to the contract extended by the developers, 'your work with the Fun Palace trustees should be excluded from this undertaking'.<sup>66</sup> Despite the seriousness of this clause, an ironic and playful handwritten document by Joan Littlewood on Price's official paper, included in the same archival folder, situates her in the scene. Littlewood's non-official voice is addressed to 'Le Grand Anti-Arch', in what could be the record of a relaxed conversation with Price presumably some time in 1965.<sup>67</sup> Her blue handwritten musings, such as 'will people pay for entry or activities?' or her rants and raves about 'clubs must go' or 'oh, the lovely capitalists', are supported by black ink 'yep' in what seems to be Price's hand. A feeling of the mutual understanding achieved can be sensed, although each would lead the Fun Palace project through divergent paths.

Under the name 'Stratford Fair', Joan Littlewood set to develop her 'university of the streets' as a range of coordinated, tactical and self-organized temporary playgrounds and fairs in the vacant sites near the Theatre Royal in Stratford East from 1967 to 1975 [FIGURE 1.3]. Helped by a broad team of collaborators from her ensemble Theatre Workshop, Price's role was focussed on gaining planning permission on behalf of the governing Fun Palace Trust, a charitable body constituted in 1966. The overall aim remained the same - namely, to contest the idea of progress promoted by top-down institutional structures of governance, and the ludic form was maintained. But the focus now became local, the quality performative, and the audience shifted more specifically to the youth of the Stratford community. Here, the Fun Palace project moves to enhance continuous education for active citizenship through place-making and community building, and achieves a more active socio-political efficacy.<sup>68</sup>

A new 'site of information' captures this idea of playground in which the Fun Palace project had been renewed. *Bubble City* is a small, concise and critical A5 pamphlet written by Joan Littlewood, designed by Oscar Tapper, and published by the Fun Palace Trust in 1968 [FIGURE 1.4]. In line with the *Sigma Portfolio* and the Fun Palace broadsheet, the pamphlet collates a heterogeneous set of information. Voices which include opening quotes from *Archigram* and Max Born, pages from Littlewood's diary, inserts from the local newspaper

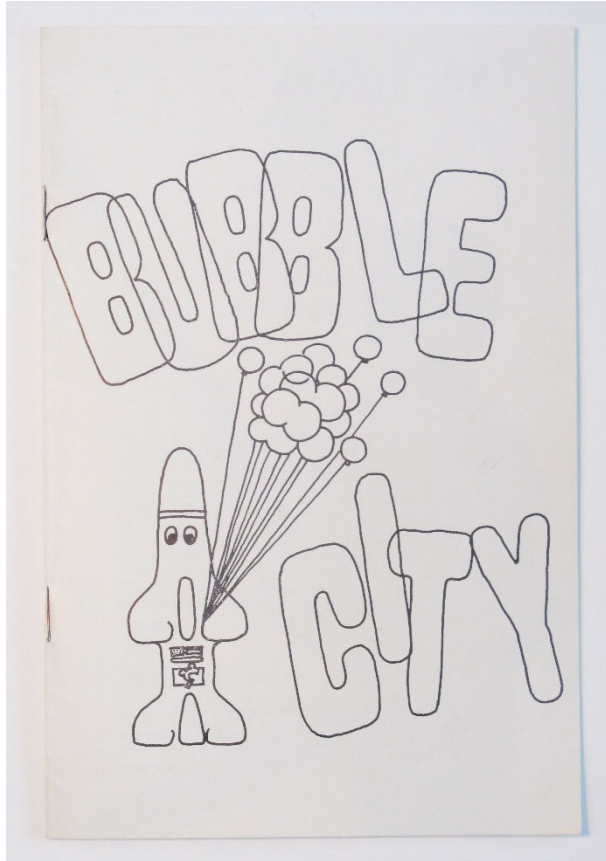
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<sup>65</sup> 'Littlewood, Rene Allio, Jan Kott, at Hammamet', International Theatre Informations Internationales, August 1965, 121, folder DR1995:0225, Cedric Price fonds CCA.

<sup>66</sup> J. Lyons & Co. Ltd., 'Letter to Cedric Price', October 14, 1965, 3, folder DR1995:0224:342:002, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

<sup>67</sup> Untitled handwritten memo by Littlewood and Price, n.d, folder DR1995:0224:342:002, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

<sup>68</sup> Nadine Holdsworth, *Joan Littlewood's Theatre* (Cambridge: University Press, 2011), 234.



**FIGURE 1.4:** Joan Littlewood, *Bubble City* pamphlet, cover page, 1968.  
Theatre Royal Stratford East Archive Collection.

*The Stratford Express* and excerpts from legislative texts mix with photographs of the debris surrounding Stratford East, child-like drawings of inflatables and ludic toys made by young designers and artists. These are accompanied by practical information on activist groups in East London and a questionnaire for volunteers. But unlike to the fragmented *Portfolio*, Joan Littlewood's words are intertwined here within the structured nineteen-page pamphlet to develop a coherent and critical argument. In what reads like one of her theatre scripts, an overall critique of top-down urban renewal processes grows steadily and rhythmically through the sequence of dissonant scene-like pages.

Accompanied by the silhouette of a boy, an opening question initiates Littlewood's enquiry about the educative role of the playground in the formation of the subjectivities of local young people: 'What will I be? Tinker, tailor, soldier, sailor, richman, spaceman, con-man, thief?'<sup>69</sup> Juxtaposed contradictory information follows in order to ironize the possibility of deriving a liveable environment from 'official' rules. For instance, excerpts from the Civic Amenities Act of 1967 about tree provision or prohibitions regarding the abandonment of junk, are confronted with real photographs of a 'tree-less area' or a 'dumped car' parked in the street [FIGURE 1.5]. Such satire is a hallmark of Littlewood's productions: in her acclaimed *Oh What a Lovely War!* (1963) the dramatic data of the official war game, which is on display in the backstage, becomes enacted through the festive atmosphere of the music-hall performance, designed to present the ordinary soldier's view and life through popular war songs.<sup>70</sup>

Environmental deterioration is only one aspect of overall socio-cultural deprivation, in which education emerges as a major issue. On page nine of the pamphlet, a diagnosis of the negative effects upon children of a deficient educative service grows from data gathered between 1952 and 1968 referencing the UNESCO conference on illiteracy held in 1966 in Tunisia:

*1968-(...) low standards in education, a run-down environment, the break-up of old patterns of social relationship, leave children ill-equipped to face adult life; drifting from one menial job to another, bored and semi-illiterate, no outlet for their natural intelligence, no training in decision making, they burn up their energy in smash-ups, in stealing and outwitting the adults who mostly hate and fear them; and a nation's prosperity depends on the educational level of its citizens.*<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Littlewood, *Bubble City*, 2.

<sup>70</sup> John Elsom, *Post-War British Theatre* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1976), 114.

<sup>71</sup> Littlewood, *Bubble City*, 9.



**FIGURE 1.5:** Joan Littlewood, *Bubble City* pamphlet, p. 4, 1968. Theatre Royal Stratford East Archive Collection.

But beyond critique, *Bubble City* calls for action and draws a plan. 'A no-mans land' is presented in page three to stimulate action: 'what (...) to do'. The playground idea in the form of the 'Stratford Fair', is the new implementation of the Fun Palace project. It retains the focus – evident in the Camden Pilot Project or the Major Fun Palace - on the educative potential of the open air and public spaces of London, although now in minor form through a sequence of local events. It addresses the community with the main purpose of engaging them in the urban re-generation process commencing in Stratford East: 'the young need to participate in living'. And now, her collective action-oriented strategy is not anymore a dream, but a reality, as the past tense of the verbs indicate: '1967– A team of local children helped to clear rubble and dumped rubbish from a site in Salway Road, Stratford'.<sup>72</sup> Although the ambitions are more restrained in this phase, the efficacy of such a guerrilla attitude has proved to be immediately practical: 'it's not a Royal Park / but a symbol / that their place will keep on growing'.<sup>73</sup> As Littlewood reports to the trustee Buckminster Fuller in March 1968:

*These efforts are small in relation to the ideas set down for the "Fun Palace" but the work of taking over strips of war-time debris and transforming them, to supply the needs which assert themselves, has proved immediately practical.*<sup>74</sup>

A 'mobile fair' - as Littlewood explains to Fuller - is among the plans for the immediate future, for which 'a team of designers' will provide 'piped learning', a 'brain-bank' and 'street corner education toy[s]'.<sup>75</sup> The toys include Bruce Lacey's inflatable structure 'Journey through the Human Body / Humanoid' [FIGURE 1.6], Michael Leonard's audiovisual tower and the 'inflatable fun structure' of Simon Conelly, Mike Davies, Jonny Devas and David Martin. Child-like drawings of the inflatables, next to a questionnaire titled 'so mark the team you fancy', give expression to the overall intent to recruit for action.<sup>76</sup> The mobile condition of the fair affirms the steady, if not increasing, provisionality and contingency of the Fun Palace project, now far from the stable ten-year life span devised for its earlier realizations. This is intimated in the changeability of the inflatables designed: 'structures can be renewed, duplicated or improved and left where they are needed most';<sup>77</sup> in the lack of a venue three months ahead of the event while 'many sites are being investigated';<sup>78</sup> and in the fluctuating network of artists participating, with significant drop-outs like Peter Cook, but also with

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid, 9.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid, 9.

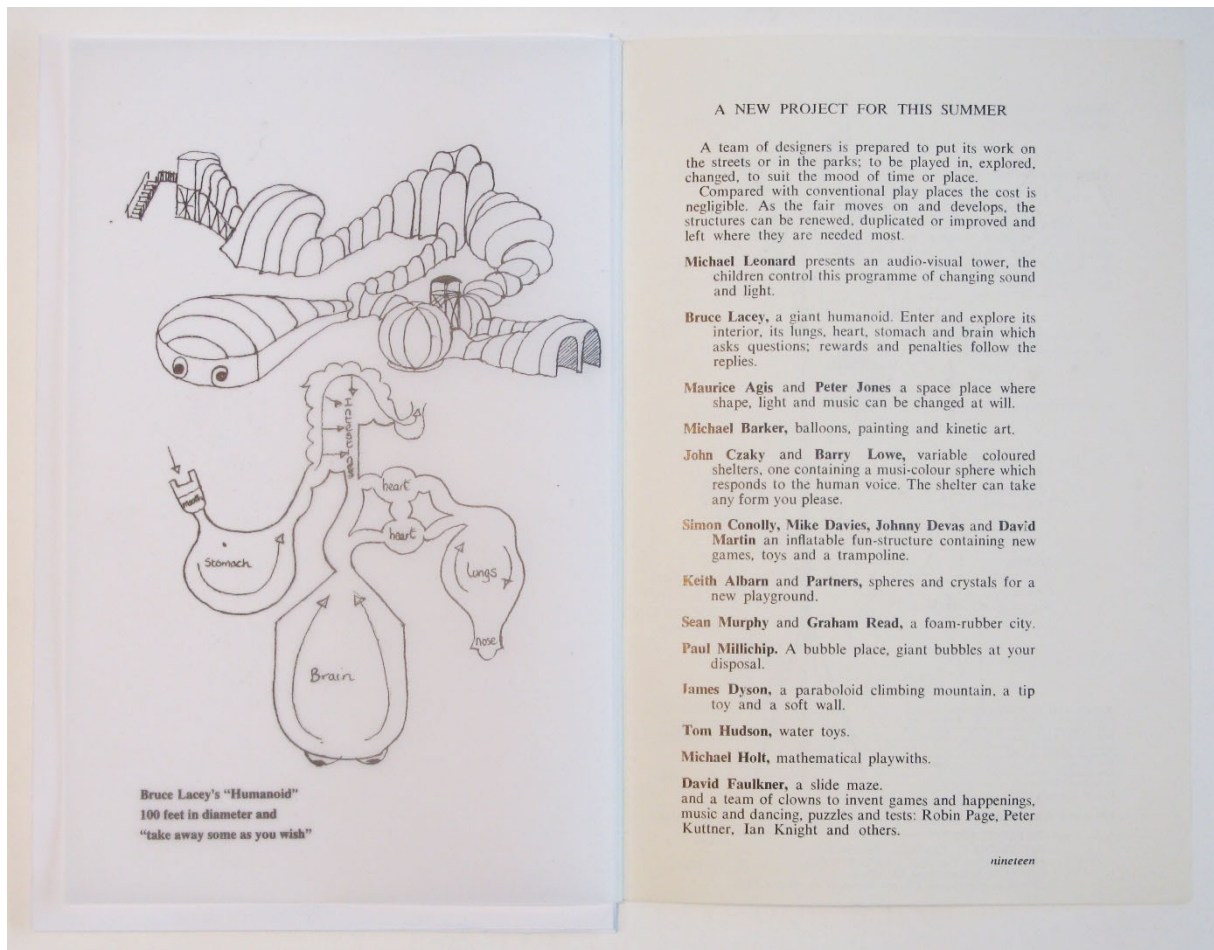
<sup>74</sup> Littlewood, 'Letter to Prof. R. Buckminster Fuller', March 25, 1968, DR1995:0188:525:003, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

<sup>75</sup> Littlewood, *Bubble City*, 17.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid, 19.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid, 19.

<sup>78</sup> Littlewood, 'Letter to Prof. R. Buckminster Fuller', 25 March 1968, DR1995:0188:525:003, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.



**FIGURE 1.6:** Joan Littlewood, *Bubble City* pamphlet, p. 19, 1968. Theatre Royal Stratford East Archive Collection.

additions such as Bruce Lacey. At the same time, the increasing diversification and extension of the Fun Palace network evidences the growing efficacy of the communicative outputs of this evolving site.

The overarching educational purpose of the playground idea is orientated by a concept of personal growth as a function of engagement in the transformation of the environment through collective action. In such a conception of education, performance takes a major role. And the territorialization of the idea, both social and physical, is now part of a continuum that starts at the theatre's stage and unfolds onto the streets. Not only does action take place simultaneously 'in theatre' and 'on the pitch' under the leadership of the art-director of the Theatre Workshop Robert Atkins,<sup>79</sup> but actors and neighbours are collectively reconstituted for action through team-work. Theatre Royal Stratford East, now transformed into a "'Learn-and-Play" Club', becomes the catalyst for the educative activities within its surroundings.<sup>80</sup> 'At its best (theatre) is the great educator, keeping our language alive, giving us the music and poetry which seem to identify us and add some value to our brief journey'.<sup>81</sup> Its principal role, in Littlewood's vision, is defined through a description of 'the Posh Night' at Theatre Royal - providing a magic circle in which judgements about hopelessness of reality can be suspended and despair transformed:

*The day's troubles (...) re-enacted; the boys (...) identifying themselves with the "enemy". Then, as the evening wore on, fantasy would enter. Ambitions, hopes, dreams and fears would be acted out (...)/The energy of violence can be channelled into genius.*<sup>82</sup>

The *Bubble City* pamphlet is itself street theatre. Not only does it take the form of a script for what could be Joan Littlewood's latest satirical production, but also the transference of theatre resources into the street playgrounds is credited in the pamphlet through the dual role of Una Collins, the stage designer for *Oh What a Lovely War!* and author of the child-like drawings of the inflatables.<sup>83</sup> Fundamentally 'Bubble', as a title suggests, seems to be the master-image of Littlewood's idea of theatre based on growth through performance,

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<sup>79</sup> Littlewood, '1st Draft Programme of Fair on Salway Road. Bank Holiday, Monday 31st' Box 'The Fun Palace Trust, The Fun Palace- Minutes'. TRSE Archive Collection.

<sup>80</sup> Littlewood, 'Letter to Dr. Connolly, (from Education Office, Stratford, London E15)', 11 January 1967. Folder DR1995:0188:525:003, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

<sup>81</sup> Littlewood and Raffles, 'Uses for Land Awaiting Redevelopment, 1967-1975, around Theatre Royal Stratford, London E15', p.36-37, c 1975. Folder DR1995:0188:525:001, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

<sup>82</sup> Littlewood, *Bubble City*, 13.

<sup>83</sup> The award winning *Oh What a Lovely War!* premiered at the Theatre Royal Stratford East on 19 March 1963, when an inchoate Fun Palace was already on the move. It staged a parody of the futility of war at a time when fresh nuclear threats of the Cold War were laid upon a city punched with bombsites. The clown imagery of pierrots and songs brought to life the story of the ordinary soldier in the frontline against a backdrop of destruction evidence. In loose white satin costumes, actors-pierrots were constituted into a collective aimed to entertain and inform their audience. For, as Littlewood put it: 'The War is a pierrot show. It's the right period and, after all, war is only for clowns.' In Littlewood, *Joan's Book*, 675.

according to the order in which questions are posed on pages thirteen and fourteen – ‘what is theatre?’, ‘is it a bubble?’, and the answer, ‘it very nearly was’.<sup>84</sup> As performance conquers the centre of Littlewood’s renewed Fun Palace, it also permeates inside the lines of the *Bubble City* pamphlet. Again in the manner of William Burrough’s cut-up technique, we see how the words themselves become ludic and metamorphic, themselves enacting the intended transformation: ‘This very day, Funday 16<sup>th</sup> July, beginneth the Falway Road Fun Place (...)’.<sup>85</sup>

Looking back to the first representation of the Fun Palace project within *Sigma Portfolio*, a final comment on the relation with the earlier proposals of inclusiveness, accessibility and mobility needs to be made. The *Bubble City* pamphlet does not share the ‘subtlety of subversion’ that accompanied ‘The Moving Times’ section. It does not function as a bridge between official and resistant positions, both located in any case in a cultured audience. Instead, *Bubble City* is made for the ordinary youth of Stratford East. So communication needs to be less polite and more accessible, since immediate action is a must. Accessibility is achieved here through the simple and concise quality of the critical pamphlet, its well-argued content, the intentionally unsophisticated but effective language and graphics used, with photographs of derelict surroundings followed by child-like drawings of inflatables, and the inserts of useful information when needed in the building of the overall critical argument. And lastly, with regard to mobility, the ever-growing provisionality and contingency of the idea is now manifested in the spontaneity and improvisation of the actions planned, now struggling to last merely a few days. *Bubble City*’s fluctuating content depicts an uncertain future very much dependent on the activity it manages to generate in the community.

## Conclusion

The analysis of the publicity designed for these two episodes in the evolution of the Fun Palace idea conveys the direction of its development during the 1960s. The general movement was toward a progressive intensification of focus and specificity, and at the same time, a loosening of design in favour of spontaneity and finally activism. This emerges

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid, 13–14.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid, 12.

through the qualities of the sites, both the physical territories defined and the communicative strategies devised within the mediating 'sites of information'.

In spatial terms, the Fun Palace broadsheet depicts a democratic space *par excellence* – an 'everybody's' toy – yet one that is directed to a *generic* audience. It takes the form of a 'laboratory of pleasure', and in doing so it defines a model of space detached from any *specific* site. Indeed, the carefully *designed* palace proposes a *generic* infrastructure that can be accommodated across the globe. Simultaneously defined as architecture-free, theatre-free and education-free, the overall claim of the palace was about a *general* freedom from any institutional context. At the same time, the big interior perspective shows the spatial configuration of an instant in this ever-changing mechanism. However, its spontaneity is governed by an invisible cybernetic system which 'make(s) rainbows for you'. The audience is directly acknowledged in capital letters – 'YOU' – but the play takes place in a technological stage that is already prepared. Considered as a media event, the early Fun Palace found many specific sites, both official such as the Lea Valley Development plan reports, and alternative such as the *Sigma Portfolio*. The *public* character of the Fun Palace broadsheet is evidenced in the need to reach such a diverse audience. So, in line with 'The Moving Times' section of the *Sigma Portfolio*, a certain 'subtlety of subversion' was implemented in its design.

By the end of the 1960s, and under the name of 'Stratford Fair', the Fun Palace idea evolves into a more informal and site-specific activity of place-making and community building. The new territory is now a continuum which starts at the theatre and unfolds in the 'as-found' neighbouring streets of Stratford East. The spatial model shifts into an event-model – self-organized and highly temporal playgrounds made by the local children. And the overall purpose becomes more focussed: education for active citizenship. In it, theatre plays a major role, and improvisation is now its rule. Meanwhile design and technology assist the overall performance, with the provision of inflatable toys when necessary. The *specificity* and *spontaneity* found across the pages of the little pamphlet *Bubble City* enhances the renewed Fun Palace idea. The audience and distribution is now localized in the ordinary community of Stratford East, so the upper-case 'YOU' of the broadsheet shifts to a lower-case 'us' in the pamphlet. Accessible and direct communication is devised to engage its young readers in action through a concise and coherent script-like pamphlet, which mixes visual and textual information of critical and practical intentionality. Contradictory information is not only juxtaposed to satirize the *specific* failures of 'official' culture in the neighbourhood, but also a play with words is located in the description of *specific* events- 'Funday 16<sup>th</sup> July'. Since no one 'makes rainbows for (...)us on the street, the desperate closing call for action: 'get your skates on!' unpacks the ever-growing provisional condition of the Fun Palace project.

## Chapter 2: From Filmed Pleasure to Fun Palace

The Fun Palace articulated a response to the ‘increased leisure’ affecting British post-war society. A critical model for cultural production in which civics met pleasure, the Fun Palace project aimed to construct *situations* for playful exchange in self-directed actions as a way to activate audiences. Pleasure for all – a ‘breakthrough to total enjoyment’<sup>1</sup> as opposed to existing commodified leisure – was its overarching critical agenda set against the elitist and interventionist Labour Government White Paper ‘A Policy for the Arts. The First Steps’. Enforcing class-based distinctions between the high arts and popular entertainment, state arts policy failed to address the key role played by media in the rise of the leisure society. In analysing British communications in the 1960s, the cultural critic Raymond Williams argued that, rather than fine art versus popular entertainment, social growth could only be achieved through the circulation of public and independent information, opportunities for which were at the time limited within the corporate structure of British media.<sup>2</sup>

Extensive scholarship to date grounds the significance of the Fun Palace as a visionary and emancipatory architecture<sup>3</sup>, while the constant circulation of its images inflects this stable conceptualization with values such as situationist undertaking,<sup>4</sup> ‘educreative’ megastructure,<sup>5</sup> public park of tomorrow,<sup>6</sup> experimental,<sup>7</sup> indeterminate<sup>8</sup> and future-responsive mobile,<sup>9</sup> to cite just a few. However, the history of the Fun Palace reception does not exhaust the complexities of this cultural project. Crucially, it is the role that media plays in the production and communication of the Fun Palace’s democratic ideals that demands closer attention. Struggling to find a site in the institutional map of London, the Fun Palace was disseminated through publicity. In constant search of support and funding, the need to reach broad audiences led to an evolving set of representations during the 1960s. Crafted through montage, a technique central to Littlewood’s theatre, to convey the idea to certain audiences through specific media, these images involved a strategy of ‘calculated omission’ – as Price

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<sup>1</sup> Price, ‘Observations on “A Policy for the Arts” Government White Paper’, 173.

<sup>2</sup> Williams, *Communications*.

<sup>3</sup> Particularly, Mathews’ *From Agit Prop to Free Space* and Hardingham’s *Cedric Price Works 1952-2003*, have thoroughly developed the argument..

<sup>4</sup> ‘Joan Littlewood Presents...’, Folio number 11 Trocchi, *Sigma Portfolio*.

<sup>5</sup> Reyner Banham, *Megastructure: Urban Futures of the Recent Past* (New York: Harper and Row, 1976), 86–88.

<sup>6</sup> George F. Chadwick, *The Park and the Town: Public Landscape in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (London: Architectural P, 1966), 369.

<sup>7</sup> Peter Cook, *Experimental Architecture* (London: Studio Vista Universe Books., 1976), 141.

<sup>8</sup> Royston Landau, *New Directions in British Architecture* (New York: G. Braziller, 1968), 74–75.

<sup>9</sup> Alvin Toffler, *Future Shock* (New York: Random House, 1970).

put it –'[...] that makes for rather a disjointed reading'.<sup>10</sup> Each representation-in-its-context defined a site of information, within which the Fun Palace was constituted and circulated. Among these, the unexplored Fun Palace film was key, for it most effectively intimates the social aspirations of the project. Drawing on a set of short films shot by Littlewood for the project, which have been made available only recently, as well as on additional archival records, this chapter reconstructs the shattered Fun Palace film as a montage which dramatizes the conditions of contemporary leisure production. Aimed to affect British consumerist audiences with pleasure, the film, this chapter argues, stands as a critical communicative model that sets the scene for a socialist alternative to modern urbanity.

The idea of a promotional film for the Fun Palace can be traced back in the archives to the beginnings of the project in 1962, when hopes were linked to the derelict banks of Glengall Wharf, Isle of Dogs, East London docks. The idea grew under strict confidentiality while the overall publicity strategy was being devised by Littlewood and Price, in close collaboration with the journalist and Labour politician Tom Driberg. It was 28 April 1963 when Joan Littlewood had first made the Fun Palace public in the BBC programme *Monitor*. A week later, Driberg further expanded the message in his column in the *Sunday Citizen*. However, it was not until 1964 that the Fun Palace gained momentum and the idea circulated in diverse editorial projects.

On 14 May 1964, 'A Laboratory of Fun', the first comprehensive description of the project written by Littlewood and Price, was published in the magazine *New Scientist* [FIGURE 2.1]. As Price commented for the occasion, 'since this was in a series called 1984, we avoided mentioning both the proposed sites and the practical completion dates'.<sup>11</sup> In it, the very first public image of the project was unveiled. The single drawing accompanying the text was an 'isometric diagram showing full width and two out of the 14 bays in the length of the complex'.<sup>12</sup> The elusive ethos of the whole article permeates this image. Beyond the indication of scale, it shows an abstract assemblage of components detached from any contextual reference. The isometric drawing bears close correspondence to the plans and sections of a drawing titled 'Film Model Information', which was produced to guide the construction of a model that would appear in the film.<sup>13</sup> In this, a double bay of the complex holding a range of suspended components such as auditoria, screens, escalators or 'speed ramps' that are operated by a high-level mobile gantry crane, is defined as the mobile set for

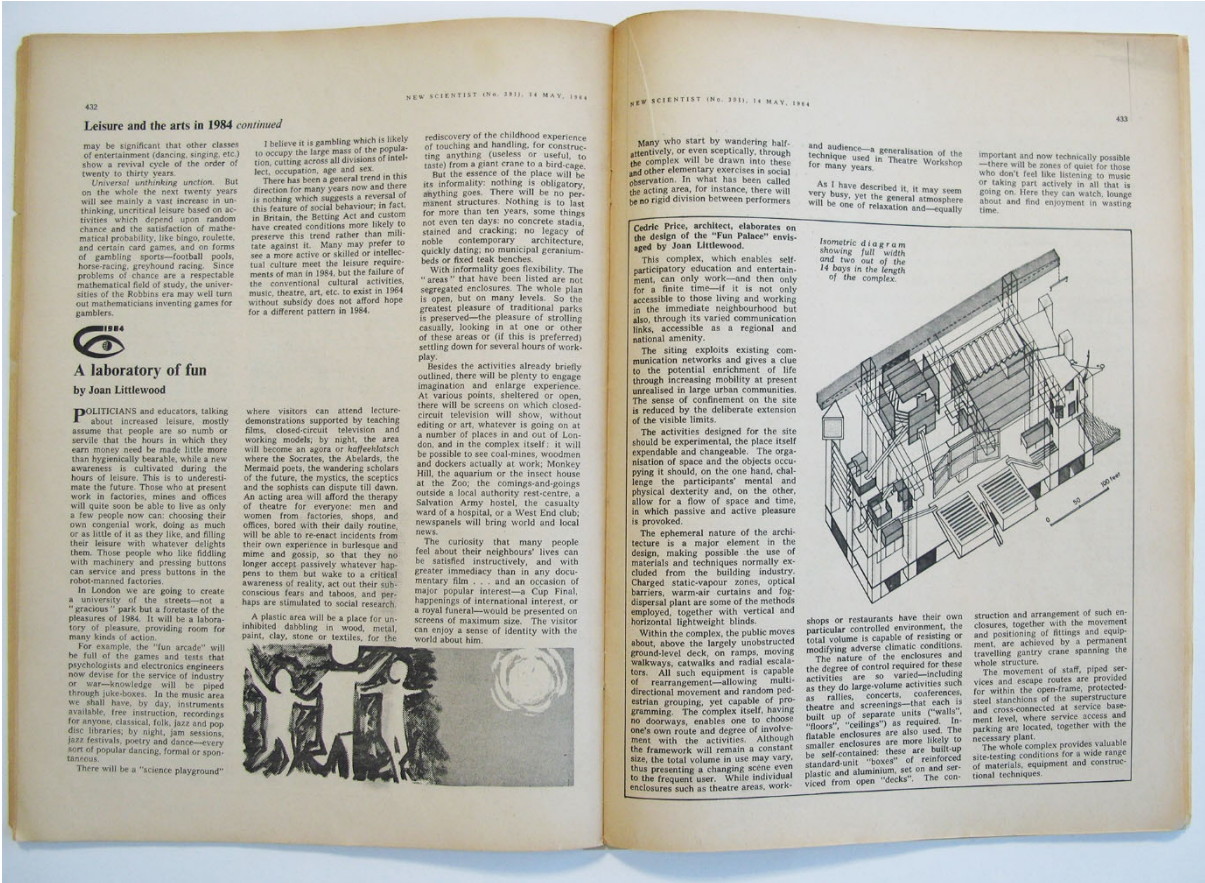
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<sup>10</sup> Price, 'Letter to John McMichael', 8 August 1963. Folder DR1995:0188:0525:002:001, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

<sup>11</sup> Price, 'Letter to Norman Fisher', 15 June 1964. Folder DR1995:0188:525:002:001, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.


<sup>12</sup> Littlewood and Price, 'A Laboratory of Fun', 432.

<sup>13</sup> Price, 'Film Model Information. Drawing Number 51/38', 18 February 1964. Folder DR1995:0188:302-321, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.



432  
**Leisure and the arts in 1984** *continued*

may be significant that other classes of entertainment (dancing, singing, etc.) show a revival cycle of the order of twenty to thirty years.  
Covered *unthinking* *unction*. But on the whole the next twenty years will see mainly a vast increase in unthinking, uncritical leisure based on activities which depend upon random chance and the satisfaction of mathematical probability, like bingo, roulette, and certain card games, and on forms of gambling sports—football pools, horse-racing, greyhound racing. Since problems of chance are a respectable mathematical field of study, the universities of the Robbins era may well turn out mathematicians inventing games for gamblers.

  
**A laboratory of fun**  
by Joan Littlewood

**P**OLITICIANS and educators, talking about increased leisure, mostly assume that people are so numb or servile that the hours in which they earn money need be made little more than hygienically bearable, while a new awareness is cultivated during the hours of leisure. This is to underestimate the future. Those who at present work in factories, mines and offices will quite soon be able to live as only a few people now can: choosing their own congenial work, doing as much or as little of it as they like, and filling their leisure with whatever delights them. Those people who like fiddling with machinery and pressing buttons can service and press buttons in the robot-managed factories.

In London we are going to create a university of the streets—not a "gracious" park but a laboratory of pleasure, providing room for many kinds of action.

For example, the "fun arcade" will be full of the games and tests that psychologists and electronics engineers now devise for the service of industry or war—knowledge will be piped through juke-boxes. In the music area we shall have, by day, instruments available, free instruction, recordings for anyone, classical, folk, jazz and pop disc, libraries, by night, jam sessions, jazz festivals, poetry and dance—every sort of popular dancing, formal or spontaneous.  
There will be a "science playground"

I believe it is gambling which is likely to occupy the large mass of the population, cutting across all divisions of intellect, occupation, age and sex.  
There has been a general trend in this direction for many years now and there is nothing which suggests a reversal of this feature of social behaviour in fact. In Britain, the Betting Act and custom have created conditions more likely to preserve this trend rather than militate against it. Many may prefer to see a more active or skilled or intellectual culture meet the leisure requirements of man in 1984, but the failure of the conventional cultural activities, dramatic, theatre, arts, etc. to exist in 1984 without subsidy does not afford hope for a different pattern in 1984.

where visitors can attend lecture-demonstrations supported by teaching films, closed-circuit television and working models; by night, the area will become an agora or kuffeubstsch where the Socrates, the Abelsards, the Mermaid poets, the wandering scholars of the future, the mystics, the sophists and the sophists can dispute till dawn. An acting area will afford the therapy of theatre for everyone: men and women from factories, shops, and offices, bored with their daily routine, will be able to re-enact incidents from their own experience in baroque and mime and gossip, so that they no longer accept passively whatever happens to them but wake to a critical awareness of reality, act out their subconscious fears and taboos, and perhaps are stimulated to social research.  
A plastic area will be a place for un-

paint, clay, stone or textiles, for the

recovery of the childhood experience of touching and handling, for constructing anything (useless or useful, to taste) from a giant crane to a bird-cage. But the essence of the place will be its informality: nothing is obligatory, anything goes. There will be no permanent structures. Nothing is to last for more than ten years, some things not even ten days: no concrete stadia, stained and cracking; no legacy of noble contemporary architecture, quickly dated; no municipal geranium-beds or fixed teak benches.  
With informality goes flexibility. The "areas" that have been listed are not segregated enclosures. The whole plan is open, but on many levels. So the greatest pleasure of traditional parks is preserved—the pleasure of strolling casually, looking in at one or other of these areas or (if this is preferred) setting down for several hours of work.

Besides the activities already briefly outlined, there will be plenty to engage imagination and enlarge experience. At various points, sheltered or open, there will be screens on which closed-circuit television will show, without editing or art, whatever is going on at a number of places in and out of London, and in the complex itself: it will be possible to see coalmines, woodmen and dockers actually at work, Monkey Hill, the aquarium or the insect house at the Zoo, the coming-and-goings outside a local authority rest-centre, a Salvation Army hostel, the casualty ward of a hospital, or a West End club, newspapers will bring world and local news.

The curiosity that many people feel about their neighbours' lives can be satisfied instructively, and with greater immediacy than in any documentary film... and an occasion of major popular interest—a Cup Final, happenings of international interest, or a royal funeral—would be presented on screens of maximum size. The visitor can enjoy a sense of identity with the world about him.



433  
**Leisure and the arts in 1984**

and audience—a generalization of the technique used in Theatre Workshop.  
As I have described it, it may seem very busy, yet the general atmosphere will be one of relaxation and—equally

**Cedric Price, architect, elaborates on the design of the "Fun Palace" envisaged by Joan Littlewood.**

This complex, which enables self-participatory education and entertainment, can only work—and then only for a finite time—if it is not only accessible to those living and working in the immediate neighbourhood but also, through its varied communication links, accessible as a regional and national amenity.

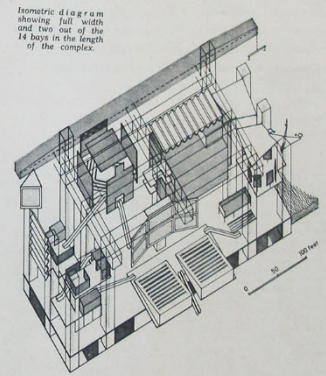
The siting exploits existing communication networks and gives a clue to the potential enrichment of life through increasing mobility at present uncared for in large urban communities. The sense of confinement on the site is reduced by the deliberate extension of the visible limits.

The activities designed for the site should be experimental, the place itself expandable and changeable. The organization of space and the objects occupying it should, on the one hand, challenge the participants' mental and physical dexterity and, on the other, allow for a flow of space and time, in which passive and active pleasure is provoked.

The ephemeral nature of the architecture is a major element in the design, making possible the use of materials and techniques normally excluded from the building industry. Charged static-vapour zones, optical barriers, warm-air curtains and fog-dispersal plants are some of the methods employed, together with vertical and horizontal lightweight blinds.

Within the complex, the public moves about, above the largely unobstructed ground-level deck, on ramps, moving walkways, catwalks and radial escalators. All such equipment is capable of rearrangement—allowing multidirectional movement and random pedestrian grouping, yet capable of programming. The complex itself, having no doorways, enables one to choose one's own route and degree of involvement with the activities. Although the framework will remain a constant size, the total volume in use may vary, thus presenting a changing scene even to the frequent user. While individual enclosures such as theatre areas, work-

shops or restaurants have their own particular controlled environment, the total volume is capable of resisting or modifying adverse climatic conditions. The nature of the enclosures and activities are so varied—including as they do large-volume activities such as rallies, concerts, conferences, theatre and screenings—that each is "floored", "ceilinged" as required. Inflatable enclosures are also used. The smaller enclosures are more likely to be self-contained: these are built up standard-unit "boxes" of reinforced plastic and aluminium, set on and serviced from open "decks". The construction and arrangement of such enclosures, together with the movement and positioning of fittings and equipment, are achieved by a permanent travelling gantry crane spanning the whole structure.



The whole complex provides valuable site-testing conditions for a wide range of materials, equipment and construction techniques.

**FIGURE 2.1:** Joan Littlewood and Cedric Price, 'A Laboratory of Fun', *New Scientist*, 14 May 1964.

the 'end of film sequence'. Hand-written comments in red ink over the simple-line sketches give instructions regarding how the 'model should break in half to enable camera to "pass through" the complex'.<sup>14</sup> The selection of the film set for the first public graphic representation of the Fun Palace idea, rather than the Fun Palace on its intended site, situates the production of the film as a priority in the 'publicity' agenda of the Fun Palace project. But also, it anticipates how film techniques permeate the communications of the Fun Palace idea.

*ARK*, the student-led magazine of the Royal College of Art in London, also published the Fun Palace in its spring and summer issues of 1964, dedicated to Utopian thought. Considered as 'important' by Price,<sup>15</sup> the split form of the article bears close correspondence with the two-part film. Under the heading of 'the necessity of the Fun Palace as a temporary "valve" in late 20<sup>th</sup> century metropolis',<sup>16</sup> a short description introduces the social relevance of the Fun Palace project in the first issue. In the second, a visually engaging sequence of diagrammatic vignettes with captions explains the Fun Palace's technological methods of operation to 'provoke active and passive pleasure' [FIGURE 2.2].<sup>17</sup> These schematic drawings resemble the frames sketched in the archival record 'storyboard for the film and sketches'.<sup>18</sup> In the article, while site plan drawings aim to locate the Fun Palace idea within the existing ground conditions of the Lea Valley site, the section conveys the imagined site of pleasure proposed by the Fun Palace. Lifted from the ground, a landscape of open geometries connected by dotted lines within a light open frame closely corresponds to the intermittent events that animate the structural framework section repeated across the storyboard. Captions in the storyboard document note the 'explosions', 'blurs' and other artifices mobilised to construct the transitions within events. If the encounter up in the air between human and technological bodies following random movements would bring occasions for pleasure, the film enacts it through the movement of the camera plunged inside the model frame and through the special effects that the medium affords.

Whether the film was ever finished remains uncertain.<sup>19</sup> It exists today as a set of records of different material scattered across various archives. Together with the record 'storyboard for

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<sup>14</sup> Price, 'Film Model Information. Drawing Number 51/38'.

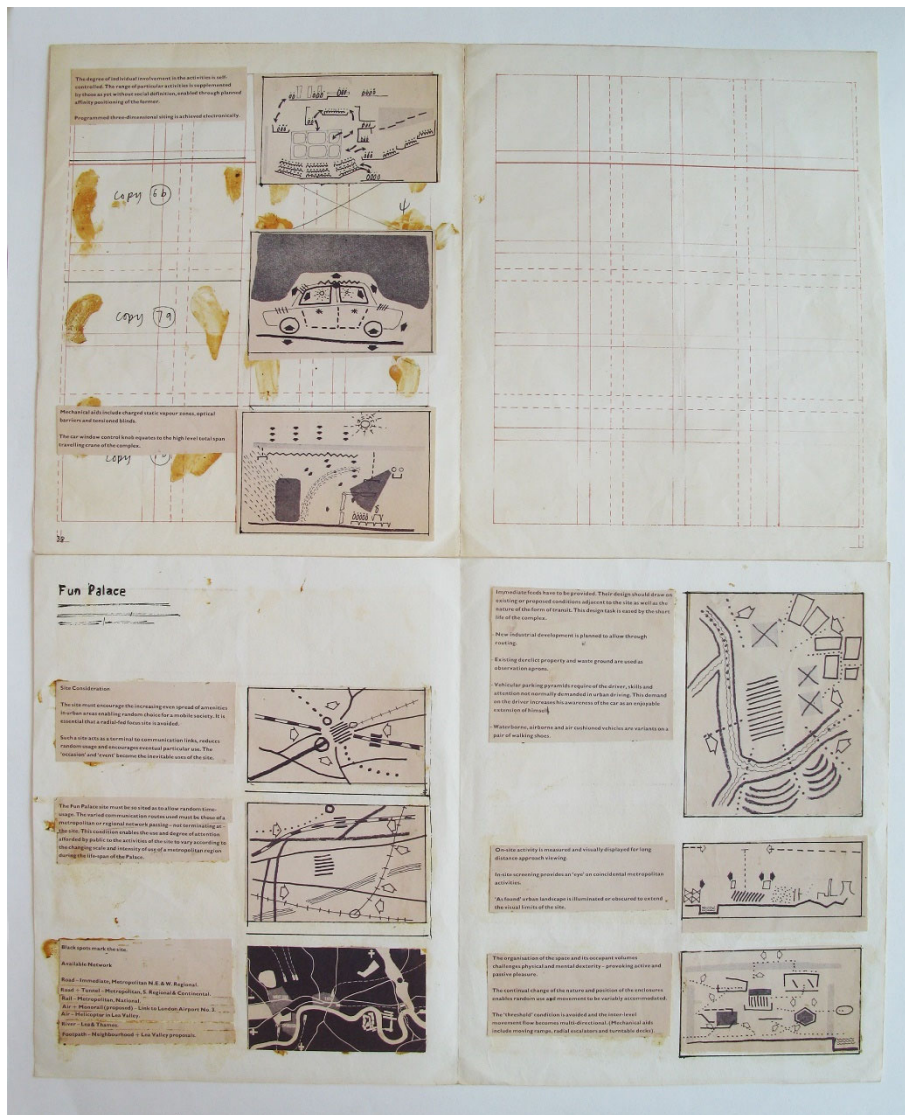
<sup>15</sup> 'Articles of the Fun Palace'. Folder DR1995 0181 525 003, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

<sup>16</sup> Royal College of Art, *ARK: Words and Images : From the Royal College of Art : Magazine, 1950-1978* (London: Royal College of Art, 2014), 134–35.

<sup>17</sup> Royal College of Art, *ARK*, 135–36.

<sup>18</sup> 'Storyboard for film and sketches', object number 1235.2000, Gift of The Howard Gilman Foundation, MOMA, <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/846?locale=en>.

<sup>19</sup> Its interminably provisional condition was indicated in an undated memo signed by the playwright Shelagh Delaney which read: 'the filming commences June 24th / filming finishes whenever it does'. In Shelagh Delaney, 'Internal Memo "Regarding the Fun Palace Partnership" on Filming', undated, DR1995:0188:0525:002:001:032, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.



**FIGURE 2.2:** Cedric Price, mock-up of article 'Fun Palace', ARK no 36 (Royal College of Art), folder DR:1995:0188:525:003, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

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the film and sketches'<sup>20</sup> held at Museum of Modern Art in New York, there are over 60 reels of 16mm black-and-white silent footage, at the British Film Institute in London. Catalogued as 'Joan Littlewood Pleasure Rolls' or 'Fun Palace outtakes', footage from 2 to 3 minutes long freely accessible on British Film Institute player as part of the ongoing project 'Britain on Film',<sup>21</sup> offers quick glimpses of London's urban life in 1963. In addition, the Cedric Price fonds at the CCA in Montreal holds the main records for the 'End of Film Sequence' – namely, some studio footage, several drafts for the scripts, a few photos of an early working model that was presumably used as a set, and some textual records dated between 1963 and 1964.

Several considerations regarding the material have to be noted. Firstly, the model of the typical two-bay section of the Fun Palace held at the Cedric Price fonds differs substantially from the rough version photographed and apparently destroyed during the shooting. Secondly, the preserved footage might well warrant the caption 'Fun Palace outtakes', if it is indeed made up of material edited-out of the 'Pleasure Film'. And if this is in fact the case, it is precisely the complementarity and amplification that this material offers with regard to the edited-in but seemingly lost footage that allows us to better understand what counts as sites of pleasure for Littlewood and how she investigates existing conditions through the camera eye. Thirdly, the low-budget 16 mm technology used to shoot the films reflects both the independence of the production but also a certain directness in relation to real conditions that the film achieves. And finally, what this loose assemblage of material essentially embodies is the mobile condition that marks the whole production of the Fun Palace project, through its fragmentary, increasingly provisional and always open-ended material quality. Ultimately, the unedited material for the film conveys what Reyner Banham called the 'clip-kit' culture of the 1960s, which seemingly announced 'the future architecture of democracy'.<sup>22</sup>

The undated record 'Fun Palace: pleasure film assembly', held in Cedric Price fonds, sets out the plan for the film as a two-part production [FIGURE 2.3].<sup>23</sup> According to this document,

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<sup>20</sup> 'Storyboard for the film and sketches', object number 1235.2000, Gift of The Howard Gilman Foundation, MOMA, <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/846?locale=en>, accessed 16 Aug 2017.

<sup>21</sup> 'Britain on Film' aims to build 'a moving and intimate portrait of the diversity of British life (as) revealed by professional and amateur footage' (BFI news July 2015). It is an ongoing project of the Unlocking Film Heritage programme [2013-2017], funded by National Lottery and with additional support of the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation.

<sup>22</sup> Reyner Banham, 'Zoom Wave Hits Architecture', *New Society* 7 (3 March 1966): 21.

<sup>23</sup> Littlewood and Price, Fun Palace: pleasure film assembly, DR1995:0188:525:003:003, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

PLEASURE FILM: ASSEMBLY

Catholic christening.  
Int. church

1. C.U. woman
2. Family at altar, priest
3. Old woman smiling
4. Profile shot of family
5. Poor mother and companion in background
6. Exit from church to taxi

Ext. church

Sequence of random shots taken in streets which show conditions in which children play and young men and women lay about - linked by tracking and panning shots of streets as if observer were making the journey

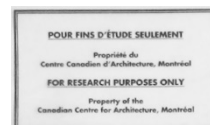
Shot of streets (look through Simon Guttman's reel)

7. Poor woman - pan to two kids - on steps
8. Buildings
9. Young couple on steps with child
10. Travel thro' streets
11. Little girls, kneeling in street?
12. Brick wall
13. Cable St., lounging bodies
14. Dustbins
15. 2 small Cypriot girls carrying basket/small boy and fair girl?
16. Pan over 1930 LCC buildings, narrow st.
17. Children in circle
18. Prosecution plaque
19. Young boy making improvised go-cart
20. Street, youths laying about
21. Street
22. Circular swing by river, boat passing
23. Close up of park regulations - to be shot
24. Dark tunnel Vallance Rd.
25. 2 boys in doorway, waiting
26. Girl walking along Juniper St.

Sequence of boys and girls going to dance at "Rose Garden Hall", Ilford

- Ext. 27. Boys and girls coming to Rose Garden long shot
28. Waiting
29. Going in
- Int. 30. Rose Garden Use types, especially very young and guitar moving up and down
29. Shot from back of band.

**FIGURE 2.3:** Fun Palace: pleasure film assembly, 1960-1964, typescript on paper 33 x 21 cm.  
DR1995:0188:525:003:003, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.



the film would open with a documentary sequence of London's street life and would close with a part-scripted and part-improvised shorter drama piece advertising the Fun Palace idea. This archival record is key, for it possibly preserves an edited version of the loosefootage catalogued as Joan Littlewood's 'Pleasure Rolls'. From the collection of material available in the different archives, this chapter attempts to reconstruct the Fun Palace film as a montage that critically examines the conditions of contemporary leisure production. The analysis that follows will consider firstly, the shot-by-shot juxtaposition in the opening documentary; secondly, the structural opposition constructed by the part-improvised and part-scripted closing comic piece; and finally, its status as a media event clashing with the broadcast 'flow' – as defined by Raymond Williams – offered by British commercial television in the 1960s.

### **Stage One: Documenting Pleasure**

The archival document 'Fun Palace: pleasure film assembly' builds a story about how people actually produce themselves in leisure situations 'as found' in London's streets 1960s. Passive consumers instead of active creators, leisure instead of pleasure, is what Littlewood finds. The montage grows through a sequence of 81 shots grouped in 7 thematic areas. 'Catholic christening' is the title of the sequence that Littlewood chooses to open the inquiry on pleasure. It proceeds with a longer sequence of twenty 'random shots taken in streets which show conditions in which children play and young men and women lay about-linked by tracking and panning shots of the streets as if the observer (was) making the journey'.<sup>24</sup> A focus on children's activities follows through a five-shot 'sequence of boys and girls going to dance at Rose Garden Hall, Ilford', and proceeds through a two-shot sequence referred to as 'education bit? Schools'.<sup>25</sup>

The active tracking by the camera wanders around the pleasures available. According to Brecht, 'a dramatic plot will move before my eyes; an epic seems to stand still while I move around it [...]. If a circumstance moves before my eyes, then I am bound strictly to what is present to the senses; my imagination loses all freedom [...]. But if I move round a circumstance which cannot get away from me, then my pace can be irregular. I can linger or hurry according to my own subjective needs'.<sup>26</sup> The action-oriented subject matter, the non-poetic quality of the rushed footage, and the repetitive quality of the social commentary, are

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 1.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, 2.

<sup>26</sup> 'Masterful Treatment of a Model' in Bertolt Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre*, 210.

all qualities that Littlewood borrows from her Brechtian inspired theatre to construct a critical insight into the existing conditions of leisure. However, significant differences arise between a live play and the filmed subject that concern the audience's participation. While in a play, the eyes of the audience wander freely around the stage, the film medium is constrained to fabricate its epic through the camera and to flatten it in a celluloid, for an audience which cannot affect its performance. Raymond Williams' definition of film as 'total performance'<sup>27</sup> or Susan Sontag's claim for 'the camera (as) an absolute dictator',<sup>28</sup> both make the point that the film medium, as distinct from a live play, restrains the vital participation of audiences. How then does Littlewood use film conventions to 'dialecticize' the conditions of pleasure in urban life 1963, as a way to mobilize audiences? In other words, how does she release pleasure from the flatness that the medium imposes?

Apparently, nothing extraordinary happens in her random selection of life. However, the position and movement of the camera transforms plain observation into an active and roving subjectivity. A frontal camera identifies the loss of motivation as the conflictive matter in society to be urgently tackled: '2 small boys throwing stones by Stratford canal'.<sup>29</sup> Conflict leads the unconventional shooting angles and the movements of the camera, tracking, panning and cutting at will, to dissolve the unity of the familiar into semi-abstract clashing fragments of a new estranged narrative that shake us from our habits. In an illustrative 'shoe shine' sequence,<sup>30</sup> the camera stands by the kneeling shoe polisher, and after making eye contact with him, tilts around to show the world view from his position. Pinned down at the doorstep of West End theatres, the client's legs obstruct leisure time for the worker. Momentarily the camera tilts up, and the oblique perspective of the city that looms above him appears to dissolve any hope to ever enjoy it.

Close-ups afford the intermittent subjectivization and slow pace through which Littlewood's intimate commentary progressively grows. Conflict goes into close-up to interrogate the gestures of the leisure society. The subtle smile of a male observer of a strip-tease talent show, a bouncing young face at a record shop or the busy working hand of the shoe polisher, the camera scrutinizes pleasure - or the lack of it - through the micro-gestures that ordinary actions provoke. As Bela Balasz claims, 'in the isolated close-up of the film we can see to the bottom of a soul by means of such tiny movements of facial muscles which even the most observant partner would never perceive'.<sup>31</sup> In manipulating the distance with the

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<sup>27</sup> Film and the Dramatic Tradition, in Raymond Williams and Michael Orrom, *Preface to Film* (London, 1954), 7.

<sup>28</sup> 'A Note on Novels and Films' in Susan Sontag, *Against Interpretation: And Other Essays* (London: Penguin Books, 2009 (1961)), 242-43.

<sup>29</sup> Littlewood and Price, *Fun Palace: pleasure film assembly*, 2.

<sup>30</sup> 'Talent Contest II' Joan Littlewood, *Pleasure Rolls (Fun Palace outtakes)*, 1963 no. 50, British Film Institute.

<sup>31</sup> Bela Balasz, 'The Close-up', from the *Theory of the Film*, in Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen, *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, (Oxford University Press, 2004), 308.

object, close-up defines 'privileged points' from where the subjective side of a complex, deep and mobile reality is revealed. Linked by tracking and panning, they add definition to the texture of the urban mood in affluent London and convey its tactility to the audience. According to Paul Virilio, it is precisely through such a tactile and slow, rather than visual and distant, communication that experience is shared and a resistant position in audiences can be activated.<sup>32</sup>

The intimate documentary of familiar pleasure locations and specific faces starts to lose definition throughout the following 18-shot 'waiting sequence', which present how 'most people spend most of their lives bored, sleeping, waiting',<sup>33</sup> and the 11-shot 'Fun arcade/Present pleasures'. The subject matter increasingly becomes distant and generalised, as evidenced by the inclusion of an aerial view of 'Battersea fun fair' (shot 51), and the plural form used in some of the captions such as 'theatres', 'strip clubs', 'cinemas' or 'schools' (shots 50, 52, 53 and 54 respectively).

At this point, the film reaches its climax. The estrangement increasingly gained by the removal of the camera from the action sustains the critical question that drives the whole inquiry: 'Who has all the fun?' The actors? The planners? Do they live in these [...].<sup>34</sup> A transitional sequence of 21 shots shows 'pictures of politicians mixed with actors' (shot 63), and 'plans for new Alcatraz blocks and roads' (shot 64) after presenting a funny 'robot doll walking computer singing as background' (shot 62) approaching the camera [FIGURE 2.4]. It closes by blurring London's reality into the abstract alternative of the Fun Palace. A quick sketch, single line 'white on black' (shot 71), appears on scene after 'helicopter shot over London and river to last frame of mudflat' and shot 'dissolves mud to blackness' (shot 70). The creation of the Fun Palace and of its surroundings, including the river and even the sun, is then celebrated with 'fireworks drawn falling into the river' in the last shot. The film assemblage closes with a surprising acted piece. A brief dialogue initiated by 'square shape' characters introduce the activities offered. After claiming 'I want my money back [...]. They push buttons. Change the whole place', while the 'backward movement' film technique enacts the in-built flexibility of the complex.

The transitional sequence makes use of film conventions to construct an idea that aims to transcend reality. While close-ups transform the general into the intimate, the helicopter shots radically detach us from it and impose a fictional stillness in the observation. In

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<sup>32</sup> Paul Virilio, *Speed and Politics: An Essay on Dromology* (Columbia University, 1986).

<sup>33</sup> Littlewood and Price, *Fun Palace: pleasure film assembly*, 2.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.



**FIGURE 2.4:** Robot doll shot, min 2:16, 'London from the Air 1' (Fun Palace outtakes), 1963; Joan Littlewood, 3 min. British Film Institute National Archive.

discussing the aerial view as a cultural product, Mark Dorrian has argued how the departure from the terrestrial surface estranges the observer from the newly abstracted image that increasingly opens below his feet, and mentions how Malevich's suprematist manifesto, *The Non-Objective World*, had already intimated that the transition from the figurative to abstract might be understood in terms of the fading away of the world as experienced by an aviator.<sup>35</sup> If abstraction is estrangement radicalized, Dorrian claims, then the aerial view becomes an agency of abstraction. Aided by the helicopter flight, the narrative in the film moves from the specific to the abstract. From departure to landing, the estrangement of audiences increases until we no longer recognize what we see: the robot doll or the square shape. The particular experiences evolve into a general social problem: 'human misery, despairs and apathy'.<sup>36</sup> Radical abstraction, through estrangement, becomes the way to mobilize audiences. The realist tone of the opening footage is increasingly substituted, when it comes to present the radical novelty of the Fun Palace, for an abstracted spontaneity of Russian avant-garde inspiration. The magnified robot-doll that heads towards us singing, the elemental white-on-black drawing of Glengall's mudflat as stage – in which even the sun is drawn anew – and the spontaneous square-shape chosen to present the Fun Palace, all these resonate with Malevich's 1913 stage set for the Futurist opera *Victory Over the Sun*.<sup>37</sup> In this, lumbering robot-like figures voicing words beyond human logic in front of cubist backdrops, portrayed the apocalyptic fervour of modern city's dynamics, a new mechanized world liberated even from the sun. Abstraction was, in Lyubov Popova's words, of 'transitory nature': It 'rejects object-ness and the related conventions of formal representation [...] in order to listen carefully to the nascent need and take a different look at the object's form, which will emerge from this work not only transformed but in fact entirely new'.<sup>38</sup> The abstracted materiality of the Fun Palace publicity, conveyed in all its diagrammatic images, becomes the expression of the transitory nature of such a 'short-term exploratory social toy' named the Fun Palace.<sup>39</sup> It shares the optimistic mood of the 1920s avant-garde, for in defining its temporal usefulness the project, it also anticipates the time when the hopes for a full realization of art in life will dispense with its services. If the avant-garde stage became the public arena where new aesthetic ideas were communicated to illiterate audiences in the 1920s, the film would

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<sup>35</sup> Mark Dorrian, 'The aerial view: notes for a cultural history', *Strates. Matériaux pour la recherche en sciences sociales*, no. 13 (31 December 2007): 11.

<sup>36</sup> Littlewood and Price, 'What is the Fun Palace', n.d. Folder DR1995:0188:0525:005, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

<sup>37</sup> While this first draft for the end of film and Malevich's *Victory Over the Sun* are analogously related here, this interpretation grows from the explicitly acknowledged grounds of Russian Avant-Garde for Joan Littlewood theatre.

<sup>38</sup> Nancy Van Norman Baer et al., *Theatre in Revolution: Russian Avant-Garde Stage Design, 1913-1935* (New York; San Francisco: Thames and Hudson; Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, 1991), 154.

<sup>39</sup> Cedric Price, 'Public Space Programme', in Ellis Hillman (ed.), *Essays in Local Government Enterprise. Vol. 2*. (London: Merlin Press, 1965), 159.

be the site of information devised to bring the question of creative pleasure to mass audiences of consumers in the 1960s.

The unexpected appearance on screen of the robot doll is particularly alienating, and raises questions about the role of technology in the conditions of affluent Britain. A large rounded and tuneable lithographed tin screen-as-belly transported by articulated legs on wheels, is surmounted by a radio-head of electronic components mimicking a face. In the background, Joan Littlewood has just landed from a helicopter in an empty dockland plot. The shot is strongly constructed. A low angle of the camera magnifies the scale of the toy and its stiff movement towards us, while the oblique capture of the background enhances its dynamism and instability. The interruption effected by the robot-toy shot seems to enact the claims made by the Fun Palace's promotional literature about the active role that technology could play in the production of pleasure to activate mass-audiences in Sixties Britain: 'When it comes to enjoy ourselves, we think, feel and behave as we did a hundred years ago. We just haven't learned how to enjoy our new freedom: how to turn machinery robots, computers and buildings themselves into instruments of pleasure and enjoyment [...] We must start discovering how to do so'.<sup>40</sup> The robot-toy appears to be a personification of the Fun Palace itself, while its clumsy movements anticipate how its technological core acts just 'for your diversion' in the closing comic piece of the film.<sup>41</sup>

## Stage Two: Releasing Pleasure

A significantly early letter from Joan Littlewood to Cedric Price, dated January 2, 1963, anticipates the production of the film to the very beginnings of the Fun Palace idea. In it, Littlewood outlines the key elements for the end of the film:

*Re: Pleasure Film/ Suggest at the end of film, after a long shot of Glengall Site, pan to model. Your voice explaining in your way. Your fingers pointing at it. / Cut angle shot to Vic Spinetti, Barbara Ferris and maybe of child poking model and smashing or overturning part of it, maybe flooding or setting fire to it.*<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> 'A Message to Londoners / WE COULD ENJOY OURSELVES. All about Joan Littlewood's Palace of Fun'. Folder DR1995:0188:0525:001, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

<sup>41</sup> 'Draft. London Now London Now', Promotional literature of the Fun Palace, DR1995:0188:0525:003:023, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

<sup>42</sup> DR1995:0188:525:002:07, Cedric Price fonds, CCA

Between 1963 and 1964, the preliminary sketch of 'square shapes' on black and white backdrops evolve into a part-scripted and part-improvised comic piece in which some pierrots borrowed from the Theatre Royal, acted – with the aid of a model – the pleasures offered by the Fun Palace. The key role of drama in Littlewood's vision of the Fun Palace is evidenced in it. Drama is, according to Raymond Williams, a performance with the intention of representation. 'Drama is a precise separation of certain common modes for new and specific ends (...). It is specific, active, interactive composition'.<sup>43</sup> Historically active in those periods of crisis when experience surpassed the existing order, drama offered the 'possibility of what might be done with what was known to have been done, and each could be present, and mutually, contradictorily potent, in specific acted forms [...]. Drama broke from fixed signs [...] for precise historical and cultural reasons into a more complex, more active and more questioning world'.<sup>44</sup> If that was the case of avant-garde experimental drama, by the 1960s – Williams argued – it had been appropriated by capitalist forces to aid the organization of society into a market.<sup>45</sup> Williams' arguments invite us to explore the end of the film's dramatic form, with a view, in the closing section of the chapter, to analysing its critical position with regards to the broadcasting context within which it would have been transmitted.

Within less than thirty frames – a number that varies among the several scripts held in the archives – a choreography of clowns who mimic the architect's description, presents the delights of the Fun Palace. The humour of the vignette progressively grows from contradictory gestures and distorted measure to challenge the logic of reality. A black suitcase with a big white question mark on it opens in front of the three clown faces [FIGURE 2.5]. 'On opening the box the clowns should be looking down on a model of extreme complexity and confusion'.<sup>46</sup> An irresistible toy suddenly becomes available for intense 'use and misuse', to the point that it is consumed in the action. While the architect's voice describes at length the 'content and reason for structure'<sup>47</sup>, the quick hands of the clowns 'move it around a bit' (no 6) or get 'cramped in structure' (no 7). Price had claimed that 'conditionally, there would be no cutting back from model to live sequences but that human scale and mass and individual movement of people as well as objects within the complex

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<sup>43</sup> 'Drama in a Dramatized Society' in Raymond Williams, *Raymond Williams on Television: Selected Writings* (New York: Routledge, 1989).

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*, 7.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid*, 8.

<sup>46</sup> 'Discussion on nature of F.P sequence of film' meeting, dated 06.07.1964, attending Joan Littlewood, Cedric Price, the engineer Frank Newby and Price's collaborator Stephen Mullin, DR1995:0188:525:002:003:004, Cedric Price fonds, CCA

<sup>47</sup> DR1995:0188:525:002:003, section no 6, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.



**FIGURE 2.5:** Still from Fun Palace film ca. 1964, digital image from 16mm negative. DR2003:0006, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

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should be shown'.<sup>48</sup> So grotesque scenes of clown faces crowding the model sets the film apparatus to work for the production of self-evident scale tricks. In front of what seems to be a one-way gate to an alternative reality, the scripts suggest the use of 'modelscope' and 'superimposed photography' to allow Barbara Winsor to entry into the complex through the optical illusion of 'shrinking or expanding (her)'.<sup>49</sup>

Two undated pictures held in the Price archives show a low-tech working model of a double bay of the complex,<sup>50</sup> which differs from the mobile device depicted in the document 'Film Model Information'. A central wire truss spans across the whole section supported from the two towers of the interior row of the lateral bay, suggest a modular construction. The space is occupied by ordinary domestic utensils, such as the colander hanging from a wire grid and acting as a 'large enclosed suspended auditorium' or some folded plain white paper in the role of a 'high level suspended umbrella'. The place appears static in these images. However, one of them shows the model under fireworks.

The clown-as-hero and the model-as-toy emerge as the essential components in Littlewood's gestural representation of the Fun Palace. Gestures, which according to Brecht are derived from the technically visible, repetitive and deadpan construction of characters, provoke estrangement of both actors and audiences: 'Everything to do with emotions has to be externalized; that is to say, it must be developed into a gesture [...] Special elegance, power and grace of gesture bring about the A-effect'.<sup>51</sup> The mime episodes itemized in Littlewood's scripts share this Brechtian gestural form, for which Cedric Price and Frank Newby – the engineer of the project – agreed: 'In general, it is felt that all actions can be mimed and where equipment is required to further occasion or condition an activity – e.g Item 10: Vic on Ramp; Item 17: Acoustic Hood- then the equipment should be pointed at and then investigated in close-up by "modelscope" in model after it being questioned by clowns as to its use – then miming follows'.<sup>52</sup>

It is through the sequence of gestures laid by the evident inadequacy of the model-clown interaction, that Littlewood dramatizes the insurmountable gap between real London's leisure and the imagined pleasures offered by the Fun Palace. But crucially, these gestures bring a paradoxical corporeality to the project, one that – contrary to its necessity of actuality – grows from the uncertain outcome of such interaction, as announced by the big question

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<sup>48</sup> Meeting Cedric Price, Tony O'Leary, Anthony Shaffer, Simon Gutman, Robert (Model Maker), dated 06.03.1964, DR1995:0188:525:002:001:009, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

<sup>49</sup> Meeting Littlewood, Price, Stephen Mullin, dated 06.07.1964, folder DR1995:0188:525: 002:003, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

<sup>50</sup> DR1995:0188:0525:002:003:005 and DR 1995:0188:0525:003:007, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

<sup>51</sup> 'Short Description on a New Technique of Acting', Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre*, 139.

<sup>52</sup> '*Discussion Film Sequence & Script*', internal meeting, Cedric Price and Frank Newby, 09.07.1964. DR1995:0188:525:002:003:023, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

mark printed on the black suitcase. If the film operated to actualize the Fun Palace and reach mass audiences, how could then Littlewood's desire become a reality through drama? How could it gain corporeality through these filmed gestures?

The answer seems to revolve around the pleasure that the film and its production are able to release. Two unrelated references might be helpful here in casting light upon the significance of Littlewood's comic sketch. In the first, Roland Barthes discusses toys as literal representations of objects of bourgeois society.<sup>53</sup> The social effect of these toys is, as Barthes argues, 'to produce children who are users, not creators', for they involve 'actions without adventure, without wonder, without joy [...] Their very material introduces one to a coenaesthesia of use, not pleasure'.<sup>54</sup> The Fun Palace model, in its readiness to be misused, appears as a critical inversion of such myth-toys. If pleasure mediates between use and creation, the model becomes an agency of pleasure. Indeed, the possibility of an open-ended interaction was irresistible, not only for the clowns, but for whoever encountered it. The photographer Richard Lubblock declared to truly having felt 'a strong urge myself to have fun with the palace. I'm compelled to wonder out loud whether it would be at all possible to play with it on my home ground'.<sup>55</sup>

On the other hand, it is worth considering Jose Ortega y Gasset's argumentation about the agency of desire within his *Meditations of Quixote*, written in 1914. The reality of the main character Quixote, Ortega claims, is not that of his adventures – his single reality is the desire of adventure. It is the real desire which activates the hero to master his perpetual resistance to the habits and consensus that he is part of. The hero, Ortega argues, becomes whoever is capable of making up the project of an adventure to command his or her own miserable existence.<sup>56</sup> In the end of the Fun Palace film, we see three clowns playing, not with ordinary reality – as mimes do – but with Joan Littlewood's project of adventure. Victor, Barbara and Brian present the mechanism as a 'self-washing giant toy'<sup>57</sup> and, while voicing a range of 'technical jargon',<sup>58</sup> they play with it to the point of destruction. The incongruous interaction between the clown and the model becomes the gesture that iteratively tests and destabilizes Joan Littlewood's project of adventure. In the vulnerability that these critical and hilarious operations inflect, the anticipatory image of the Fun Palace becomes more human, imperfect and real. It is real because it has been already subject to the criticism by the clowns. As the model-toy becomes consumed in the action – and celebrated with fireworks –

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<sup>53</sup> Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (Grant & Cutler, 1994), 53.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*, 54.

<sup>55</sup> Letter from Richard Lubblock to Cedric Price, dated 19.08.1964, folder DR1995:0188:525:002:003, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

<sup>56</sup> José Ortega y Gasset, *Meditations on Quixote* (Urbana, Ill: University of Illinois Press, 2000 (Spanish, 1914)).

<sup>57</sup> DR1995:0181:525:003:021, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

<sup>58</sup> DR1995 0181 525 003 020, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

pleasure is released to affect and activate audiences. If humour was Littlewood's strategy to actualize the Fun Palace, for it offers a shortcut to charge reality with hope and to release action from desire, the film would then be its medium.

The end of film sketch seems comparable to that comic treatment of the mundane made by the minor form of drama during the Spanish Renaissance named the 'entremes'. Familiar to Littlewood, as scholarship acknowledges,<sup>59</sup> the 'entremes' was a short, funny and mocking representation played during the interval of a comedy to enhance variety or to amuse the audience. Beyond shared qualities with the film such as its looseness, its gestural form and weightlessness, the interest in the 'entremes' lays in the fact that, in being a minor and parasitic form, its intensity and effect depended on the contingent position within the overall drama: the interlude. The 'entremes' brought an arrest to the overall programme in which the title character, in landing in a grotesque and hilarious situation, becomes more human, vulnerable and real. Similarly, the full significance of the end of film springs from the contingent position it occupies as an interval within the broadcast programming of British TV at the time, where it was intended to be shown.

## **Epilogue: Broadcasting Pleasure**

An unnumbered but key archival document about the Fun Palace's 'situation to date', dated August 28, 1964, mentions that 'the Fun Palace film is nearing completion and will be shown on commercial television eventually.'<sup>60</sup> From the robot doll shot closing the documentary part, to the carnivalesque tone of the acted closing piece, the film stands as a critical communicative product within the context of the newly established independent commercial TV stations in London 1960s. In *Television*, Raymond Williams problematized the understanding of communications technology as an independent force to society,<sup>61</sup> and argued for the necessary consideration of the purposes and practices that made these technologies emerge and be used, not as marginal, but as direct social needs. The technology of broadcasting was, Williams explained, functional to an increasingly mobile and expanded society. It was the social product of the 'mobile privatisation' that, having started in the 1920s, created the need to provide the private living room with news from outside at the

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<sup>59</sup> Gwynne Edwards, 'Theatre Workshop and the Spanish Drama', *New Theatre Quarterly* 23, no. 4 (2007): 304–316.

<sup>60</sup> Internal memo from Pain to JL, copied CP, Ian Mikardo dated 26.08.1964, folder DR1995:0188:525:002:003, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

<sup>61</sup> He refers to 'technological determinism' and what he named 'technological symptomatism'. Williams, *Television: Technology and Cultural Form*, 6.

same rate as the public realm would disappear.<sup>62</sup> By the early 1960s, broadcasting shaped the 'dramatized society', a term Williams coined to refer to the dependence of society on broadcast drama.<sup>63</sup> Advertising, constituted in new dramatic forms, colonised the media through its undeclared and intermittent programme of 'interruptions'. 'Flow' was the quality of this broadcast drama, which became the expression of the consumerist social consciousness and the active method for its reproduction.<sup>64</sup> 'What is "being seen" in what appears to be a natural form is, evidently' – claimed Williams – 'what is actually "being made to be seen"'.<sup>65</sup> 'Advertising' – argues Williams – 'is the consequence of a social failure to find means of public information and decision over a wide range of everyday social life. This failure, of course, is not abstract. It is the result of allowing control of the means of production and distribution to remain in minority hands'.<sup>66</sup>

It is against this scenario that Williams studies the effect of corporate control of communications in public and independent initiatives that the film – and the overall Fun Palace project – would react. In this light, the film montage emerges as a critical advert designed to be an interlude within the broadcast flow of commercial television in 1964. The film offers a model of communicative production aligned with William's alternative democratic, autonomous, self-managing and multi-way interactive communication.<sup>67</sup> On one hand, it inverts the sponsorship formula devised by broadcasting at the time. As Littlewood recalls in her autobiography: 'All we needed was publicity. I decided to make a film and, to raise the cash, wrote and directed half a dozen TV commercials'.<sup>68</sup> So while scripting the film, she directed the commercial series 'Sheila and Eggs', commissioned by the British Egg Marketing Board. Despite its announcement in *Television Mail* with a mock theatre poster, it is an ironic reversal of the funding formula of corporate TV production. Littlewood's independent labour for these TV commercials, was, through the film, only bonded to the promotion of the altruistic Fun Palace project. On the other hand, considering William's claims about modern advertising techniques, which guarantee as if by magic the satisfaction of a specific human need while constantly deferring it,<sup>69</sup> the broadcast film crucially aims to suspend these techniques precisely by satisfying the social need for active pleasure in mass media as a route to citizenship.

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid, 10.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid, 3.

<sup>64</sup> Williams defined flow as 'programmed series of timed sequential units are replaced by a flow series of differently related units in which timing, though real, is under declared, and in which the real internal organization is other than the declared organization', in Williams, *Television*, 93.

<sup>65</sup> 'Means of Communication as Means of Production', in Williams, *Culture and Materialism*, 61.

<sup>66</sup> 'Advertising: the Magic Circle', in Williams, *Culture and Materialism*, 193.

<sup>67</sup> 'Means of Communication as Means of Production', 61.

<sup>68</sup> Littlewood, *Joan's Book*, 709.

<sup>69</sup> 'Advertising: the Magic Circle', 189.

Despite the resistances that this unfinished initiative might have encountered in its production or distribution, the film material awaits in the archives for the Fun Palace's reactivation. In casting some light upon the significance of the film's scattered records, this chapter may open paths to further interpretations of the Fun Palace's complex cultural initiative.

## Chapter 3: Grids: Self-organisation and Excess

### The Idea of Self-organisation in Britain 1960s

*We haven't learned how to enjoy our new freedom: how to turn machinery, robots, computers, and buildings into instruments of pleasure and enjoyment.*<sup>1</sup>

In February 1960 the architectural critic Reyner Banham initiated a five-part editorial project in *Architectural Review* to contest the stasis in which he perceived late modern architecture stood. Opening the series, the manifesto-like paper '1960-Stocktaking' conveys what Banham saw as two irreconcilable modes of architecture. Headed by the keyword 'technology', a bold plea for a science-based architecture was set against the architectural lore that Banham referred to as 'tradition', and that he argued through specific aims, techniques and key designers.<sup>2</sup>

'Technology' became a map-word in the Sixties' culture of emancipation. Associated with a general systematic logic of production since nineteenth century,<sup>3</sup> by the Sixties such production would be precisely of information and scientific knowledge, constituting both the means and ends within what the American sociologist Daniel Bell referred to as the post-industrial society by 1967.<sup>4</sup> Critical with the soaring commodification brought about by technology, the philosopher Jean-François Lyotard mused in *The Postmodern Condition. A Report on Knowledge* (1979) on the social impact of the change in the conditions of production and transmission of knowledge in 'computerized societies', as these become increasingly affected by the structural relationship between technology and profit.<sup>5</sup>

Banham's technological alternative would be paradigmatically attended to in the Fun Palace project. A comprehensive set of diagrammatic plans and sections representing the capacity

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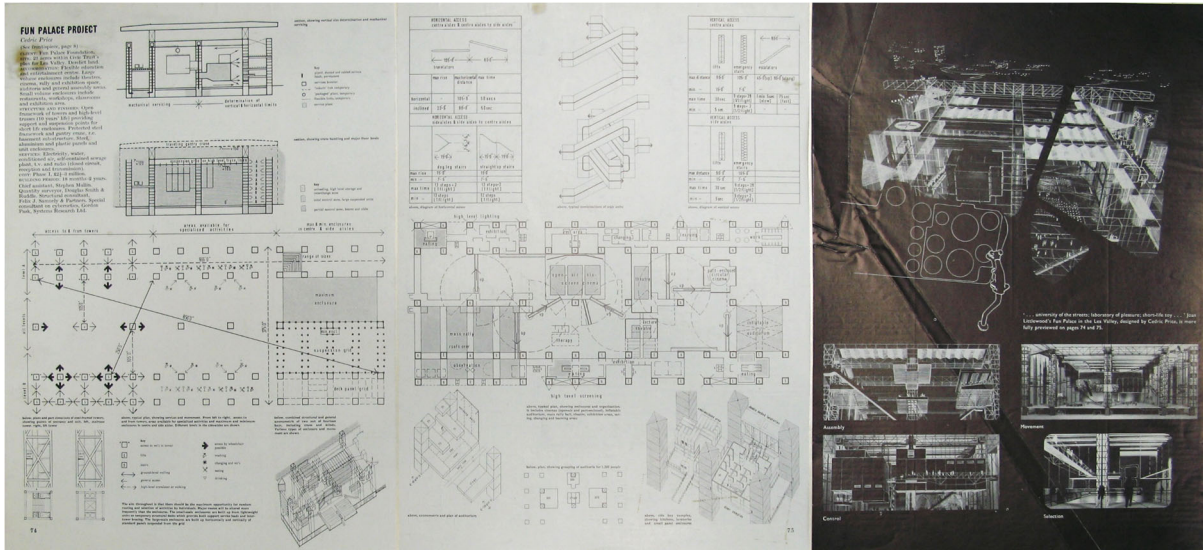
<sup>1</sup> Fun Palace promotional literature. In Mary Louise Lobsinger, 'Cybernetic Theory and the Architecture of Performance', 119.

<sup>2</sup> Reyner Banham, *A Critic Writes: Essays by Reyner Banham* (Berkeley ; London: University of California Press, 1996), 51.

<sup>3</sup> Williams, *Keywords*, 311.

<sup>4</sup> Daniel Bell, 'Notes on the Post-Industrial Society (I)', *The Public Interest*; New York, Winter 1967.

<sup>5</sup> Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), 6.



**FIGURE 3.1:** Fun Palace Project, *Architectural Review*, January 1965. Folder DR1995:188:505-519, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

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of the modular structure of the complex, alongside a photomontage for the approach by helicopter among other drawings, would make public for the first time the technological ambition of the project in *The Architectural Review*, January 1965 [FIGURE 3.1].<sup>6</sup> Banham promptly acclaimed the 'clip-on' strategy of the project, that is, an architecture of indeterminate form - 'simply a kit of parts and a space-grid of supports and services', but one affording 'a zone of total probability' designed to ease up choice as a way to activate the public through pleasure.<sup>7</sup> The pleasure released would resemble – to Banham's enthusiasm- 'a gigantic version of the three-dimensional chess (played) on long interstellar voyages in science fiction'.<sup>8</sup>

This commentary crucially reveals the affects that technology stimulated at the time. The ideal of a free information society, sustained by the novel conditions of production of, and access to, objective knowledge and information, stimulated the visual imagination of the Sixties. Along with the Fun Palace, images of technologically infused megastructures such as Archigram's Plug-In City, Yona Friedman's Ville Spatiale and Japanese Metabolists' cities circulated widely in architectural media. These city complex speculations borrowed from genetic codes and feedback systems to 'resolve conflicts between design and spontaneity, the large and the small, the permanent and transient', Banham reviewed.<sup>9</sup> 'A technologically utopian structure of feeling', as David Mellor argues, took hold of London artistic practice, such as Roy Ascott's cybernetic art and Eduardo Paolozzi's screenprints.<sup>10</sup> Meanwhile, the Colloquium of Mobiles by Fun Palace cybernetist Gordon Pask animated the exhibition 'Cybernetic Serendipity', curated by Jasia Reichardt at the Institute of Contemporary Arts London, 1968.

However, the Fun Palace's technological agenda would exceed Banham's 'clip-on' expressions of indeterminacy. Under the leadership of Gordon Pask, the Fun Palace became the forerunner of a new design approach concerned with the provision of responsive and evolving systems rather than buildings, for which it appropriated methods and vocabulary of the British branch of cybernetics Operational Research.<sup>11</sup> Pask conceived of the Fun Palace environment as a cybernetic system, one that built-in uncertainty by handling the governance to participants. Moreover, he would set it to work as a model of practice for

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<sup>6</sup> Cedric Price, 'Fun Palace Project', *The Architectural Review* 137, no. 815 (January 1965): 74–76.

<sup>7</sup> Reyner Banham, 'A Clip-on Architecture', *Architectural Design* 35 (November 1965): 13.

<sup>8</sup> Banham, *A Critic Writes*, 108.

<sup>9</sup> Banham, *Megastructure*, 10.

<sup>10</sup> David Mellor, *Sixties Art Scene in London* (London: Phaidon, 1994), 107.

<sup>11</sup> Operational Research was the British post-war development of systems-oriented thinking concerned with problems of organized complexity such as multidimensional decision processes involving uncertainty and which were tackled by reduction to linear mathematical expressions and handled after by computers. Michel Alhadef - Jones, 'Three Generations of Complexity Theories: Nuances and Ambiguities', *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 40, no. 1 (2008): 71.

the Fun Palace organization that would design it. He develops the argument in 'The Architectural Relevance of Cybernetics', *Architectural Design*, September 1969. 'Cybernetics and architecture (...) share a common philosophy of architecture in the sense that Stafford Beer has shown it to be the philosophy of operational research (...). Architects are first and foremost system designers (...) tak(ing) an increasing interest in the organizational (i.e. non tangible) system properties of development, communication and control (...)'.<sup>12</sup> While system design predated cybernetics, and Pask mentions the distinctive forms of man-environment interaction dictated or enticed by functionalism or by surrealism, however, what cybernetic theory offered to architecture was a metalanguage and modelling techniques to explain and predict dynamic behaviour, and consequently effecting a radical transformation of the traditional descriptive and prescriptive functions of architecture.<sup>13</sup> While addressing the conditions surrounding the design of reactive and adaptive environments, the concept of self-organization remains implicit in Pask's paper, one tailored for architectural audiences. The crux of what Price defines as 'a simple cybernetic design paradigm', is that it 'nearly always' operates within an underspecified brief by 'provid(ing) a set of constraints that allows for certain presumably desirable, modes of evolution'.<sup>14</sup> Thus, under-specification and self-organization present themselves as functionally related concepts, the former giving context and reason for the autonomous, stable and inherently regulated operation of the latter. Indefinite, probabilistic and self-organized are the three key qualities of cybernetic systems, as Stafford Beer elaborates for the field of scientific management.<sup>15</sup> Underspecified goals lead not only the interaction of the potential user *within* the designed environment. More importantly, they also apply to the design process itself, thus turning design into 'the control of control'. Invested with this new role of controller, design activity would be less an authoritarian apparatus than what Pask appreciated in closing the paper, 'an odd mixture of catalyst, crutch, memory and arbiter'.<sup>16</sup>

What is intriguing in the case of the Fun Palace, and what distinguishes it from other technological expressions at the time, is the formation of a social organization to 'determine

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<sup>12</sup> Gordon Pask, 'The Architectural Relevance of Cybernetics', *Architectural Design* 39 (September 1969): 510.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, 512.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, 511.

<sup>15</sup> A cybernetic system is recognizable by three outstanding characteristics. It is exceedingly complex: to the point where its interconnectivity is undefinable in detail. It is exceedingly probabilistic: to the point where its structure though complex becomes undifferentiated, and every trajectory is equiprobably. It is unreal to suppose that any such system can be controlled by the imposition of rules from outside; because the system by definition defies analysis, and therefore no test can be applied by which the adequacy of rules could be judged. The third characteristic of a cybernetic system is, therefore, that the fundamental organization it displays is generated from within: it is self organizing'. Stafford Beer, 'Toward the cybernetic factory', in *Principles of Self-Organization. Transactions of the University of Illinois Symposium on Self-Organization, 1961, Sponsored by Information Systems Branch, U.S. Office of Naval Research*, International Tracts in Computer Science and Technology and Their Application (Oxford, 1962), 25.

<sup>16</sup> Pask, 'The Architectural Relevance of Cybernetics', 511.

an attitude, a philosophy and a manner of control for the Fun Palace organization<sup>17</sup>. Convened by Pask, the Cybernetics Committee would be claimed to run as a self-organising system: 'like the Fun Palace itself the Cybernetics Committee should, perhaps, develop as a self-organising system. The genetic code of the agenda is provided to initiate the evolutionary process and the constraints are not severe enough to inhibit it altogether'.<sup>18</sup> A cross-disciplinary, non-hierarchical and self-directed organization, the Cybernetics Committee operated through meetings whereby the Fun Palace's means and ends would fluctuate. The freedom afforded by the idea of self-organization captured the imagination of committee member Roy Ascott, as minuted in one of the meetings: 'Ascott stressed the need for an unrestrictive framework wherein the participants acted as a Self-Organising System by dint of creative activity or group involvement'.<sup>19</sup> Borrowing from Pask's cybernetic design paradigm, Price's own life-long design strategy of 'calculated uncertainty' would operate under conditions of uncertainty by accommodating change as a way to challenge the undesirable closure caused by too tight prediction of planning.<sup>20</sup>

The uneasy association between the visionary and the pragmatic responses to non-deterministic, megastructural organization of the city would be subject to intense interrogation at the turn of the decade for its ideological flaws by Marxist-informed critic Manfredo Tafuri,<sup>21</sup> and for the insensitive clearance effected in British cities following Colin Buchanan's 'Traffic in Towns', by geographer Peter Hall respectively.<sup>22</sup> Registering the ambivalent reception that the idea of technology accrued at the time, and with explicit mention to the Fun Palace this time, Canadian architect Melvin Charney appraised the cultural role of these experimental analogues over their technical competence in *Landscape*, Spring 1967. For whereas the real performance is obsolete in relation to developments in other fields, these speculative models of human organization built-in probability in their performance, and in so doing they write a commentary to current impersonalization of social experience brought about by technology.<sup>23</sup>

Constructed through images, the idea of technology in the 60's was a contested one. On the one hand, it was believed to provide free access to scientific knowledge and to herald the

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<sup>17</sup> Fun Palace Project. Cybernetics Committee. Introductory Document, Circulation List and Basic Plans, 5, DR:1995:0188:525:004:009, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

<sup>18</sup> Fun Palace Project. Cybernetics Committee. Introductory Document, Circulation List and Basic Plans, DR1995:0188:525:004:009, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

<sup>19</sup> Cybernetics Committee Meeting 27 Jan 1965, RIBA Archive.12.

<sup>20</sup> Stanford Anderson (ed.), *Planning for Diversity and Choice. Possible Futures and Their Relations to the Man-Controlled Environment* (Cambridge, MA: The M.I.T. Press, 1968), 286.

<sup>21</sup> Manfredo Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia: Design and Capitalist Development* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1976).

<sup>22</sup> Peter Hall, 'Monumental Folly', *New Society* 12, no. 317 (24 October 1968): 602–3.

<sup>23</sup> Melvin Charney, 'Environmental Conjecture: In the Jungle of the Grand Prediction', in Anderson, *Planning for Diversity and Choice*, 326.

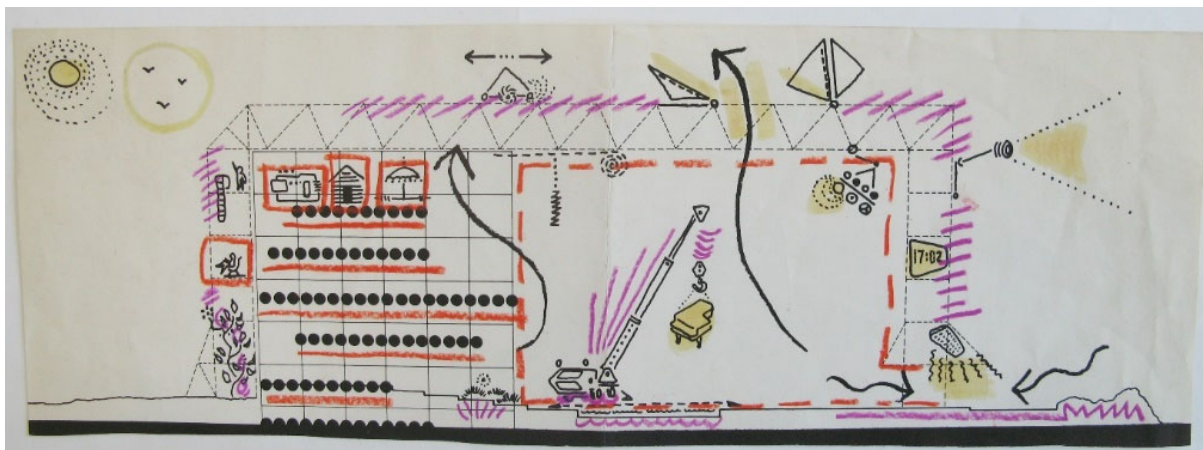
construction of a self-directed and emancipatory subjectivity that challenged the institutionalized culture of the Welfare State.<sup>24</sup> On the other hand, these ideals were constantly suffocated by the corporate logic of performance that the commodification of technology imposed on cultural production, as philosopher Jean-François Lyotard concisely delineated in *The Postmodern Condition*. Sharing the emancipatory ambition of a free information society, the Fun Palace offers a relevant case to investigate the affective investment in technology, and the idea of self-organization in particular, at the time. In analysing closely the archive of the Fun Palace, the grid emerges as an ambivalent figure of technological mediation in search for social freedom, for it produces both organization and excess. It is through the interrogation of the grid and the chain of gestures involved in their production, that the dissolution of design regimes in the project can be critically examined. Grids are represented in different ways in the archive. These convey the spatial rationale of Fun Palace environment as a servicing network, as in the early drawing '51/18: Diagrammatic Section'. Alongside these, comparative matrices investigate relational conditions affecting the design brief, such as the visual conditions for different audience positioning in '51/30 Auditorium chart'. Punch card technology was further introduced to index affinities in servicing demands for speculative pleasures. Finally, Pask's operational expertise outlined the program for the self-regulated organism.

## Servicing Network

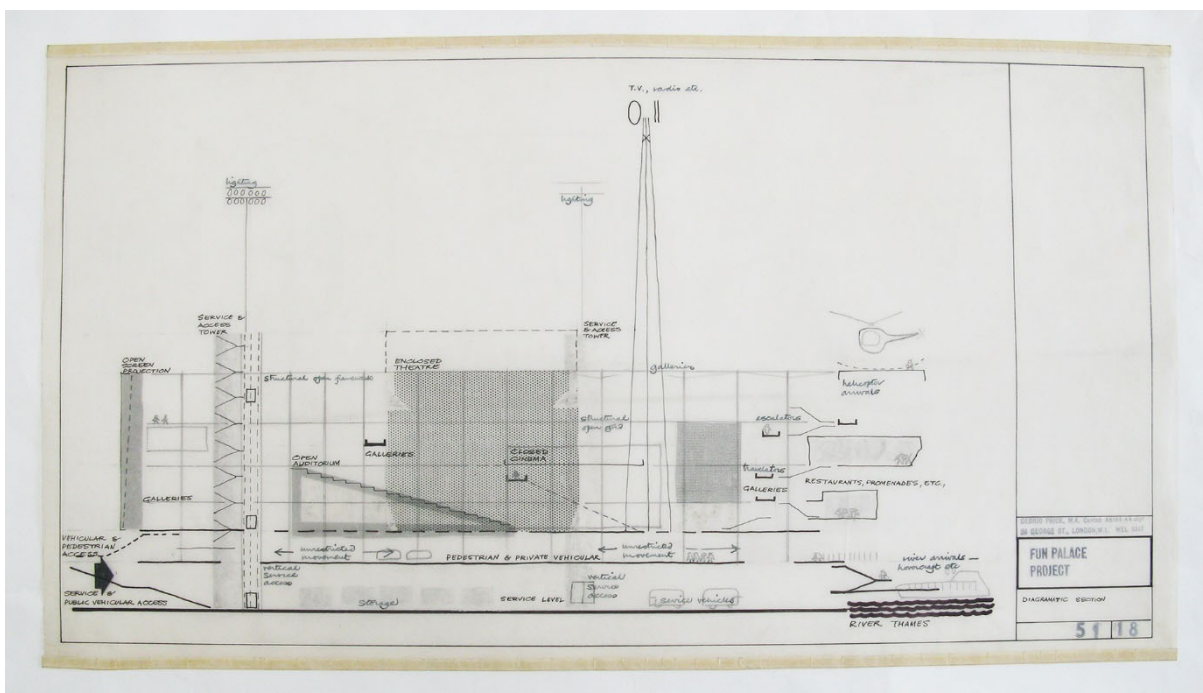
Visually contrasting components in an early diagrammatic section - which became cover for Price's exhibition 'The Evolving Image', London, 1975 - articulate the inchoate ambition of the project: organization for spontaneous pleasure to develop [FIGURE 3.2]. A modular frame in thin-dotted black line touches lightly an uneven ground line. The frame encloses both a big void on the right, where ideograms sit randomly, and a self-standing grid on the left punched by parallel rows of black dots. Differently to the frame, the grid sinks onto a thick raw black soil. Freehand lines in crayon enhance the quality of these objects, the seriality of spots, the singularity of squared enclosures, and the open, shared big void. Colourful effects convey the event-like quality of the picture;'17:02' – the evening is ahead. An undated 'Preliminary Report' written for the Fun Palace situates the project within the

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<sup>24</sup> Lobsinger, 'Cybernetic Theory and the Architecture of Performance', 122.



**Figure 3.2:** Diagrammatic Section of the Fun Palace. n.d..  
 DR1995:0188:109, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.



**FIGURE 3.3:** Fun Palace drawing 51/18. 'Diagrammatic Section'.  
 DR1995:0188:121, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

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new age of leisure, and claims that 'it is intended that the total area will provide the range of freedom and enjoyment that is possible only in a metropolitan riverside site'.<sup>25</sup> Thus the drawing conveys not only the key role of technology in providing such freedom but, more importantly, what counts as technology at this early stage in the project: an infrastructural punched grid commanding a range of mechanically controlled environments and the structural frame that would shelter these.

Iterations of the section soon defined a deck and a datum, the former to equip the ground, the latter to modulate the environment above as a programmable system. Meanwhile, the graphically insinuated events would progressively evolve into textually specific but graphically blurred, yet always changing pleasures on offer, as the drawing '51/18:Diagrammatic Section' shows [FIGURE 3.3]. The Preliminary Report expands the structural function of the grid to that of a servicing network and suggests its stabilizing function for the spontaneous occupation sought: 'In order to produce an area capable of varied and variable use by all it is necessary to provide an overall network of services and servicing areas'. Further definition of the network would incorporate a travelling crane spanning the whole complex to enlarge the servicing capacity of the open framework and deck, as shown in the drawing '51/111: Sections (AR)' produced for *Architectural Review*. The framework, deck and travelling crane would modulate the Fun Palace air as finely as a spider's web to assist the servicing demands of any potential event within it.

## Chart

A progressive ephemeralization of the section's material referent announces the substitution of space for information and as the new object of design in the Fun Palace. A range of charts capture this shift of attention. They represent the research of a range of conditions to be attended by the Fun Palace's open brief. Thus, early drawings such as '51/30. *Comparative Theatre Seating Analysis*', were concerned with visual conditions related to audience positioning [FIGURE 3.4]. Similarly, charts such as 'Servicing for Mass Activities. 51/59' and its later development for the Camden Pilot Project '*Individual Activity Requirements. 51/89. Amended 20.4.64*',<sup>26</sup> would coordinate infrastructural services and environmental controls (such as acoustic control, heating, lighting, power or water) as required per potential activity and space. Operating as sort of a project management technique, the flow chart '*Camden*

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<sup>25</sup> Fun Palace Preliminary Report, DR1995:0188:525:002:001:009, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

<sup>26</sup> DR 1995:0188:218, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.



**FIGURE 3.4:** Cedric Price, '51/30. Comparative Theatre Seating Analysis', DR1995:0188:165, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

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*Town Project. Network Analysis. 51/121* borrows the 'Critical Path Method' from operational research to map the possible route through the procurement's network.

The production of these matrices became a main activity of Cedric Price's office, and the conditions examined varied as the project evolved. Notably, each of these charts is hand drawn on the Fun Palace project's typical translucent sheet format with tape protection in its long sides ready for blueprinting, and allocated a board number to mark them as part of the Fun Palace's list of drawings. The media form of the above chart is defined in the archive as 'black ink, graphite, black felt-tip pen, black ink stamp and adhesive dot on wove paper encre noire. 38,2 x 71,1 cm'. These grids migrate from representing space to generating organization, namely, analysis of interrelated conditions potentially applicable to different projects. Uncommitted to any architectural expression, design thrives in constant flux. However, it is by means of the grid's own material presence in the archive that we appreciate the mobility they infer in Price's body of work. From the 'Communications Diagram. 67.08' in Feasibility Study Oxford Circus Hive, to the 'Life Span & Use cycle chart' of Potteries Thinkbelt project ca. 1965, the flow chart of 1969's Non-Plan, the adjacency graphs developing 'menus' for the digitally controlled Generator in 1976, the 'Safety and Health' organisational diagram for McAppy project in 1974, and the Information System for any job conducted in the office of 1976, the ubiquity of the grid in Price's archive gives a measure not only of the delight its production may have released – for Price would use them as a provocation to clients, collaborators and himself – but crucially, of the ambivalent demarcation of Price's projects and the challenge these pose to the conventions of the architectural program. Such mobility is registered in the Fun Palace's reception, for instance, when the Interaction Centre's usage diagram is appreciated as a Fun Palace drawing.<sup>27</sup> Price scholar Tanja Herdt unpacks how the experimentation with operational research principles initiated in the Fun Palace sets the myriad of matters of concern for design in later projects, for as she claims, 'in the Fun Palace Price had formulated all the important questions and stances that he would develop over the next fifteen years as he created his own autonomous design approach'.<sup>28</sup> The ephemeralization of architectural design brought about by these grids is best conveyed in Price's definition of architecture, as 'that which, through a natural distortion of time, place and interval, creates beneficial social conditions that hitherto were considered impossible'.<sup>29</sup> What else could open the informational game

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<sup>27</sup> This drawing is included in the folder of the Interaction Centre, DR:1995 252 621, Cedric Price fonds, CCA. However, it is captioned as a Fun palace drawing in Pier Vittorio Aureli, 'Labour, City and Architecture: Cedric Price's Pottery Thinkbelt and the Post-Fordist Turn in Architecture' (Architectural Association, 11 December 2013), 1:54:59 min.

<sup>28</sup> Herdt, *The City and the Architecture of Change*, 63.

<sup>29</sup> Price, 'Technology Is the Answer, but What Was the Question?', in Hardingham, *Cedric Price Works 1952-2003*, 331.

that the Fun Palace sets up other than the key framed as drawing number 1 '51/01: Key to Seating Types'?

## Index

The brief of the Fun Palace took the form of an open list of everyday pleasures. Keeping it loose and evolving while anticipating the compatibilities of their servicing provision, became the crux of the organizational strategy of the Fun Palace project. Designed by Cedric Price's office, the 'Activity Affinity Programming' would primarily survey through questionnaires desired activities and their servicing demands. This information would then be stored in the form of a punched card index, to which the card of the figure 4.4 belongs [FIGURE 3.5]. Having realised the 'shortcomings of using, by name, activities already in existence' – Price describes the process to Christopher Alexander in 1966, and later to *The Drama Review* audiences, interestingly, in the Non-Program section of 'The Fun Palace', 1968 <sup>30</sup> –

*(...)Therefore the next stage consisted of breaking down a wide range of desirable activities into their constituent demands. This work was purposely put out of the office, although the punch card system used was developed and tabulated here. The resulting activity affinity information was then rehabilitated by a developed structural, component and servicing kit. The final store of such possibilities was handed over to the cyberneticians with specific requests for threshold conditions, visiting patterns, to be investigated at an early stage. Once satisfactory feedback was achieved then previous hunches on, say, the desirable periods of transformation from one total configuration to another could be tested.<sup>31</sup>*

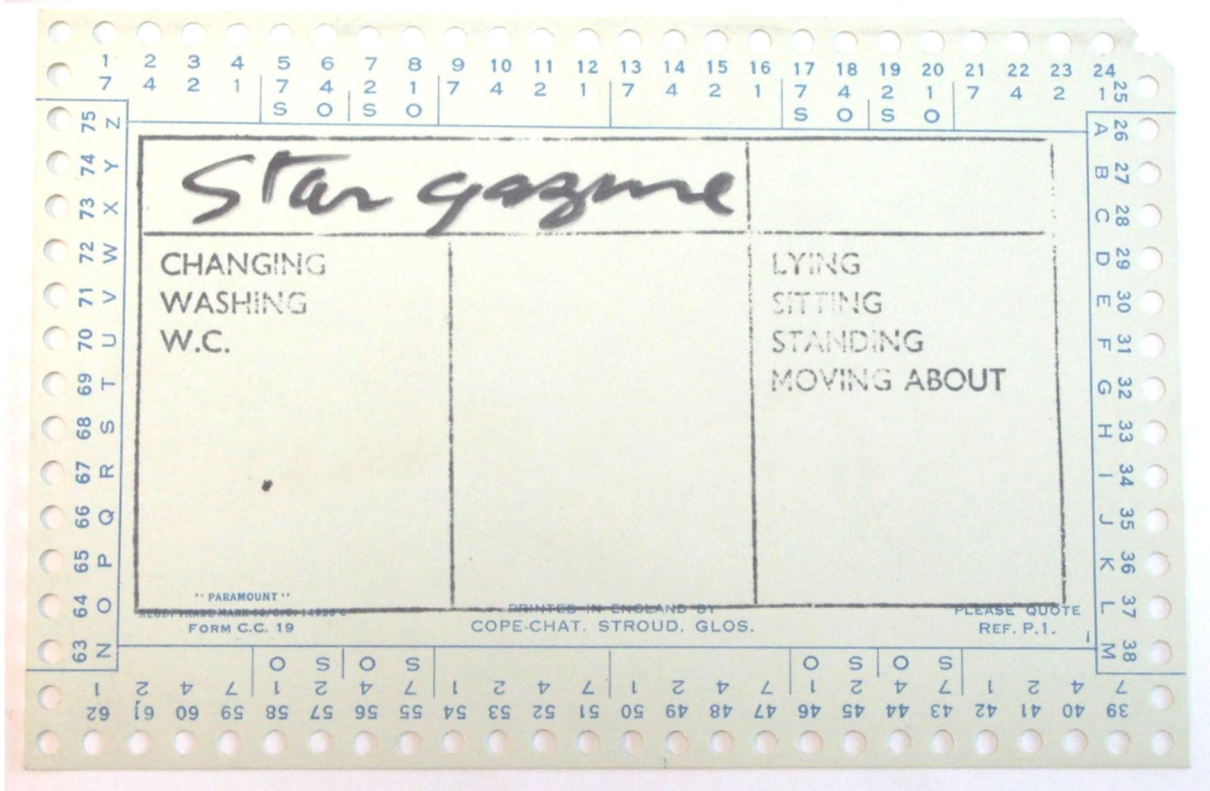
The so called 'electronics system investigation questionnaire' was designed to feed the index with speculative pleasures and their servicing demands.<sup>32</sup> A limited number of questionnaires, overall 186 units, were distributed by post from Cedric Price's office to a list of 17 addressees, including Fun Palace members such as Joan Littlewood, engineer Frank Newby and politician Tom Driberg, together with close collaborators such as Reyner

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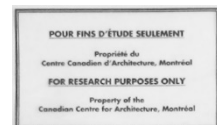
<sup>30</sup> The text is an excerpt from a letter Price exchanged with Christopher Alexander in 1966.

<sup>31</sup> DR 1995:0188:525: 003.Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

<sup>32</sup> Letter from CP to GP, 7 June 1963, folder DR1995:1088:525:001, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.



**FIGURE 3.5:** Fun Palace's edge notched punched card, DR1995:0188:525:004:001, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.



Banham, and Price's sister Mercia Price, as well as the AA Student Committee. Filled in by hand with amusing notes, it purports the close involvement of a small network of collaborators, with each member involved in multiple tasks. Price explains the workflow as follows:

*(1) Completed questionnaire form (...) is transferred, in this office to (2) rubber stamp in centre of punch card. (3) This information is then related to the allocation of number sheet. (4) The appropriate perimeter hole is cut./ On completion of sufficient cards existing conditions, whether environmental, organizational, temporal, social or economic, are allocated numbers enabling a compilation of a series of mutually reinforcing activities./ Such reinforcing is purely technical and requires a further sieving in relation to social intent whether participant willed or organisationally directed.*<sup>33</sup>

The card index generated activity affinity information gained through questionnaires by means of the morphology of the card. Its capacity is a function of the length of the punched perimeter. A rubber stamp organizes the card's central space as a gridded field in direct correspondence to the structure of the questionnaire. A handwritten activity leads the card's information: 'star gazing'. The edge is yet to be notched in Cedric Price's office following a specific 'allocation of numbers' sheet. Running from number 1 to 49, the document codes spatial factors related to 'size, position, quality of activity'; 'environmental factors' such as noise tolerance; piped and communication services such as television reception. The list is rather short for the capacity of this type of cards, which suggests the use of direct rather than binary coding.<sup>34</sup> Activity information is held by the holes opened to the edge in appropriate locations. To retrieve the information, a needle is passed through the pack of cards at the specific hole, the pack is shaken and the cards drop out. Produced in Stroud, Gloucestershire by Cope-Chat since the 1930s, edge-notch cards such as this one were popularly used in the 1960s as personal indexes<sup>35</sup>— notably, Price himself would use these for the publications of his projects [FIGURE 3.6].<sup>36</sup> An affordable analogue machine, at a time when computation infrastructure was institutionally controlled, the index conveys the self-

<sup>33</sup> DR1995:0188:525:004:005, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

<sup>34</sup> In direct coding, each descriptor is assigned to its related numbered hole following the external perimeter with printed numbers running from 1 to 75, whereas binary coding would make use of the parallel structure of fields printed with the '7-4-2-1-S-O' numbers to tabulate a larger number of items using indirect coding methods.

<sup>35</sup> Anthony Charles Foskett, *A Guide to Personal Indexes Using Edge-Notched, Uniterm and Peek-a-Boo Cards*, Second edition, revised and enlgd.. (London: Bingley, 1970), 21.

<sup>36</sup> 'Cedric Price: research materials, ca. 1953-2009', 1/2 Box, BIB 197984. Library, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

7 4 2 1 | 7 4 2 1 | 7 4 2 1 | 7 4 2 1 | 7 4

75 Z  
74 Y  
73 X  
72 W  
71 V  
70 U  
69 T  
68 S  
67 R  
66 Q  
65 P

51 FUN PALACE (1)

14.5.64 New Scientist ? 432 - 433  
 1.65 Architectural Review 874'875.  
 20.1.65 Architectural Journal  
 6.65 Link. (Gloucestershire College of Art)  
 7.65 Aujourd'hui \*France  
 no 35 ARK (Royal College of Art)  
 no 36 ARK (Royal College of Art)  
 5.67 Bauen + Wohnen \*Germany SWITZERLAND  
 no 63 Design Quarterly \*USA  
 6.68 Baumeister \*Germany  
 11.67 Architectural Design - (Pilot Fun Palace Project)  
 4.68 Bauen + Wohnen \*Germany SWITZERLAND  
 2.68 The Kentiku \*Japan

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51 Fun Palace (2)

7. 8.64 New Statesman  
 Lee Valley Regional Park Report.  
 15. 4.65 New Society  
 no 4 Archigram  
 no 6 Archigram  
 1. 5.67 Utopie  
 1968 Planning for Diversity and Choice. M.I.T.Pres.  
 1968 New Directions in British Architecture:  
 Royston Landau: Studio Vista.  
 1965 Essays in Local Government Enterprise, vol 2.  
 Spring 68 The Drama Review  
 2 1/71 Megascope  
 AD  
 "PARAMOUNT"

FIGURE 3.6: Fun Palace bibliography. Series: Library, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.



supported nature of the Fun Palace organization. However, even if no automatic computation would be conducted for the Fun Palace, the unfinished punch-card socializes the computer as an instrument of pleasure for the Fun Palace's emancipatory program.

It is within the specification for additional capacity in the analogue punch-card index, for further activities and related technical factors that would only become known as the project developed as Price noted —<sup>37</sup> that the self-organizing agenda of the project is realized. For the provision for the unthinkable was quintessential to the idea of fun pursued in the project. As minuted on the first meeting for the Cybernetics Sub-committee group 'Form and Amenities', 5<sup>th</sup> March 1965: 'We wanted to get closer to a definition of "Fun"(...) "Seeking the unfamiliar", and ultimately "transcending the unfamiliar". Fun makers provide amenities which are unfamiliar. Funsters have the ability to seek the unfamiliar'.<sup>38</sup> More specifically, Pask would identify the means and ends conducive to fun with those of self-organization in the Cybernetics Committee Introductory Document: 'The organisation is called a Fun Palace because it involves a physical enclosure of palace-like dimensions and because, as an ultimate goal, we aim to foster the achievement of happiness within the confines of this structure. (...) Although many of us, including myself, have tentative ideas about the conditions that are conducive to happiness, these have only been built into the specification to the extent that provision is made for adaptation and participant interaction. Hence the Fun Palace is intended to be experimental (to act as a test bed for relevant concepts)'.<sup>39</sup>

## Programme

Circulated in the minutes of the first Cybernetics Committee meeting, 27<sup>th</sup> January 1965, the 'Organisational Plan as Programme' captures Pask's idea of self-organization as tailored for the Fun Palace, and as it appears, its mechanics of fun [FIGURE 3.7]. Opaque squares and enigmatic notations bridged by directional lines, and distributed in three hierarchical levels, the diagram represent the interactive and learning capacity of the system. For as Pask clarifies, 'levels in the hierarchical structure (...) will undoubtedly exist in any viable system'.<sup>40</sup> Its scope is to afford sufficient variety and novelty to sustain participants' interests

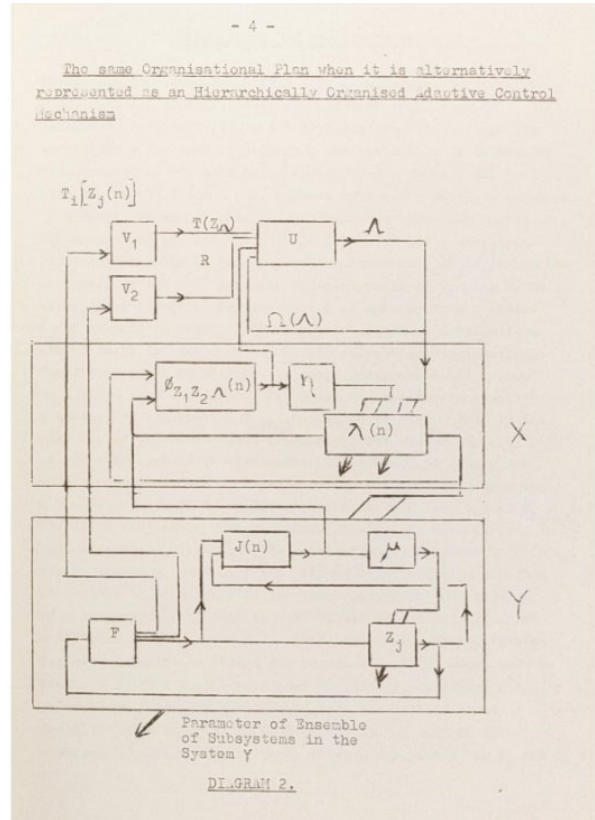
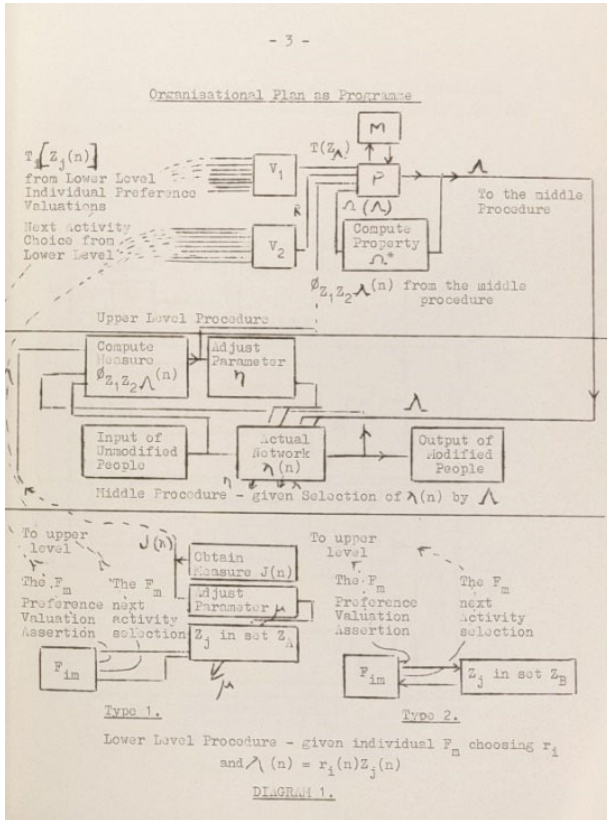
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<sup>37</sup> DR1995:0188:525:004:005, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

<sup>38</sup> Cybernetics Committee Meeting, Friday, 5<sup>th</sup> March, 1965, folder DR1995:0188:525:005, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

<sup>39</sup> Fun Palace Project. Cybernetics Committee. Introductory Document, Circulation List and Basic Plans, 1. DR1995:0188:525:004:009, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

<sup>40</sup> Fun Palace Project. Cybernetics Committee. Introductory Document, 5.



**FIGURE 3.7:** Gordon Pask, 'Organisational Plan as Programme' [left] and 'The same Organisational Plan when it is alternatively represented as a Hierarchical Organised Adaptive Control Mechanism' [right], Fun Palace Cybernetics Committee. Minutes of the Meeting held at the Building Centre, Store Street, London, W.C.1, 27<sup>th</sup> January, 1965', p. 3-4, Cedric Price Papers, Royal Institute of British Architects Archive.

as the only governing force in the system. The lower level in Diagram 1 represents two kinds of conditioning systems, a fixed Type 2 and a dynamic 'adaptively controlled' Type 1, which is sensitive to novelty and feeds back to the middle and upper levels. Pask describes these eloquently in the Introductory Document: 'At one extreme we can consider arrangements in which definite assumptions are made about the characteristics of man and in which individual participation by way of individual feedback is minimised. The kind of system in mind is a modern analogue of the late 17<sup>th</sup> century sensationalist displays wherein the nobility were accustomed to wander through a suite of differently (but, by 17<sup>th</sup> century standards, most exquisitely) scented apartments. The modern analogue is perhaps a maze-like structure through which people wander (or possibly are propelled on one of the moving platforms provided by our architects). As they move, these people are subject to various sensations and possibly also to exploit conditioning procedures. But the entire programme of events is predetermined / At the other extreme we take the "happening", a sort of American party, as our paradigm. In principle the "happening" should provide an input of novel and varied events, the development of which is modulated by feedback from the participants at the party'.<sup>41</sup>

Pask had envisaged a dynamic environment modulated through feedback for the sole aim of 'encouraging the creative behaviour that is necessary in an automated society'.<sup>42</sup> However, the opacity of the squared memory-plus program supervising the diagram, which feeds not only backwards but forwards a looped system intercepted by 'adjustment parameters' renders visible the paradoxical governance of the system. The contested reception among committee members that Pask's neutralized Program gathered – and the pragmatic rhetoric that accompanies it – conveys the plural sensitivity and critical capacity of the Fun Palace organization. Among others, the Educational Committee convenor Dr. R. Chesterman took up arms: 'Strong objection taken to Pask's line in cybernetics paper "a centre for sociological and operational research" (...) nobody would submit to being a cybernetics guinea pig. Couldn't believe this was L.'s (Littlewood's) intention (...) L. (Littlewood) said that practice of cybernetics in many cases and predictive chat was only later day fad-version of pseudo Marxism'.<sup>43</sup> Growing concerns pointing at the alienation from the Fun Palace's social milieu were raised in an unsigned letter addressed to Gordon Pask on 13<sup>th</sup> April 1965, headed as 'JL/BR' and reverberating Joan Littlewood's critical voice: 'While I am confident that a human generating system can provoke games, trials, expeditions and play at one pole of the Palace, and that many of these games may indeed be called scientific: at the same time I see no sign of a similar force emerging at the science pole. Who among our associates –

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid, 9-10.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, 5.

<sup>43</sup> Folder DR1995:0188:525:005, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

teacher – scientist – artist – will generate that situation in which each person becomes a scientist? We appear to discuss peripheral ideas at our meetings. I always think ideas are very easy, but what is the use of talking about the hierarchies and rituals which may develop if we have not as yet a formula or lever which will assist people in changing themselves?’<sup>44</sup>

Pregnant with affects - freedom, happiness, fun-, the Fun Palace’s idea of self-organization and the grids informing its expression as service network, chart, index and programme, stood at odds with the rising criticism that technology culture accrued at the time for its dehumanized abstraction, centralized bureaucracy and social rationalization.<sup>45</sup> With a hint of irony, Price registers this ambivalence when commenting upon his ‘Fun Palace Auditorium Chart’ in *Architectural Design* Supplement Series, 1970: ‘produced through despair at the paucity of information on such conditions. Difficult and obtuse conditions were selected as well as the conventional situations since I was depressed by the ‘magic’ associated with mono-directional non-electronic audio-visual mass contact (...) Still a bloody good crib sheet although it has a disturbing similarity with those charts of how to lay out slaves on a ship’s deck’.<sup>46</sup>

## Operational Delirium

Pask anticipated the tangible analogy of a fluid conversation when presenting his Organizational Plan to committee colleagues, for as he nuanced in the Introductory Document: ‘The feedback concerned must resemble the concept producing discourse of a conversation rather than the arid data exchange of the more familiar information channels encountered in communication systems’.<sup>47</sup> Systematically minuted, the interactive and evolutionary nature of the agenda made the meeting the quintessential event of the Fun Palace’s production. Far from the abstractness that the diagram represents, a polymorphous, contested, inconclusive and ultimately live flow of arguments swell the archive of the Fun Palace project. In subjectivizing the Fun Palace’s self-organising agenda, the archive emerges as the key locus where the critical productivity of the program takes root.

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<sup>44</sup> Unsigned letter to Gordon Pask, 13th April 1965, folder DR1995:0188:525:005, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

<sup>45</sup> Student revolts such as the Free Speech Movement in Berkeley, December 1964, would denounce the commodification brought about by technology, even if later the networked American counterculture of the 1970s would re-idealize the latter. Fred Turner, *From Counterculture to Cyberculture: Stewart Brand, the Whole Earth Network, and the Rise of Digital Utopianism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 2.

<sup>46</sup> Cedric Price Supplement, *Architectural Design*, in Hardingham, *Cedric Price Works 1952-2003*, 26.

<sup>47</sup> Fun Palace Project. Cybernetics Committee. Introductory Document.

Plural, with over 60 entries itemized in 10 sub-chapters pointing to a divergent set of goals, provisional, for it intended to develop in further lines of enquiry, and self-supported, mostly developed through voluntary work, the self-organising agenda that Pask coordinated inscribed the modus operandi of the cybernetic organization steering it.<sup>48</sup> A cross-disciplinary, non-hierarchical and self-supported society of experts and non-experts,<sup>49</sup> the Cybernetics Committee would recruit and set autonomous sub-groups as required by an ever-expanding conversation. A mobile organization, it produced by means of systematically minuted meetings held in different locations,<sup>50</sup> with records from the first two Cybernetics Committee meetings dating from 27<sup>th</sup> January and 17<sup>th</sup> March 1965 existing along with those from the sub-committee 'Form and Amenities', 5<sup>th</sup> March 1965, and the undated notes 'Cybernetics and Architecture Panel'. The drifting conversation and exceeding energy seem at times to have overtaken the agenda of the first of these meetings: 'Although the rest of the meeting was perfectly coherent the items that were discussed merged into one another and different members of the Committee became associated with different attitudes' –And it is abruptly brought to a close - 'in order to leave the Building Centre by 10 pm the remaining items on the Agenda were very briefly considered and it was agreed to set up 4 specific groups to consider certain facets of the project in detail (...) As an organisational point, each convenor is intended to co-opt whoever he regards as desirable'.<sup>51</sup> The activity stirred by the agenda revealed itself unmanageable by the organization, as explicitly recorded in the 'Cybernetics and Architecture Panel' minutes: 'At the two meetings of the cybernetics committee it has been apparent that there are many ideas but little coordination. The management function is missing'.<sup>52</sup>

The simulation of aspects of the Fun Palace organization in pilot projects, a key preoccupation of the cybernetics group, led to a contested Camden Pilot. While Price's enthusiasm for the project would reverberate in later projects such as Generator, the scheme was received with scepticism by Cybernetics Committee members,<sup>53</sup> and above all, by Joan Littlewood. Her free, witty and agile hand promptly criticized the stasis of Camden grid-system on the grounds of its self-referentiality. Among Littlewood's typically ironic and

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid, 11.

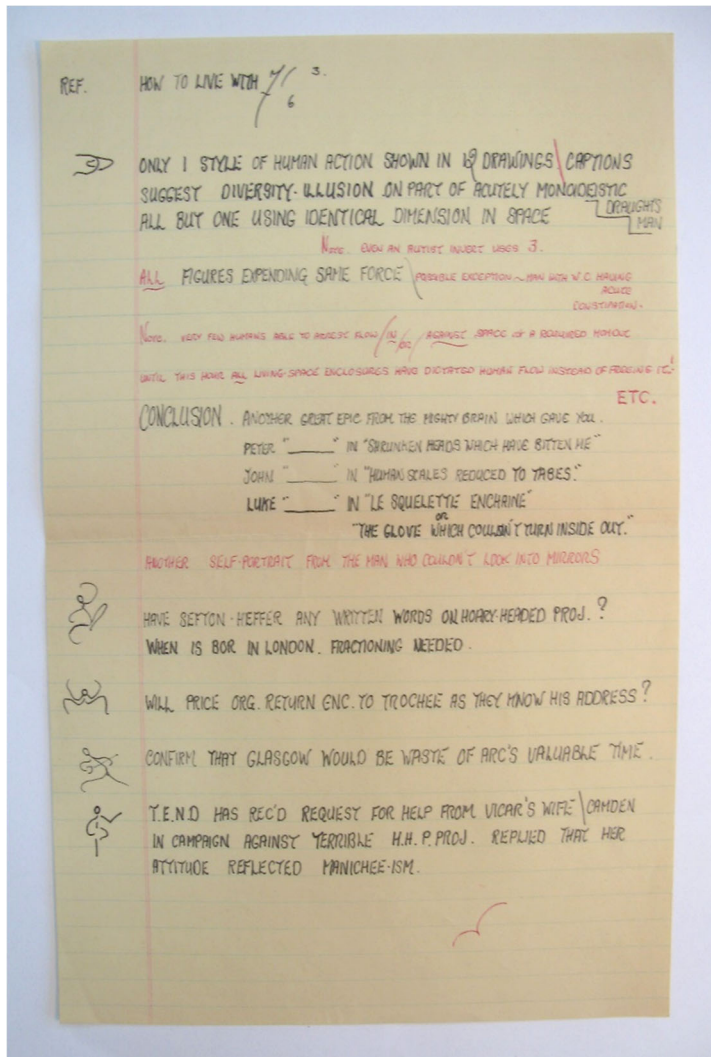
<sup>49</sup> Ibid, 3.

<sup>50</sup> The venues in London for the Cybernetics Committee meeting were The Building Centre, the Architectural Association, and the Holborn Town Hall respectively.

<sup>51</sup> Cybernetics Committee Meeting 27 Jan 1965, RIBA Archive, 9.

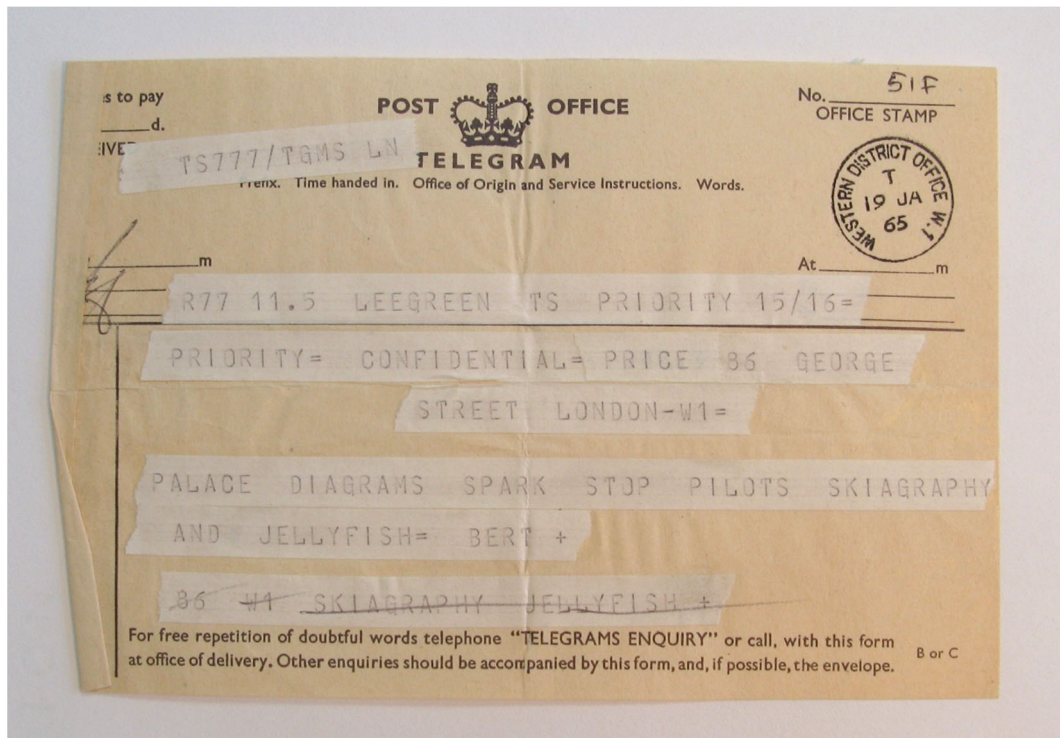
<sup>52</sup> DR1995:0188:525:005:011, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

<sup>53</sup> As recorded in the second of the Cybernetics Committee meeting minutes of 17<sup>th</sup> March 1965: 'Willmer — stressed that the original concept of a Fun Palace laid considerable emphasis on the dynamic nature of the system. In contrast, the pilot project proposed for Camden Town was far more static'. Fun Palace Cybernetics Committee. Minutes of the Meeting held at the Architectural Association, 34 Bedford Square, W.C.1, 17/3/65, folder DR1995:0188:525:001, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.



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FIGURE 3.8: 'Ref. How to Live With  $7\frac{3}{8}$ '. Memo by Joan Littlewood, n..d.  
Folder DR1995:0188:525:003, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.



**FIGURE 3.9:** Telegram, 19 January 1965. Folder DR1995:0188:525:003, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

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poignant memos and notes from encounters with Price, one titled as ‘How to live with 7’6” and sprinkled by comic silhouettes of body postures resents the lack of plurality in the representation of the pilot project’s audiences [FIGURE 3.8]: ‘Only 1 style of human action shown in 12 drawings. Captions suggest diversity illusion on part of acutely monodeistic draught man [...] All figures expending the same force. All but one using identical dimension in space. Until this hour all living space enclosures have dictated human flow instead of freeing it!’.<sup>54</sup> Littlewood’s pithy warnings would also reach Price’s office via telegram: ‘PALACE DIAGRAMS SPARK STOP PILOTS SKIAGRAPHY AND JELLYFISH’ [FIGURE 3.9]. A more severe critique of the disengagement with the social milieu of the project would arrive on 8 February 1965: ‘1. Post mortem Camden. Suggests any future pilot forays must be planned + ARC (and) socio-political ideas integrated at the outset (...) 3. JL has no belief in Camden as a workable proposition (...) 5. JL still concerned abt (about) 7’6” mod (module). It is Corbusier crampedness. See “Unite”. Suggests Arc’s next questionnaire: “what can 2 people do in a small box?” Re.3.4.5 if Arc Cli in serous disagreement suggest Arc proceeds with his ideas without Cli. Latter would not like current plans sold to J. Lee’.<sup>55</sup> Unheaded, unsigned, mostly undated, and distinctively Littlewood’s, these grotesque memos interrupt without notice the cybernetic rhetoric with their timely critique. They occupy the archive, make it shudder, and regenerate.

Meanwhile, an unfinished repository of fictional narratives devised by the Bristol-based experimental psychologist John Clark, convenor of the sub-committee ‘Ideas Group’, and distributed in instalments, kept expanding the cybernetic activity until December 1965.<sup>56</sup> In the last of these, headed with the motto by nineteenth century poet Arthur Rimbaud “... he must see to it that his inventions can be smelt, felt, heard”, envisions the haptic experience of an elusive topiarist in the Fun Palace: ‘21. The Elusive Topiarist. / The devotee of maze will be dumbfounded. For having say, on Tuesday, achieved the labyrinthine journey through the privet, box, beech and holly alleyways of an open-air maze, if say, on Thursday, he hopes to show off his knowledge to some fair companion, he will be foxed. / For the mazes in the Fun Palace will be erected not to the ground but to the mobile boxes of earth. Thus the configuration of each maze can be changed overnight.’<sup>57</sup>

Relevant for this discussion are Lyotard’s politics of the postmodern paralogy.<sup>58</sup> Taking scientific discovery as its paradigm, paralogy – which Lyotard opposes to the performative logic of technology – identifies itself with that minor form of practice that firstly, lives within an

<sup>54</sup> Joan Littlewood, ‘How to live with 7’6”’, n.d. Folder DR1995:0188:525:005, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

<sup>55</sup> ‘JL to CP Urgent questions 8.2.65’. Folder DR1995:0188:525:005, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

<sup>56</sup> ‘A List of 70 Projects for a Fun Palace’. Folder DR1995:0188:525:002:003, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

<sup>57</sup> Memorandum. Ideas for the Fun Palace. (Serial Numbers 15 to 21), 17 December 1965, DR1995:0188:525:003:024, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

<sup>58</sup> Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, 3.

irreducible plurality of modes of argumentation, and secondly, pursues novelty through dissent, seeking instabilities in the accepted paradigms of truth. Groping about without a model, this 'micrologic' dissolves regimes such as authorship, expertise or design program by saturating them with a powerful ambiguity. Its resistance – argues Lyotard in his early study of the micropolitics of desire, *Libidinal Economy*, 1974 – stands in the libidinal, ephemeral form that operational delirium takes as opposed to any systematization of subjectivity. Lyotard claims, '(modern) science is positively productive or creative, or fictive, as is art. It is less and less interesting as a theoretical critique and more and more as operational delirium. The delirium requires the death of the knowing subject (...) Every topology [topique] seems like an outdated ideology compared to the mobility of libidinal economy at play in invention. The modern scientist no longer exists as a knower, that is to say as a subject, but as a small transitory region in a process of energetic metamorphosis, incredibly refined; he exists only as a 'researcher', which means on the one hand, of course, as a part of a bureaucratic apparatus of scientific power, but on the other hand, indissociably, as an experimenter, indefatigable and not enslaved, with new junctures and combinations of energy; the statements he proposes count only in terms of their novelty'.<sup>59</sup> Paralogy is a multiverse of experimentation animated by the friction between a movement of flight, invention and excess, and a movement of reason and organization. That practice of the experimenter- researcher subject, is for Lyotard the anti-model capable of creating new knowledge that is also socially just, as noted in the concluding remarks of his *Postmodern Condition*.<sup>60</sup>

The excess flooding the Fun Palace archive - which only at the CCA accrues a total of '275 drawings, 228 reprographic copies, 20 panels, 1 artefact, 1 film reel, 1 roll, 1.13 l.m textual records, 0.04 l. m. photographic materials'—<sup>61</sup> maps the libidinal energy that caused it to exist. A cacophony of media forms resisting unification or replication, and whereby among others, Littlewood's memos graze more than praise both Price's and Pask's grids, the irreducible complexity that the self-organised agenda of the Fun Palace attempted grounds the first of the paralogical, namely, the recognition of an incommensurability between kinds of discourse.<sup>62</sup> The second condition attends the ambiguity that dissent invests in existing

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<sup>59</sup> Jean-François Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy* (London: Athlone, 1993), 255.

<sup>60</sup> Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, 67.

<sup>61</sup> Description of Cedric Price fonds, CCA. Other components of the Fun Palace archive are the Theatre Royal Stratford East Archive, the British Film Institute, Arts Council of Great Britain, London County Council Collection at London Metropolitan Archive, The Howard Gilman Collection of Visionary Architectural Drawings at Modern Museum of Modern Art and Michael Barker Collection of Joan Littlewood and the Theatre Workshop at University of Austin. But also the media by means of which the Fun Palace news circulates.

<sup>62</sup> In Lyotard's own terms, 'a recognition of the heteromorphous nature of language games is the first step (...). The second step is the principle that any consensus on the rules defining a game and the moves playable within it must be local, in other words, agreed on by its players and subject to eventual cancellation. The orientation them favours a multiplicity of finite meta-arguments'. Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, 66.

disciplinary paradigms. It is recorded in the archive through the distributed authorship on the one hand, which rejects the privileged voice of the expert by liquefying roles across committee members – with Littlewood as the sharpest design critic and Price as experienced operational researcher – and on the other hand, though the non-program that the Fun Palace grids open for design. The Fun Palace's critical capacity grows out of the incommensurable plurality and excess of its program and the mobility that it is capable to infer in the established design regimes. The Fun Palace exists only as an irreducible event, for any attempt of representation appears to arrest the project to death.

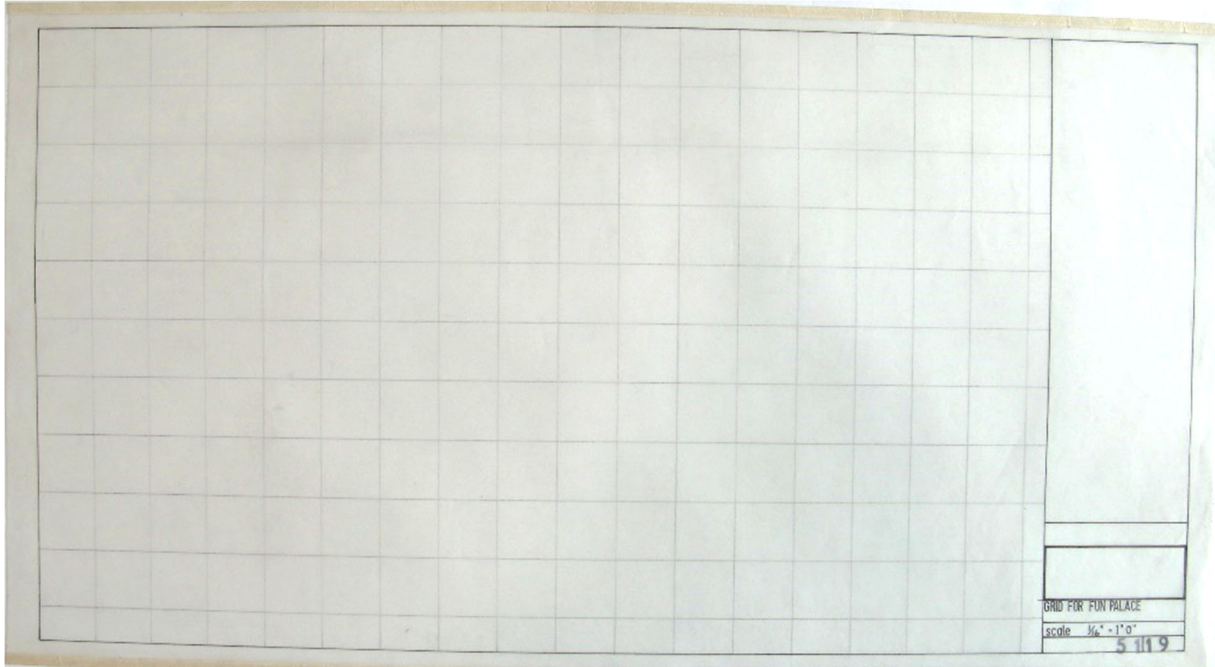
## Vertigo

What then is the cultural role of these grids? The Fun Palace grids are not a-temporal images of rational efficacy, but techniques situated within the historic specificity of the punch card in Sixties Britain - a time when scientific discovery would unleash both the anxieties against nuclear warfare and the ecstasies of mass communications. The disorientation caused by the rate of change would bring about an ephemeralization of the attachments between subjects and things, as Alvin Toffler referred to as 'Future Shock' in 1965. Baudrillard situates those instant attachments and the whole ecstatic and solitary experience of pleasure as realizations of a culture of chance and vertigo.<sup>63</sup> In his attempt to derive a sociology from the study of games, the French polymath Roger Caillois argues about the displacement that modernity exercises upon the chaotic world of make-believe and vertigo in favour of the governing equilibrium granted through merit and chance. Relegated into minor forms, the spirit of the mask and of ecstasy work to create illusion. Caillois' taxonomy is doubled with two modes of playing, the absolute excess of 'paidia' and its disciplined, absorbed by culture, 'ludus'. These play with restrictions, such as the repulsion of vertigo and the *ludus* mode, for, as he explains, 'the desire to overcome an obstacle' – *ludus* attitude – 'can only emerge to combat vertigo and prevent it from becoming transformed into disorder or panic. It is therefore, training in self-control, an arduous effort to preserve calm an equilibrium. (...) It provides the discipline needed to neutralize the dangerous effects of *illinx* [vertigo], as in mountain climbing or tightrope walking'.<sup>64</sup>

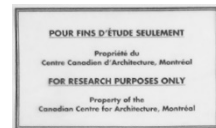
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<sup>63</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *The Ecstasy of Communication*, (New York: Semiotexte, 1988), 25.

<sup>64</sup> Caillois, *Man, Play, and Games*, 31.



**FIGURE 3.10:** Cedric Price, '51/19. Grid for Fun Palace. Scale 1/16": 1'0"', folder DR1995:0188:140-160, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.



Following Caillois affinities, these grids seem to stretch across the giddiness of Britain's Sixties to design the illusion of its command through the idea of self-organization. In what appears itself as a *ludus* practice of both context and disciplinary neutralization, the Fun Palace grids construct a cybernetic maze of arbitrary obstacles and opaque language that seizes consciousness of those involved in its design. The output of such a practice turns out to be exuberant, as the archive shows. The ephemeral quality of the Fun Palace organization and its work presents itself in synchronised alignment with the transient subjectivity of the Sixties. However, these grids expedite, not the embodiment of Fordist techniques applied to the organization of free space nor its labour as architectural scholar Pier Vittorio Aureli has claimed,<sup>65</sup> but the liberation that minor forms enjoy from that precise performative logic. Resonant with Lyotard's postmodern paralogy, the *modus operandi* of the Fun Palace as conveyed through its grids proves resistant to technological commodification. Its cultural value is that of challenging architectural regimes, such as those of authorship and program, by means of the libidinal mobility of the Fun Palace agenda, one which constantly puts itself into play by way of pleasure and excess.

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<sup>65</sup> Pier Vittorio Aureli, 'Labor and Architecture: Revisiting Cedric Price's Potteries Thinkbelt', *Log*, no. 23 (2011): 106.

## Chapter 4: Journals: an Archive for Stratford Fair

*6.7.68 / Look around area between Eton Manor – walled playing fields (half derelict) adjoining Hackney Marsh and Stratford Broadway – New high risers – dumps – dog kennels – 1840 – 60 houses half demolished, flattened areas between dwellings given over to dumping of usual filth, disintegrating mattresses, cars, scooters, broken glass. Refuse blowing about in wind. Pirate-dumps of rubble and dirt, in places spreading to curb stones. Patches of debris scheduled for gardens or car parks similarly disfigured. Broken fences and windows everywhere/ Over half of this area is no man's land. When will they rebuild? <sup>1</sup>*

This description, from a production meeting of the Stratford Fair in 1968, gives a vivid picture of the impact that local government slum clearance had in the area surrounding the Theatre Royal, Stratford, East London, where the radical theatre producer Joan Littlewood had settled her troupe Theatre Workshop in 1955. The desire to address the deprivation ravaging East London's urban life was a key motivation for the Fun Palace program, which she initiated in the early 1960s in a search for "a place to play, learn, and do what you will", in which 'everybody (is) an artist, or a scientist [...]'.<sup>2</sup> According to Theatre Royal honorary archivist Murray Melvin, 'the Fun Palace came out of the children in this area, the poor children [...] [Littlewood] started organising the children [...] doing street things with the children. And out of that came the Fun Palace as a bigger, vast [undertaking]'.<sup>3</sup>

Littlewood transmuted the atmosphere of dust and social conflict into the democratic and transformative agency of the playground, one that could afford – as Cedric Price put it – 'urban lungs of forms of breathing not yet imagined'.<sup>4</sup> The cultural form of the playground constituted the master image for the whole Fun Palace program, as the promotional literature of the project stressed: 'If to play is to employ oneself in satisfying curiosity, vanity or pride, exercising the imagination attempting new skills and making new decisions then the Fun Palace is a playground. If it is acknowledged that lack of development of human

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<sup>1</sup> "Report – Week of 6<sup>th</sup> March, 1968," folder DR1995:0188:525:003, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

<sup>2</sup> Littlewood, *Joan's Book*, 64.

<sup>3</sup> Murray Melvin, interview with the author, December 2014.

<sup>4</sup> "Land Use – Stratford E15," letter from Cedric Price to Joan Littlewood, dated February 1<sup>st</sup> 1974, folder DR1995:0188:525:003, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

potential is not due to inborn apathy in the individual but to lack of opportunity and incentive, to environments and educational systems which were not designed to release individual initiative but to stifle it then the objective must be to make current systems of development available without delay'.<sup>5</sup>

Such aspirations resonate throughout British post-war culture, and appear to share the educational and political agendas for a free society cultivated by contemporary cultural institutions such as the adventure playground during the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>6</sup>

Between 1963 and 1975 experiments were undertaken under the sponsorship of the Fun Palace Trust, a charitable body constituted in 1965. It was the contingencies of shifting socio-political conditions, from the explosion of consumerism and its impact on the 'leisure question' in the early Sixties, to the local effects (as vividly recorded in the opening quotation) of the Greater London Development Plan and the impetus its politics gave to local activism, that shaped the different expressions of the Fun Palace's playground idea.<sup>7</sup>

In October 1966, after withdrawing the Planning Appeal relating to the main Fun Palace project and, significantly, arguing for action 'more in the public interest', Littlewood wrote to the Fun Palace trustees: 'Having recently completed a social experiment in Tunisia which made successful use of several of the original ideas behind the Fun Palace, I think the project can be revived here cut to suit our poverty, that is as a travelling circus in a collection of inflatable structures, erected on traditional fairground or circus sites. Exhibitions, demonstrations, classes, do it yourself theatre; cinema and design could function even if only for a limited period [...] for the local citizens'.<sup>8</sup> Stratford Fair becomes the new rubric of Fun Palace communications between 1967 and 1975. Alternatively referred to as 'Open Space Utilisation Programme E15' in the Cedric Price fonds and 'The Salway Road Fair' in the Theatre Royal Stratford East Archive Collection, Stratford Fair was an educational initiative to reclaim public land through the production of community-led and temporary playgrounds and fair events in the vacant sites near the Theatre Royal. Coordinated by Littlewood and a small team, supported by the Fun Palace Trust and occasionally other public institutions, Stratford Fair's agenda encompassed a renewable set of activities addressed to the local youth. 'New playground territory in Newham' is the year's objective in

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<sup>5</sup> "Report and Accompanying Drawings [...] [for] the Use of an Area of Public Open Space as Pilot Project – in the Content and Operation – for some of the Aspects of the 'Fun palace'," folder DR1995:0188:525:005, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

<sup>6</sup> Roy Kozlovsky, *Architectures of Childhood. Children, Modern Architecture and Reconstruction in Postwar England* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 48.

<sup>7</sup> On local activism provoked by the Greater London Development Plan, see Michael Hebbert, *London: More by Fortune than Design* (Chichester: Wiley, 1998), 85.

<sup>8</sup> Letter from Joan Littlewood to Lord Harewood, October 10, 1966, folder DR1995:0188:525:003, Cedric Price fonds, CCA. For the planning appeal, see "The Fun Palace Planning Appeal," folder DR1995:0188:525:003, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

the undated record 'Stratford Fair. Agenda', a document that also listed fundraising events such as 'Bubble City, mobile. Tower. Isle of Dogs' (1968), established in support of the initiative, as well as politically driven activities such as the formation of Newham Adventure Playgrounds Association [FIGURE 4.1].<sup>9</sup> Crucially, the agenda highlights the need to build connections across the various experiments and with the community: 'Playgrounds and their link with Bubble', 'Links with Local citizens'. These attachments aim to transform the Fair into an operative system, bottom-up and interconnected, capable of contesting the impact of local government politics in East London. In such a system, I claim, media play a crucial role. Littlewood stressed in a production meeting in January 1968 the ambition to collate a 'complete report on the history of the playgrounds – as an experiment is useless unless recorded and a report on failure might be more to the point than the usual sociological success story'.<sup>10</sup> Thus, the critical pamphlet *Bubble City*, produced in support of Stratford Fair, simultaneously records and conveys the networked agency of the playground idea through a heterogeneous collection of materials from the playgrounds' recent history and direct communication, to urge local action: 'One or two people with ideas and energy meet on the site; in every street there are enough skills to change a tip into a playscape [...] Each one would be different, evolving from the ideas of the team who tackle it. [...] The new sites would link up and ideas exchanged. A "brain-bank" could be set up and information piped from site to site [...] Piped learning is cheaper than a University building and more urgently needed'.<sup>11</sup>

*Bubble City* is only one example of how the democratic ends and systematic means of Stratford Fair were constituted by the interweaving of playground and archive. Scholarship to date has discussed Stratford playgrounds as a trigger for the political imagination of local youth, but has left unexplored the role that media played in the playground's production.<sup>12</sup> Diaries and reports, meetings minutes, planning applications, promotional brochures and press cuttings – all these materials distributed across various archives both record the specific operation of the Fair and reflect its public nature. This chapter explores this archive as a heterogeneous and complex active site of representation of Stratford Fair. The analysis of a range of archival resources grounds the discussion of the central role of media in the construction of Stratford Fair's public agenda and its efficacy. A final remark considers the

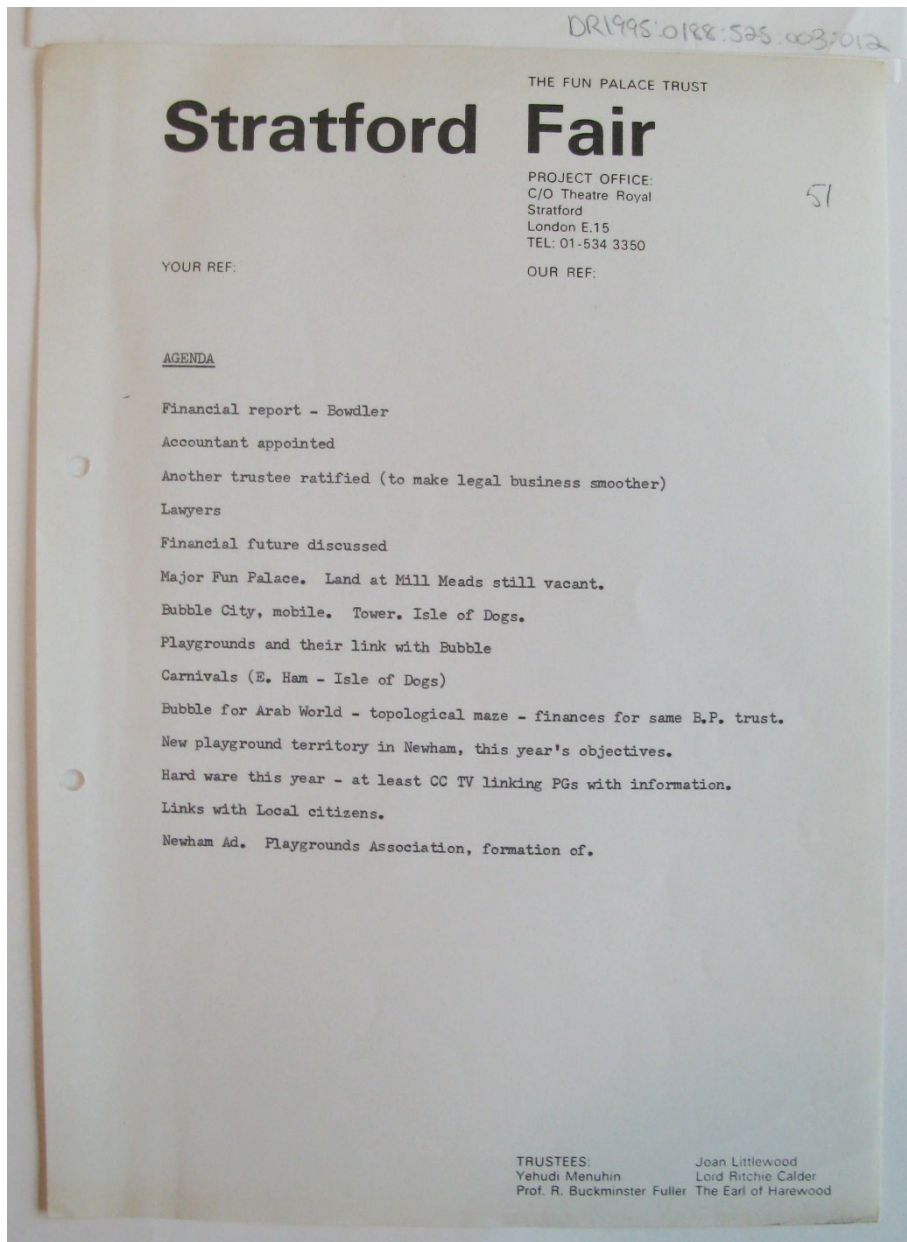
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<sup>9</sup> DR1995:0188:525:003:012, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

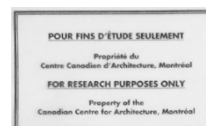
<sup>10</sup> "Minutes of Meeting Held at Blackheath, Saturday Jan 27, 1968," folder DR1995:0188:525:003, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

<sup>11</sup> Joan Littlewood, *Bubble City* (London: The Fun Palace Trust, 1968), 17.

<sup>12</sup> See Nadine Holdsworth, "Spaces to Play/Playing with Spaces: Young People, Citizenship and Joan Littlewood," *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance* 12, no. 3 (2007): 235.



**FIGURE 3.1:** Stratford Fair Agenda.  
DR1995:0188:525:003:012, Cedric Price fonds,  
CCA.



way the agency of the archive has shaped the reception of the Fair within architectural scholarship.

## The Agency of Media

The concept of cultural techniques as discussed by the German media theorist and historian Bernhard Siegert is particularly relevant for this discussion, for it analyzes material objects such as doors, grids, or registers and the related practices that they represent – controlling boundaries, encoding space or constituting subjectivities – in relation to their agency in the production of specific cultural situations. Siegert conceptualizes cultural techniques as those historical practices and related technologies ‘involved in operationalizing distinctions in the real’.<sup>13</sup> Accordingly, the cultural techniques of dwelling produce the house as the expression of distinctions between inside and outside, those of spatial control produce public and private space, and those of time measurement comes to mark the distinction between productive and leisure time. Facilitated by specific “technical objects capable of performing – and to considerable extent, determining these operations, the concept of cultural techniques recognizes on one hand, the involvement of networked agency in the creation of cultural situations, and on the other, the symbolic dimension of such productions.<sup>14</sup> Cultural techniques constitute acts of meta-communication of specific cultural values attached to the operations in question. As such, these techniques may not only disseminate and institutionalize those values, but through transgressive usage, deterritorialize and destabilize them.<sup>15</sup> This point on frictions brought about by ordinary practices and its technologies upon institutionalized culture recalls the earlier work of Michel De Certeau, which emphasized the range of tactical procedures and minuscule appropriations exercised by the ordinary users of a given system. These constitute a culture of practice that grows from below, whose tactical and active inventiveness is posed against the usual rhetoric of consumer passivity. As De Certeau claimed, ‘everyday life invents itself by *poaching* in countless ways on the property of others’.<sup>16</sup>

A productive way to mobilise Siegert’s cultural techniques and De Certeau’s ordinary tactics in the analysis of Stratford Fair is to ground them in the dynamics of British everyday culture, one subdued by its classist world-view as has been closely examined by cultural theorist

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<sup>13</sup> Siegert, Cultural Techniques, 14.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 11.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 14.

<sup>16</sup> De Certeau, The Practice of Everyday Life, xii.

Raymond Williams.<sup>17</sup> A range of archival records show how Stratford Fair deployed a number of tactical operations to challenge British culture and its assumptions on uneducated masses. For instance, the applications for temporary planning permissions, signed by Cedric Price – permissions which ranged from a few weeks to a few months – illustrate the reclamation of public land from the local authority as tactical temporal suspension of the established order.<sup>18</sup> However, it is De Certeau's discussion of the art of memory in relation to the practice of storytelling that allows us to appreciate the key role played by the archive of Stratford Fair. For De Certeau, memory provides a body of knowledge to mobilize in the attainment of the most meaningful and effective transformation of any given situation. As he explains, memory is precisely the weapon of the Greek *metis* that 'drawing its knowledge from a multitude of events among which it moves without possessing them, it also computes and predicts the multiple paths of the future by combining antecedent or possible particularities'.<sup>19</sup> The actualization of memory in storytelling resembles, for De Certeau, that subtle and productive operation of *metis* capable of overcoming the difficulties of any given situation: "The less force there is, the more memory-knowledge is required; [...] the more memory-knowledge there is, the less time is required [...] the less time there is, the greater the effects."<sup>20</sup> Such a "journalistic practice – claims De Certeau – (...) consists in seizing the opportunity and making memory the means of transforming places."<sup>21</sup>

Drawing on the concept of cultural techniques, it can be argued that specific – which is to say, tactical – techniques of playing, facilitated by particular technologies and objects of dramatic representation, constitute the distinctive cultural form of the playground. In a similar way, specific cultural techniques of documenting, aided by assorted media, constitute the archive. Siegert's discussion leads to an understanding of a distributed agency across the range of material artefacts and ephemera produced and their localization in the archives, all of which become co-producers of the fair. How then do these objects and the practices that they constitute speak politically about Stratford Fair's public ambition in the expanded site that stretches from the pitch to the archive?

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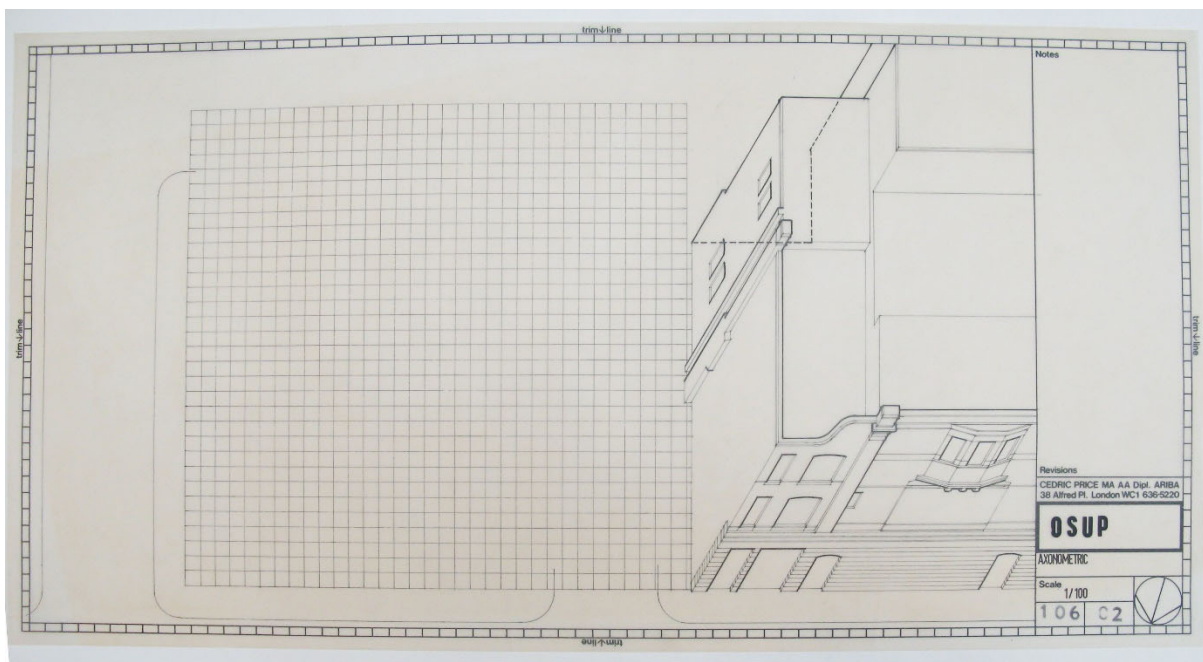
<sup>17</sup> Both Williams and Littlewood share an aversion to the elitist demarcation of British culture as the exclusive realm of the arts, and the disdain it shows for ordinary life. The masses are not ordinary people, nor the outcome of popular education, claims Williams, but the reification of ordinary life by commercial culture. The way Williams charges against the identification of popular education and with the new commercial culture, resonates in Littlewood's efforts to help developing Stratford community. Raymond Williams, 'Culture is Ordinary (1958)' in Ben Highmore, *The Everyday Life Reader* (London ; New York: Routledge, 2002), 91–100.

<sup>18</sup> Planning Application, dated June 7<sup>th</sup> 1972, folder DR1995:0188:525:004, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

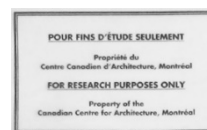
<sup>19</sup> De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 82.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*, 83

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, 87.



**FIGURE 4.2:** Cedric Price. Axonometric Showing Empty Lot and Adjoining Building for Open Space Utilisation Programme, 1972. Ink on translucent paper 38cm .72 cm. DR1995:0257:001, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.



## The Playground in Instalments

Temporary action is the tactic that articulates Stratford Fair's democratic agenda within the specific time and space of the Stratford community – the time of the school holiday and the space of land scheduled for private development. A total spatial grid, which grows in continuity with the axonometric facade of the Theatre Royal in one of the drawings of the project, filed in Cedric Price fonds as 'Open Space Utilisation Programme', is significantly left unoccupied [FIGURE 4.2]. Meanwhile, it is another type of grid, the Stratford Fair's activity program of 1975, a record duplicated in the main folder 'Fun Palace' of the same archive as well as in the Theatre Royal archive, that announces when and where the place will become public, and designs the occasion for community gathering. Sequences of activities for the public of all ages run simultaneously 'in theatre' and 'on pitch' to bring closer the otherwise separate, autonomous rhythms of the Theatre Royal and the Salway Road playgrounds: 'Easter Monday March 31<sup>st</sup>. Stratford Fair [of 1975] / BRING A STALL / slideshows / CRAZYSPO RTS / PONY RIDES / fortune telling / fire-eaters / PUNCH & JUDY [...] / 2pm. Grand Parade Outside / 3pm. Kids Show Inside / 8pm. Val Walsh & Victor Spinetti & 500 stars (bring your music and dancing shoes) / BAR WILL BE OPEN'. The advertisement closes with a call for support: 'The more you can help, the better it will be / COME ON, WHAT CAN YOU DO? Phone 534 6760 after 5pm and speak to Pat for a start. And INSIDE ... 10p for a peep – what we've been up to so far....'<sup>22</sup>

Such a popular form of entertainment requires suitable media to reach its broad audience. The Fair's activity program was produced as a cheap folio-typed pamphlet, duplicated onto coloured sheets of foolscap, and stapled to the Fun Palace Trust Report 'Diary of January, 1975'.<sup>23</sup> Thus what the program offers for a peep inside, for a small fee, is a chapter of the distinctive dramatic construction of Stratford's playground story. Signed by the team and proclaimed valuable for 'its humour and factuality',<sup>24</sup> the diary – which was part of the fundraising effort – offers a picaresque story of the 'villains', the local children in the playground, which grows in episodic form through short daily logs, one story which ends with a 'trial pending' evolving into the 'Villains' Pilgrimage' to St Paul's. A later instalment titled 'Report on Kids Village Easter Fair – Two Week Easter Holiday' reports the Fair's success in the past tense and in high spirits: 'At 2:30 pm – The parade assembled at Stratford Station. The sound of drums, pipes and music brought all the people in the flats opposite out on to their balconies – and everyone on site was craning their necks as the CIRCUS CAME INTO

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<sup>22</sup> "Easter Monday March 31<sup>st</sup>. Stratford Fair," folder DR1995:0188:525:004, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

<sup>23</sup> "The Fun Palace Trust – The Fun Palace Minutes," Theatre Royal Stratford East archive, London. A copy of this document exists also in folder DR1995:0188:525:004, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

<sup>24</sup> Jan Sender Diary 1975, p. 4, TRSE Archive Collection.

TOWN'.<sup>25</sup> A 'Bumper colouring book' stapled to it announces, at the price of 5p, the plans for the immediate future: "Summer Holiday '75. Kids Village Stratford-on-Sea-E15. Phone 5345696'.<sup>26</sup>

What then was the purpose of these reports? On one hand, the systematic daily log structure in each report and the instalment format modulated action to give continuity and stability to the fragile playgrounds, a fragility acknowledged in the concluding paragraph of the diary of December 1974:

*ON TO THE NEW YEAR. IT BECOMES OBVIOUS THAT WE ARE ALWAYS HELD UP BY LACK OF MATERIALS AND LABOUR. THE SAME URGENT REQUIREMENTS FACE US EVERY WEEK. INADEQUATE SHELTER MEANS ENGAGING THE KIDS IS AD-LIBBED. PERHAPS ONE GOOD SCROUNGER OR ONE HEALTHY INJECTION OF CASH WOULD HELP? HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ONE AND ALL. COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS WOULD BE WELCOME.*<sup>27</sup>

On the other hand, the phone number given in the activity program suggests the personal interaction with locals that the activities aimed for. Defined as a very 'local event', the Fair consolidated the activism in the area with the main contribution of the recently formed Newham Federation of Tenants Association, along with 'Newham Volunteers Bureau, Newham Rights Centre, [...] the Community Development project, and Newham Docklands Action Group' also participating.<sup>28</sup> Significantly, handwritten notes of the foundational meeting of the Newham Tenants' Association in the Theatre Royal archives reveal the essence of the Fair's program – to organize politically the Stratford community. The 'Bumper Colouring Book' stapled to the report, self-produced by local children for distribution at 5p, situates the youth within the overarching agenda of cultural activism: 'We celebrated the arrival of spring with an Easter Monday Fair, a local event organised by us, but made to happen only by hundreds of local people who participated'.<sup>29</sup> In repeating the achievement of 1974's fair, Easter Monday and the related playgrounds were no longer little threads of

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<sup>25</sup> "Report on Kids Village Easter Fair – Two Week Easter Holiday," folder "The Fun Palace Trust – The Fun Palace Minutes," TRSE Archive Collection.

<sup>26</sup> "Report on Kids Village Easter Fair – Two Week Easter Holiday," TRSE Archive Collection.

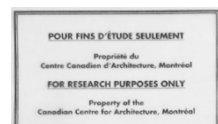
<sup>27</sup> "Diary Report – Kids Town – December 1974," TRSE Archive Collection.

<sup>28</sup> "Report on Kids Village Easter Fair – Two Week Easter Holiday," folder "The Fun Palace Trust – The Fun Palace Minutes," TRSE Archive Collection.

<sup>29</sup> "Report on Kids Village Easter Fair – Two Week Easter Holiday," TRSE Archive Collection.



**FIGURE 4.3:** Poster for Diploma in Environmental Design Easter Event from Barnet College Faculty of Art, 1961–1974. Poster 38.2cm.56 cm. DR1995:0188:525:004:016, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.



success, but a cultural system of public land constitution embedded in Stratford's culture and modulated by a rhythm of action in instalments. [FIGURE 3.3]

## Recording and Reporting to the Archive

Following Littlewood's insistence on 'keeping systematic records' in different production meetings,<sup>30</sup> the monthly journals discussed earlier not only stabilized Stratford's fleeting playgrounds and fair events in reproducible media but, taken together, constitute the memory archive of Stratford Fair, one that significantly adopts a distributed form. Through the postal system and the cheap reproduction techniques, the journals promptly inscribed Stratford Fair's achievements within the institutional and personal archives of the addressees noted in the 'Mailing List for Fun Palace Trust Reports' [FIGURE 4.4].<sup>31</sup> Together with The Fun Palace Trustees and Cedric Price – who appears on the mailing list in the category 'miscellaneous' – the inclusive list gathers activists, funding agencies and the local authority. The operation of inscription was not without tension, to judge from the location of Stratford Fair records as they appear in Cedric Price fonds. Mostly part of the main folder 'File 46: Fun Palace Project', a small group of records dated 1972 constitute a separate folder 'File 15: Open Space Utilisation Programme E15 (OSUP)'.

An examination of the distinctive operations of recording, reporting, distributing and storing – mediated by the related diaries – makes clear the reciprocity between the playground and the archive as active sites of representation of Stratford Fair. While the recording the Fair's memories conferred archival depth and the various modes in which these were reported distributed its agency, storing brought about a certain 'otherness' in the related hosting archives, that is, an element of tension in the Fun Palace history caused by the archival classification of the Fair's documents.<sup>32</sup>

The analysis of the agency of the Fair's distinctive distributed archive – the question to explore here – draws on historian Aleida Assmann's conceptualization of "functional" and

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<sup>30</sup> "Minutes of Meeting Held at Blackheath, Saturday Jan 27, 1968," folder DR1995:0188:525:003, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

<sup>31</sup> The agencies listed include: The Education Office of Local Authority, "Councillors and Influential People," "Trust and Grant-Awarding Bodies" which include the Arts Council and Greater London Arts Association, City Parochian Foundation, National Playing Fields Association and Gulbenkian Foundation.

<sup>32</sup> For instances of distribution, see "January Diary," which is available in the TRSE Archive Collection, Michael Barker Collection of Joan Littlewood and the Theatre Workshop at the University of Texas and Cedric Price fonds, CCA; "Uses of Land Awaiting Redevelopment 1967-1975" is both at the Cedric Price fonds and the Arts Council of Great Britain Archive. See Holdsworth, *Joan Littlewood's Theatre*, 304. For processes of archivization, classifications of the Fair's documents could obscure relevant connexions with the larger Fun Palace project.



**FIGURE 4.4:** Stratford Fair, 'Easter Fair '74' report, 11 March 1974. Folder DR1995:0188:525:004, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

“storage” modes of cultural memory, which offers a flexible interpretation of the opposition between memory and history. Linked to an addressee, functional memory legitimizes the group it represents, conferring its identity. Latent in words and images in the archive, storage memory constitutes a pool of uncommitted resources that is necessary for renewal and change in a given culture.<sup>33</sup> Yet, as Assmann notes, the transformative potential that can be actualized on the basis of the material an archive holds is subject both to identification and selection and to the extent and openness of public access.<sup>34</sup>

This double dimension of the agency of media, subjectivizing in present tense and holding open possibilities of renewal at a future time, resonates Raymond Williams’ analysis of British culture in the 1960s and 1970s and those more focused on the historical development of literary work. Concerned with grasping any emergent and creative culture as it is lived, Williams brings to focus media forms, for the way these constitute a register of the subtle movements and tensions brought about by this emergent culture in its active, living form. Williams coins the term ‘structure of feeling’ to refer to such a life, a complex term that captures both the fluidity of this live condition – being ‘in solution’ within the complex dynamics of actual social experience – and its organising potential. In being itself a social practice, media directly participates in the whole way of life of its time, a life that becomes grafted in its form. Thus, media practices are central to Williams’ cultural analysis, practices situated either within the more specific realm of artistic and intellectual production, or as part of the broader ordinary life – the ‘documentary’ and ‘social’ approaches to culture respectively, in Williams’ terms.<sup>35</sup> Yet, the conditions of access to the structures of feeling of a given period, which are inscribed in its documentary culture, are organised by the dominant system of values at the time of reception, what Williams calls the ‘selective tradition’. The survival of such emergent life – claims Williams – ‘is governed, not by the period itself, but by new periods, which gradually compose a tradition (...) The traditional culture of a society will always tend to correspond to its contemporary system of interests and values, for it is not an absolute body of work but a continual selection and interpretation’.<sup>36</sup> Following Assmann’s and Williams’ cultural models, the Fair’s diaries constitute both the functional memory of Stratford Fair and its stored public archive. Functionally linked to the local youth, the diaries recorded the immediate affects attached to the group’s activities which helped forge their identity, while their circulation and their storage

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<sup>33</sup> Aleida Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Western Civilization*, 130.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid*, 329.

<sup>35</sup> ‘Elements in the way of life that to followers of the other two definitions – referring to the documentary and to a third one dealing with “ideal”, perfect forms of practice - are not culture at all: the organization of production, the structure of the family, the structure of institutions which express or given social relationships, the characteristic forms through which members of the society communicate’ Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965 (1961), 58.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*, 66–68.

in institutional archives secured access to the Fair's latent memory and held open the potential for forms of future re-actualization. However, such an actualization depends on the recursive action between the archive's configuration and its critical reading by scholarship, both actions governed by expectations defined at the time of reception. In particular, the Fair's otherness as indicated by its location in Cedric Price's archive at the CCA, suggests an ambivalent attachment to this initiative of Littlewood – here Price seems to act more as an archivist, interrupting by classification the Fair's vital continuity with the Fun Palace, than an activist.<sup>37</sup> Beyond the heterogeneity of the Stratford Fair material, its presence in Price's archive crucially conveys the Fair's radical value and its resistance to fixed categorizations. Such an ambivalent configuration of the archive reverberates in the silences found within Stratford Fair's scholarly reception, as evidenced in certain studies on the agency of the playgrounds as well as in key scholarship on the Fun Palace project, as it is examined in the second part of this study.<sup>38</sup> Meanwhile, it is from scholarly and non-scholarly initiatives on Littlewood, which trace the Fair's records in complementary archives, that Stratford Fair's past is remembered and actualized.<sup>39</sup>

In conclusion, the analysis of the range of archival records grounds the interpretation of Stratford Fair as a tactical system of public land constitution and identity formation addressed to local youth. Its approach is one of temporary occupation of scheduled land for development and the recording and reporting of its living memories through cheaply produced and accessible monthly journals. Together with the playground, the distributed archive where these journals can be found becomes a complex site of production and of representation of the Fair. If memory is a means of transforming places and subjectivities, the agency of the Stratford Fair archive is one that at the time conferred legitimation, representation and identity on the Stratford East community. Now, it holds open for plural and critical historiography the potential and experience of the playgrounds as a tactical realization of the Fun Palace idea – one largely liberated from the usual material and economic constraints that attend architecture.

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<sup>37</sup> Significantly, the Stratford Fair is omitted altogether from the "Cedric Price Supplement," a collection-with-commentary of work from Price's office published in the magazine *Architectural Design* between October 1970 and January 1972, despite the resonance this supplement has with the throw-away quality and user driven ethos with which the Fair actively constructs its media archive. See "Cedric Price Supplement," *Architectural Design*, 1970-1972.

<sup>38</sup> Stratford Fair is not part of Colin Ward's study of playground experiences that aim to re-connect the child to the city. The urban zoo of Inter-Action group is chosen rather than the 'Amber Zoo' set up for Easter Monday in 1974. Colin Ward, *The Child in the City* (London: Bedford Square, 1990), 194–95. Ambivalent captions accompany key drawings of Stratford Fair in Samantha Hardingham's comprehensive retrospective of Price's work: Left: "Sketch summarizing the horizontal and vertical schematic layout for Fun Palace, 1974;" Right: "Cartoon on the subject of adaptability and multiple uses of one building." Hardingham, *Cedric Price Works 1952-2003*, 52–54.

<sup>39</sup> I refer particularly here to Holdsworth's scholarship on Joan Littlewood, as well as to the non-scholarly initiative Fun Palaces, initiated in 2014 under the direction of Stella Duffy and Sarah-Jane Rawlings across the UK.

## **PART 2: THE RECEPTION OF THE FUN PALACE**

***Joan Littlewood, Fun Palace and Theatre Workshop: In Conversation with Murray Melvin.*** Transcript of interview excerpt II, Theatre Royal Stratford East, London, 3 February 2015

*AB: Which was the relationship between Theatre Workshop productions and the Fun Palace?*

MM: Well, look at the elements she brought into *Lovely War*, the slides, the ticket-type and that going on. They are very different elements, but all moulded together. So in a way that was sort of interactive, moving space. [...] We didn't have any set. We had Shakespeare's round O. It was a bear space that you filled with imagination. And so in a way it was all there. She always had that in her productions. Her productions were always movement, even the movement of keeping still. She was very filmic. People coming to do *Oh! What a Lovely War* [2015] asked me – 'How did the scene start? And how did it end?' 'They didn't' – I replied. They faded in and out like a film, because theatre had to keep up with film. People went to film and they got used to film and the quickness of film. She thought she had to keep up with that. Therefore, you didn't stop one scene and then started another. You kept the attention of people there - this again, continual movement. You kept their interest, just as you would in the film. That came from Eisenstein, she was a she was a great fan of Eisenstein, of all those early films. She had seen them, knew how they worked. Eisenstein's lighting, that European lighting, you know, John Barry used that lighting.[...]

*AB: Brecht's theatre was educational – instructional – for it aimed to raise critical awareness in audiences as a way to make them participate and think. Was it the same for Littlewood?*

MM: Of course, it had to be educational, even though it was fun. In the early days, she did political theatre, with a small 'p'. You know, the Greeks

would say that politics were the affairs of the people – that was Theatre Workshop. In that sense they were political. They had to be pertinent in order to interest their audience, rather than just merely having that middle class entertainment. She wasn't interested in comfortable theatre. She preferred you to be uncomfortable, to make you think. That was a learning process, politically. It is there in all her productions.

*AB: Her educational ideas seemed to be about action, ambience – about creating the appropriate environment.*

MM: Yes, atmosphere, very important - and the *accessibility* of the people to know what you were doing. Especially if you were doing a classical piece, it had to be accessible to people that didn't know classical pieces. It had to be relevant to them. When I did *Every Man in His Humour* by Ben Johnson, if you would play it as written, it would take three and a half hours; Littlewood's, two hours and twenty, with one interval. That is because you discarded poetry. You just did the story, what was the through line, what was it about politically.

*AB: Which were her connections with other groups at the time?*

MM: You do have to remember that in the 1930s, there were agit-prop companies all over the world, Germany, Russia, and America. They all communicated with each other. Agit-prop came from the French, and the French Revolution, when they didn't have newspapers. They actors from Le Odeon got up every evening and acted the news. They were Living Newspapers. They all kept in touch. If they had a good sketch, they would send it to each other. Therefore, there was this enormous network of like-minded people across the world that kept in touch.

When you look at the Fun Palace, the people that supported her, Buckminster Fuller from America, Yehudi Menuhin, the Archbishop [laughter]. She was surrounded by incredible people. They all flock to Joan – the pipe-piper – whose arguments were so succinct and so clear, yet so forward thinking.



## Preamble: Charting the Field

The Fun Palace, more often than one could anticipate, slips into lectures, syllabi, exhibitions and scholarly publications that, on their part, pursue quite diverse preoccupations. For instance, an ‘Elderly Fun Palace: An Active Seniors’ Clubhouse in George Town, Penang’ by Part 1 student Yi Ming Ng from University of Malaya Kuala Lumpur, was shortlisted for the RIBA’s President’s Medals in 2018. That year, the helicopter view drawing-photograph of the project was used on the cover of Junjie Xi’s *Small-scale Public Transportable and Pre-Fabricated Buildings. Evaluating their Functional Performance*, a Routledge Research in Architecture Series book based on three contemporary case studies (whose relation to the cover image is questionable). On further examination we find that in 2018 alone the Fun Palace project was referred to or appeared in: the presentation of the 15<sup>th</sup> AHRA Conference ‘Smartness? Between Discourse and Practice’ in Eindhoven; the exhibition ‘Superstructures : The New Architecture 1960-1990’ at the Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts, Norwich; the two-week cultural project ‘A Prelude to the Shed’ in The Shed, New York; and the exhibition ‘The Art of the Building Site. Construction and Demolition from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century’ at the Cité de l’Architecture et du Patrimoine, Paris. These were accompanied by a chorus of related reviews and by a steady flow of other scholarly publications. Moreover, different kinds of images have constantly emerged as the idea is mobilized by other disciplinary domains than architecture. In particular, the UK-based cultural campaign and annual weekend of action *Fun Palaces*, initiated by an independent group of artists inspired by Joan Littlewood’s legacy in 2014, promotes cultural democracy amidst shrinking British local cultural infrastructures.<sup>1</sup> Why does the Fun Palace ever-increasingly saturate architectural discourse? Why does it do so in such a distinctive manner across disciplines and time? And which kinds of image has the reception of the Fun Palace produced and reinforced in its fifty-year long history?

The shadow of a ‘special monster’ is what the following chapters set to survey – even at the risk of feeding it further. It is in these terms that the Price researcher Samantha Hardingham characterises the status that the project holds in the imagination of architectural scholars.<sup>2</sup> For the fact is that the image of Fun Palace struggles to fall out of circulation. The outcome of a constant practice of recursive mediation, this spectral image is one and many at the

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<sup>1</sup> Stella Duffy, Sarah-Jane Rawlings, *Fun Palaces*. <https://funpalaces.co.uk/>

<sup>2</sup> Hardingham, *Cedric Price Works 1952-2003*, 66.

same time. Its plurality derives from the range of media and audiences it has engaged since the project's inception, one defining a complex medial ecology.<sup>3</sup> However, commentary tends to converge over time under the force of distinctive interests underpinning scholarly and non-scholarly discourses, risking a depletion of the original complexity of the Fun Palace in favour of a 'selective tradition'. An active process rather than an object, a selective tradition is - Raymond Williams has argued - 'an intentionally selective version of a shaping past and pre-shaped present, which is then powerfully operative in the process of social and cultural definition and identification'.<sup>4</sup> The plentiful reservoir of media materials that evidences the complexity of Fun Palace in the archive – including broadsheets, montages, film, diaries, marginalia, models, drawings, sketches, grids, punch-cards, minutes, memos, reports, press cuttings – loses definition throughout the reception of the project. In particular, architectural scholarship has tended to edit out those things that problematize the Fun Palace's condition as a building or as an architectural endeavor – such as the grids and the media associated to the project's active publicity strategies. More broadly, the challenge that the project's complex agenda posed simultaneously to the disciplinary regimes of architecture, theatre and communications technology at the time, seems unresolved throughout the reception – for what the Fun Palace problematizes is precisely the stability of each of these disciplinary positions. While architectural scholars have tended to examine the Fun Palace within the context of Cedric Price's body of work, even while recognising its interdisciplinary nature, scholarship on Joan Littlewood has located it in relation to her radical theatre practice and community-led experiments, at the same time acknowledging to some extent the architectural relevance of the project. For its part, the huge expansion of work over the past 20 years on the cultural history of the digital has brought about renewed scholarly attention to the project as an experiment in self-organization.

The second part of the thesis interrogates the complex set of images of the Fun Palace that emerge within the field of reception of the project. This preamble addresses the preliminary task of charting this field. On one hand, an index collects the range of reception events for the Fun Palace, namely, those in which images of the project circulate over time led by agencies other than Joan Littlewood and Cedric Price. These events are classified by their target audiences, differentiating the scholarly events from those addressed to wider public. The index incorporates thus, live events such as exhibitions, conferences or festivals, and recording media such as press cuttings, articles, books, course syllabi, films and web pages, drawing on the Fun Palace Reception Index – which is included in the Appendix 2 – the Fun

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<sup>3</sup> Medial ecology is for Katherine Hayles a cyclical process in which one medium is remediated into another inscribing relationships as diverse as mimicry, parasitism, deception, cooperation or competition. Hayles, *Writing Machines*, 5.

<sup>4</sup> Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 115.

Palace Reception Chart maps the field of the project's reception. The chart gathers events aimed at wider public on the one hand, and those pertaining to the scholarly reception on the other. These two modes of reception occupy opposite sides in the chart. The field is organised quantitatively, the ordinate (y-axis) extending chronologically and the abscissa (x-axis) registering the number of representations recorded per year – two scales are provided, one per mode of reception. A grey hatch visually communicates the resulting figure for each of these. The question of the specific cultural practices that operate undercover and inform the distinctive periodization of the Fun Palace reception is posed for further investigation in the chapters that follow. Importantly, this activity is marked by the progressive constitution of the distributed archive of the Fun Palace project within a set of institutions that became key agents in the project's circulation. Thus, the chart registers the constitution of the different sections of the Fun Palace archive as well as the publication of Fun Palace media by Littlewood and Price – for they seem to act as a media repository to steer later scholarship and wider public events. In the diagram, vertical lines highlight the differential tempo of such archival and publicity activities - the blue marks the constitution of the physical archives and the red key media events led by Littlewood and Price that publicised the Fun Palace. A solid band collects these to represent the positive formation of the Fun Palace archive, with its institutional and media sections. In the opposite side of the chart, a negative of this form aims to suggest the more ephemeral, involuntary and ultimately inaccessible memories of the project's life, what Williams referred to as 'structures of feeling'.<sup>5</sup> On its part, the chart's background collects key referent texts and events that underpin the argumentation of this thesis – the tempo of which is also situated. Ultimately, the Fun Palace Reception Chart visually produces the contingent and complex cultural field of the project's reception for this research.

A distinctive periodization in the project's reception emerges from this chart [FIGURE II.1]. If we focus the graph associated with wider public reflects the significant impact in the British press between 1963 and 1966, one that accrued over eighty headlines and mentions, whereas, between 1967 and 1975, only a few press excerpts are registered from Littlewood's Stratford Fair initiative. It also maps some appropriations of the Fun Palace idea in the context of festivals and fairgrounds, such as Keith Albarn's fun palace pavilion in the late 1960s. However, the frequency of reception events aimed at wider public drops after 1970s. It would not be until 2014 when a formidable revival of the Fun Palace idea has re-engaged wider public in the form of British cultural campaign *Fun Palaces*. Coordinated by an independent group of theatre-based artists with funding from several institutions – the

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<sup>5</sup> Williams, *The Long Revolution*.

Arts Council England amongst other – the yearly initiative stimulates hundreds of art-and-science-based activities that are self-organized by local communities and institutions.<sup>6</sup>

Compared to the pattern followed wider public, the scholarly reception of the project conveys a more distributed interest in the Fun Palace – one that is active through the 1960s and 70s, when the project's responsive agenda lured scholarship, thereafter dipping before resurfacing in the later 1990s. The peaks and troughs of the silhouette through the 2000s appear to follow the tempo of the constitution of the project's archive, as if these two conditions were animating one other. Additionally, it appears to inscribe contemporary preoccupations in architectural discourse. Amongst others, these involve the re-emergence of interest in post-war megastructures, which had energised the circulation of the Fun Palace during the 1970s but then subsequently dwindled during the 'turn to theory' of the 1980s and 90s, as well as the development of digital cultures in architecture since 2000s, for which the Fun Palace constitutes often a referent. One wonders if the pattern of some of these outputs could also be thought in relation to UK- based university funding policies such as the Research Assessment Exercise, initiated in 1986.

Drawing on the index and chart, three image registers have been identified within the field of Fun Palace reception, each one associated with a specific mode of discourse and directed to a specific audience type. They structure the chapters that follow. The dissemination of the Fun Palace news within the British press in the 1960s and early 1970s – represented in the upper section of the wider public graph – constitutes the first of these domains. My principal source for this is the collection of press cuttings held in Cedric Price fonds at the CCA, as well as the National Library of Scotland Catalogue and other online databases. The Fun Palace news are aimed at the mass readership of the press, and as an image register, it invests in the discursive practices of this institution. Secondly, there is the image register of scholarship, constructed through an ever-expanding suite of reception events, both live and recorded, within which the project circulates. Fundamentally supported by a network of agencies orbiting around the figure of Cedric Price, scholarly images of the Fun Palace are mainly aimed at an architectural audience. Their discursive mode is academic. The distinctive periodization that scholarship on the Fun Palace follows, as conveyed in the chart for scholarship, informs the structure of the chapter. Thirdly, there is the alterity that some carnivalesque images informed by Littlewood's legacy put into play within architectural scholarship. Their mode of discourse is activism. As well as bringing back the wider public

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<sup>6</sup> *Fun Palaces* is directed by Stella Duffy's and Sarah-Jane Rawlings. The physical realizations' count per year are: 138 (2014); 142 (2015); 292 (2016); 362 (2017); 433 (2018); 391 (2019). Countries involved beyond UK include Norway, Australia, New Zealand and Canada. <https://funpalaces.co.uk/about-fun-palaces/evaluations-2014-2019/>.

into the picture, these images leverage upon the gaps and ambiguities that Littlewood built in the uneven Fun Palace archive to keep the project open.

The interrogation of each of these image registers will follow two modes of enquiry. Looking inward into the content of the discourse on one hand, I will reflect upon the topography of accents, omissions and internal tensions that emerge within each text, for instance between the written and visual forms articulating the commentary. Outward looking on the other hand, the analysis will concern the modes of discourse and the cultures that the relentless circulation of the project engages and affects as a communicative practice. Considered here as a communicative events, each image register is constituted by means of media transactions supported by a specific network of agencies that are active at a particular time and are aimed at selective audiences. The analysis will thus, pay close attention to the range of cultural practices and social relations that become bound together in the specific modes of reading the Fun Palace production within each of these image registers. This second mode of analysis of the media comprising the field of the Fun Palace reception aims to interrogate the conditions, agencies and practices involved in the dissemination, storage and reading these works. For in their selective operations lays a productivity.

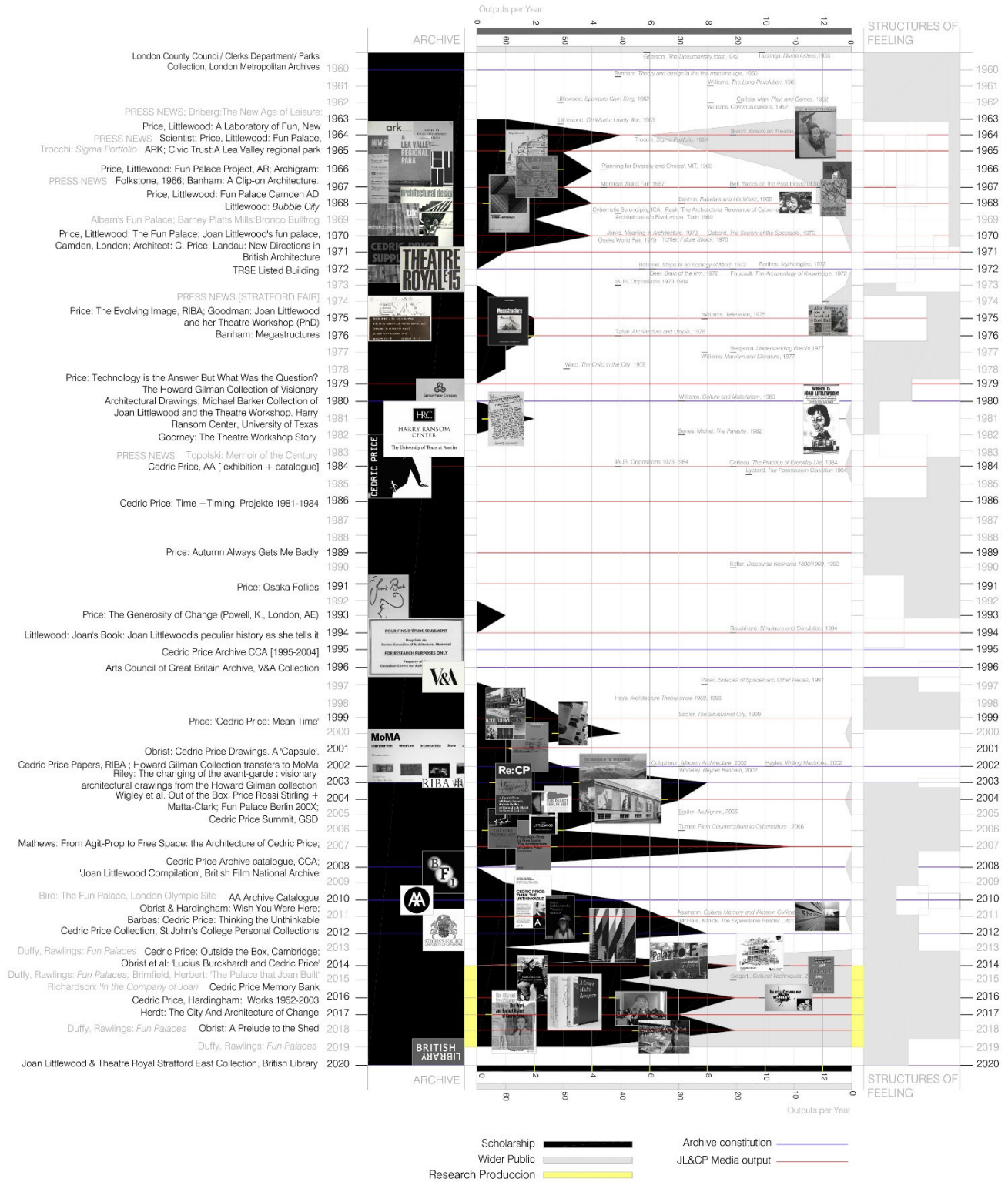


FIGURE II.1: Fun Palace Reception Chart

## Chapter 5: Press Cuttings. News from the British Sixties

In *The Guardian* of 4 July 1964 – in what reads as a light coverage of the architectural features of the Fun Palace project within the context of Price's radical concurrent work – Ian Finch commented: 'The name Cedric Price receives much the same reaction in the company of respectable architects as champions of Galileo must have received from the Vatican. Which makes him very happy (...) But who among that lot would approve of his major project at the moment, Joan Littlewood's Fun Palace? (...) There is little doubt that fair and square behind Fun Palace – "the name is deliberate, it means nothing save vague entertainment to anyone, as it should"- stand Cedric Price and Joan Littlewood. Her's the concept of ends, and his that of architectural means to those ends'.<sup>1</sup> A portrait of a young Cedric Price - presented as the 'Fun Palace architect'- illustrates the news [FIGURE 5.1]. This is unusual, for it was more often Joan Littlewood's face that was identified with the project in articles, whether positive or negative, in the British press through the 1960s.

Over eighty press cuttings from mid-60s held in Cedric Price fonds describe the history of the Fun Palace reception in the period. Drawing on this material Stanley Mathews offers a chronicle of the rise and fall of the project, in what constitutes one of its first scholarly retrospectives, *From Agit-Prop to Free Space: The Architecture of Cedric Price*, 2007. However, the collection of press cuttings exceeds Mathews' historical account, for, as a collection, it invites questions about the cultural conditions within which this material object emerged and lived. What the collection of cuttings tells us is precisely that Joan Littlewood's Fun Palace became news by means of the press, and its active collection maps a similarly positive agency in its promotion. The project made headlines in broadsheets and tabloids; it stretched into full-colour pages of Sunday magazines and in other specialized publications and shrank into non-headed paragraphs in gossip columns, into snippets of papers' art sections; and it also reverberated throughout commentaries in published letters to editors. The plurality of enunciations revealed in these cuttings poses specific questions not only about what has been said regarding Joan Littlewood's Fun Palace – as Mathews' collects – but crucially about what the agency of this news-image of the project is with regards to British mass audience in the 1960s. For Joan Littlewood's Fun Palace becomes news to

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<sup>1</sup> Ian Finch, 'Fun Palace architect', *The Guardian*, 4 July 1964.

THE name of Cedric Price receives much the same reaction in the company of respectable architects as champions of Gaudin must have received from the Vatican. Which makes him very happy. "If all that lot thought I was right, it would be time to scrap everything and start all over again." But who among that lot would approve of his major project at the moment, Jean Littlewood's Fun Palace?

At 28 he has, in a sense, arrived. But he still remains an extravagant, ebullient, restless extrovert. He is also an optimist. One short visit to Keele recently and he returned to London to start work without apparent hope of a client—on plans for a projected University of North Staffordshire based on the Free Town and the Beeching-axed railways that would take in Keele as an auxiliary unit in an overall total of an initial 30,000 students, rising to 60,000. Accommodation? "Put students in local authority housing, there's nothing peculiar about them, just a higher IQ, which is doing all reason for making them privileged in stock." One thinks of this man on Hobbes, and shudders. "I have finished" Price says from behind a bank of smoke from one of his habitual cigars, say, just makeshift houses." One thinks hard and remembers the very way-out houses in Cheshire he is talking about. "No more one off jobs. All wrong, I mean, it is like the Savile Row people cutting a suit for one man. Much healthier, economically and socially, to design a lavatory for Marks and Spencer than a house for one man."

There are architects who will say, without intending the pun, that Price's work is strictly for the price. Inasmuch as he is almost the only architect in England actually building a tenement structure—the avary in Regents Park, which he designed in association with Lord Snowden and Frank Newby of Pele's, Sainsbury and Partners—they are right. What they fail to appreciate is that Price's notions about planned obsolescence in architecture are not only the correlative of a technology accelerating as fast as ours but that structures based on this aesthetic are actually coming up.

In Bath he is building a racial theatre. Only it is not a theatre. It is a glasshouse. One or two hydraulic jacks which can be pumped up and down over the porous concrete auditorium, depending on the purpose for which it is being used. Let any doubt be

## Fun Palace architect

BY IAN FINCH

Portrait of Cedric Price by Neil Lobbert



instructed, seriousness, he should know that Vehedi Menzies is adverse to the project, as he is to Jean Littlewood's Fun Palace.

That Menzies has been brought in as a major adviser to the Fun Palace is typical of the standard of the as yet unofficial and anonymous backing behind the whole scheme. The degree of hand participation by leading figures in practically every form of entertainment and profession is ample guarantee that it is a fact hanging fire, and not fiction lacking substance. That the scheme will require some four to six millions of initial capital together with a site of from five to 20 acres (depending on parking needs, which in turn depend on the site) are but incidentals. The money will be there; the site is still undetermined only because there are three hard offers still being negotiated.

The sites being considered, which

range from north-west London to the hinterland of Hull's Cross and St. Peter's, from a possible site in the West End to the outskirts of Exeter, are determined partly by availability and partly by transport facilities, and depend mainly upon the degree of support likely to be provided by the local authority's concerned.

There is also, in Price's remarks, a not altogether inessential general objection in the office hours he need for every more capital.

"Would they not welcome more publicity? We've had all this in the past. At one time there were proposals being people chasing us, but they might come to some such thing. Everybody who can be of any help is in a already in the side. We have as much as we want and can use. So why not everybody else? All we'd do is not wanting to shed their own skin, and then we

chasing, conversations to supply lavatory cub. We're there made without the help of the great bargain hand-out media, and doing very nicely without them."

There is little doubt that fun, and square behind the Fun Palace—the name is deliberate it means nothing save vague entertainment to anyone, as it should"—stand Cedric Price and Jean Littlewood. Here the concept of ends, and his that of architectural means to those ends. These embrace an astonishing variety of forms, structures, designs, and amenities. Much of it is completed, and the greater part worked out in close collaboration with Frank Newby. From a first glance at the drawing, it might appear permanent enough, but in fact the whole concept has obsolescence built into it.

The whole thing depends on mobility of components, and since they all depend on the services of a short-lived local crew that has no more than 10

years written into its lifespan, then the whole is inherently impermanent," says Price. "It's an inverted concept, really. We cannot see more than 10 years ahead so why bother people with something that is going to be no more than use than a pyramid after its useful life is over."

"People build these funny great national monuments of theatres and cathedrals, universities, and super-corporation blocks. And they all have two qualities, you know. It is a place you come to—an end point in communications—and they have these porous great entrance halls—occasional points. We don't have that. We want a site which is a passing point in a communication network, at which you stop off but don't formally come to, and we also have to open inner back so that you arrive at somewhere which is in fact the starting point for everywhere and everything in the palace."

FIGURE 5.1: Ian Finch, 'Fun Palace architect'. *The Guardian*, 4 July 1964.

captivate the imagination of Britons, constituted into a mass readership by means of the British Press. What does the participation of the Fun Palace in Fleet Street London tell us about Sixties British culture?

### **Fun Palace is News, 1963-1966**

The history of the project's public circulation begins – as Mathews has pointed out – on Sunday 28 April, 1963 when Joan Littlewood talked about the Fun Palace in the BBC programme 'Monitor'. That day, Tom Driberg's column for the *Sunday Citizen*, 'The New Age of Leisure', had prepared his readership for the announcement of the idea. In the follow-up column the following Sunday, 5 May, Driberg sketched the project's key concepts under the heading 'Tom Driberg writes about a dream-playground', namely, the pleasure garden interpreted in novel architectural and technological means. Driberg explicitly quotes key concepts that would thereafter come to be associated to the project – such as: 'Vauxhall Gardens-plus, exploiting for pleasure the most advanced technological developments of this age'; Cedric Price's 'non-buildings' [as a] "a three-dimensional complex of largely flexible activity-enclosures, rather than a series of separate rigid buildings"; and Gordon Pask's 'electronic brain.'<sup>2</sup>

But in fact the two-word dream of Littlewood had slipped from her mouth during an interview with *The Observer's* film critic, Penelope Gilliatt, a month earlier. This was on Sunday 31 March, 1963, on the occasion of her 'comic triumph' *Sparrows Can't Sing*, her first film – an adaptation of the related Theatre Workshop production for American audiences. Responding to a suggestion by the interviewer that she should make another film, Littlewood replied: 'I'm not interested in working so that some impresario can graft it on to the West End and then pluck out the heart of it and turn it into some bawdy charade. In fact, I'm not really interested in films or the theatre. I'm interested in all *this* – in what's going on around us, in being alert to life. I don't really want a theatre: I'd rather have a marvelous Fun Palace like Vauxhall Gardens, where you could go off with your girl in the dark and come back and see real entertainment.'<sup>3</sup>

Headlines and keywords quickly spread the project's ambitions, even if no images were yet available. Only two days after Littlewood's television broadcast, *The Daily Herald* – later to

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<sup>2</sup> Tom Driberg, 'Tom Driberg writes about a dream-playground', *Sunday Citizen*, 5 May 1963.

<sup>3</sup> Penelope Gilliatt, 'Joan Littlewood on the Agony of Making Films', *The Observer*, 31 March 1963.



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FIGURE 5.2: Harold Atkins, 'Something New – Just for Fun', *The Daily Telegraph*, 6 June 1963. Press cutting, folder DR1995:0188:525:003, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

become *The Sun* – carried Henry Fielding’s article ‘Nothing but Fun on the Isle of Dogs’. About a month later, Harold Atkins wrote ‘Something new – just for fun’ for *The Daily Telegraph* [FIGURE 5.2]. With an average circulation of over 1,300,000 copies in both cases at the time, five times more than that of *The Times* or *The Guardian*, word of the Fun Palace reached a broad readership, both blue and white collar respectively. Along with these larger distribution papers, the project also featured in the local press of Tower Hamlets. On 14 June the *East London Advertiser* echoed Littlewood’s ‘Monitor’ broadcast. In the article ‘Joan has her Eye on a Fun Palace’, it noted her distance from what was perceived in the press perceived as a related initiative – Arnold Wesker’s Centre 42. ‘It would be nothing like Battersea Fun park, nor would it be “condescending like Centre 42”, Arnold Wesker’s machine for bringing culture to the masses’. Within a fortnight the news had reached the north-eastern daily *Bolton Evening News*, whose issue of 11 May ran a piece titled ‘Pleasure Park of Rare Design’.

Controversies started to emerge in the summer of 1963. The Astragal column in the 26 June issue of the *The Architects’ Journal* launched a veiled critique of the Fun Palace in its review of Archigram’s ‘The Living City’ exhibition at the Institute of Contemporary Arts: ‘do visit the show, because it is good clean urban fun in its own right, and some sort of preview of what Joan Littlewood’s Fun Palace could be like if it isn’t overcome by pomposity’.<sup>4</sup> In September Littlewood excited controversy at the drama conference ‘The Theatre of the Future’ held in Edinburgh, when she argued for her revolutionary alternative to theatre. This was reported in *The Observer* of 8 September as “Nonsense” row at drama conference’. A day later, the Fun Palace attracted bad press in the politically influential *The Evening Standard*, owned by the powerful *Daily Express* group, under the misleading heading ‘Joan Littlewood’s ‘dream’ sparks off a rumpus. Island residents protest’. It reported apparent objections to the project among residents of the Isle of Dogs, even if despite initial skepticism, it would have gained the full support of the Millwall Residents association.<sup>5</sup>

Perhaps the press influenced London County Council’s decision to hold the land. The fact is that communications had ground to a halt during the first half of 1964. Having failed to gain a site at the London docks, the Fun Palace and its public image had received a first set back. However, it would be the perspectives opened for the project from the southern site of Mill Meads in the Civic Trust’s ambitious Lea Valley Development Plan – a comprehensive plan demanding inter-borough collaboration under the auspices of yet inchoate Greater London Council – that generated a new positive energy in the spring and summer press headlines.

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<sup>4</sup> Astragal, ‘Nuts!’, *The Architects’ Journal*, no. 137, 26 June 1963, 1319. Mathews, *From Agit-Prop to Free Space*, 88.

<sup>5</sup> ‘Littlewood’s “dream” sparks off a rumpus. “Island” residents protest’, *Evening Standard*, 9 September 1963, 9.

In preparation for the major press conference on the Lea Valley Plan scheduled for 20 July, 1964, Littlewood and Price issued two articles in specialized papers that for the first time showed some drawings of the project. The first comprehensive description of the project – and, most importantly, its first drawing (a two-bay study in axonometric) – would appear as ‘A Laboratory of Fun’ in the *New Scientist* of 14 May 1964 [FIGURE 2.1]. The spring and summer issues of *ARK*, the Royal College of Art little magazine, included, respectively, a written statement on the project and a collection of diagrammatic vignettes to illustrate it. Following this, the interior perspective drawing was circulated as a broadsheet at the Civic Trust conference [FIGURE 1.2]. However, it would not be until January 1965 that comprehensive and detailed graphic reportage of the project would be issued in the *Architectural Review*. A set of five photo diagrams of interior views and the view from a helicopter that had been produced for the magazine, opened the ‘Preview’ section for the year just commencing. These were then followed by the main set of orthographic drawings, which conveyed the gridded organization of the project [FIGURE 4.1]. While the former could engage wider readership, the latter seem to appear enigmatic both to the expert and the non-expert - to judge from the little impact such grid-drawings seem to have had in scholarly and non scholarly discourses.

Skepticism about the possibilities for the project ahead was voiced by Malcolm Muggeridge in his column ‘London’s Diary’ in the *New Statesman*, 1 May, 1964. Of Littlewood, he wrote, ‘I like very much her project for a sort of London pleasure garden, including theatre and other amenities, which she describes with zest and wealth of salacious detail unlikely to win the approval of City Fathers. Of course, her project will never come to pass. If it did it would be like the Festival of Britain, and we should all hate it; specially Joan’.<sup>6</sup> Notwithstanding this view, news of Fun Palace in the Lea Valley was positively received by major London papers. *The Times* announced a ‘6000-acre play area planned. Lea Valley lung for London’, on 16 June. On July 24, *The Tribune* article, ‘Play: Ideas for a Socialist Britain’, would situate the social ambitions of the project gathered in the Civic Trust conference within the agenda of Labour-supported projects for its left-wing readership, alongside a potential public park connecting South Bank and Crystal Palace Sports Center with the whole Lea Valley scheme. With the general election in sight, the article takes stock of past achievements of Labour policies such as the Festival of Britain, National Film Theatre, riverside walks, and Festival Hall.<sup>7</sup> Even the BBC would broadcast the Lea Valley Plan in its *Time Out* programme on 6 August 1964.

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<sup>6</sup> *New Statesman*, 1 May 1964, 674. Journalist and socialist Malcolm Muggeridge is claimed to be one of the Fun Palace contributors in Mathews, *From Agit Prop to Free Space*, 274.

<sup>7</sup> ‘Play: Ideas for a Socialist Britain’, *The Tribune*, 24 July 1964.

By that summer, it would be the weekend press that devoted significant coverage of the project and the ideas that drove it within the context of both Littlewood's and Price's work. Short of architectural images, it resorted to alternative illustrations. Cedric Price's portrait for *The Guardian* 'Fun Palace architect', Saturday 4 July, was followed the day after by a close-up of Littlewood on the derelict site of Mill Meads. A photograph by Maurice Hatton – who was involved in the production of the Fun Palace film – captioned as 'Joan Littlewood and one of her possible Promised Lands', introduced the informative article 'World Fiesta in Miniature', in *The Sunday Telegraph*'s section 'Sunday Morning with Mandrake'. The four-column piece opens quoting fragments of the Fun Palace broadsheet that was to be distributed in the Lea Valley conference organized by the Civic Trust later that month, situates the interview with Price and Littlewood at a small viewing-theatre in Wardour Street, London, where footage of the promotional film is being shown. The article mentions that a folder full of scale drawings was carried by Price to the venue. Direct quotes in full paragraphs merge with anecdotes and situated observations to bring the critical, anti-institutional approach of the project to life: 'This scheme has been my central project for thirty years. I never meant to go into theatre ... I loathe the theatre. Thank God, that fossilized Lovely War is off' - and continues a few paragraphs later – 'I don't want one of the culture shows, like the Lincoln Centre. The essence must be informality. Anything goes (...) 'There should be room for anything and everything. For the Queen of England and all her black horses. It should be a microcosm for a world fiesta'. Quotation marks give the sense of Littlewood's unmediated voice and convey the optimism surrounding the project: 'On July 20 we' – referring to the Fun Palace organization – 'and the Civic Trust will be issuing a public statement. They have suggested a choice of three sites in their Lea Valley plan... They are being marvellous. These municipal-people, drains and all that, are always easier to deal with than culture-people. How much will it cost? Five and a half million. We won't have any trouble raising the money. In eighteen months, construction should be under way'. Both the project's programmatic under specification and financial unknown are reported in the Sunday paper: "'Describe it?" says Joan Littlewood. "How can one?" "A bit like a shipyard", says Cedric Price. "Could one describe the Charles Eames egg at the World Fair until it happened?" demands Miss Littlewood. "But it happened...". Just as the Fun Palace is happening'.<sup>8</sup> Along with Littlewood's and Price's direct voice, the article captures something of her force: 'Joan Littlewood, in a white, lacy shirt, manages to communicate energy without actually moving. Like a Chinese war-lord under Zen. Or maybe, like Kubla Khan (the one who decreed pleasure domes)'.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> 'World Fiesta in Miniature', Mandrake column, *The Sunday Telegraph*, 5 July 1964.

<sup>9</sup> 'World Fiesta in Miniature'.

A week later, on Sunday 12 July, *The Observer's* satirical columnist Michael Frayn issued a wry critique of the Fun Palace's built-in programmatic indeterminacy through the blathering of a fictional analyst: 'Sigismund Cortex, that keen Psychomanian student of British affairs, is greatly excited by the idea of the Fun Palace that Miss Joan Littlewood and her friends are going to build. The only trouble is, he can't understand exactly what the Fun Palace is. He keeps alternately interrogating me and hunting through a stack of English-Psychomanian dictionaries. He says they have plenty of palaces in his country, but so far as he can tell they don't have any fun. I mean, / know what a Fun Palace is, but it's damned difficult to explain to *him*. / "Is a Palace of Culture?" he asks keenly./ "Not exactly" I reply helpfully. /"Is a Palace of Varieties?" "I don't think so"/ "Is a sports stadium?"/ "Oh no"/ "Ah, now I see! Is a house of prostitution?"/ "Certainly not"(...)'. And the article continues deriding the project's fun: "I read in a newspaper that this Fun Palace would contain six screen cinemas, mobile cycloramas, warm-air curtains, optical barriers and static-vapour zones. Tell me, please, are these funs?"/"No, the fun's what goes on the screens and between the barriers"/ "Describe this fun, please"/ "Well, I don't think they've decided what sort of fun they're going to have in there yet"/ "No? They build the building first and then find the fun afterwards?" / "I think that's the idea, Sigismund" (...)' . And Frayn closes, "Yes write it down, Sigismund. P-E-O-P-L-E A-R-E F-U-N. That's our great humanistic creed. It's fun to be alive. It's fun to drop dead."<sup>10</sup>

Between August and September 1964 news of the project spread within the colour pages of *The Sunday Times Magazine*. With a circulation of 1,240,000, double that of the black-and-white *The Observer* and *The Sunday Telegraph*, the commercially successful Sunday press was aimed at middle-class readership. With neither pictures nor drawings of the Fun Palace to share, the article 'Portrait Gallery: Joan Littlewood by Frank Norman', published on 16 August, opens with a full-page cartoon cover by Gerald Scarfe. A furious Joan Littlewood trowel in hand, foregrounds a wall-inscription 'Fun Palace' under reconstruction [FIGURE 5.3]. The British writer Frank Norman, playwright in the awarded Theatre Workshop production *Fings Ain't Wot They Used T'Be*, situates the project – 'Joan's great dream' – within the aura of her personality, anecdotes from her ordinary life and insights about her professional productions. Such a textual and graphic portrait of Littlewood lends substantially to the Fun Palace image, of which Norman summarily speaks about in the paragraph before last- dedicated to her current play *Henry IV* on stage at Edinburgh Festival that summer – and noting only the controversy the project navigates: 'Strangely enough her followers are not behind her in this, in fact they have openly opposed her. They consider the Fun Palace a scatterbrained idea and that even if she gets it, it will be a white elephant; undeterred, she is

<sup>10</sup> Michael Frayn, *The Observer*, 12 July 1964.



FIGURE 5.3: Portrait Gallery: Joan Littlewood by Frank Norman, *The Sunday Times Magazine*, 16 August, 1964, 4-5; 8-9.

going it alone.<sup>11</sup> Judged either redundant or irrelevant, any further information of the project's complex ambitions and authorship is cut out of the picture. Meanwhile a flow of advertisements for fine clothes, comfortable transatlantic flight offerings, tobacco and spirits capture the attention of its managerial and white-collar readership.

Less than a month later, on 6 September, Priscilla Chapman echoed Price's creed of 'planned obsolescence' in the editorial 'The Year in Design', and followed up in the article 'Sin Centres & Fun Palaces', which unpacked the dynamism of the new architecture of leisure as the strategy to come to grips with the future [FIGURE 5.4]. Indeed, 'Fun Palace' becomes the title for a new typology of technologically serviced delight, a plurality of which the selection in the article's title accounted for: 'Fun Palaces, which hardly anyone has bothered with since Kubla Khan, are a newly revived architectural genre. The two that are planned at the moment are genuine Fun Palaces, for the kinds of fun most people really like.'<sup>12</sup> Mark Dorrian collects Mike Webb's ironic reaction to this *mélange*: 'at the last minute there appeared on the scene a new suitor with slicked down black hair and golden tongue and whispering sweet nothings in [the writer's] ear; charming her with words like expendability, impermanence and flexibility'.<sup>13</sup> Engulfed by the thrust of Price's and Littlewood's idea, Sin Centre would a few months later be referred to as 'Sin Palace' in the *Architectural Association Journal*. Chapman delves into details of how Price's design for fun would stretch between the mobile canvas tents of 18<sup>th</sup>-century pleasure grounds, Vauxhall Gardens, and the fun menu built into the punched-card programmer tailored to participants' choices, whereas Mike Webb's Sin Centre would alternatively be experienced as a kind of fairground wound up a tower accessible by car. It is Sin Centre's 'libidinal autoculture' – as Dorrian argues, one emanating from, and distributed into Webb's chains of drawings of the field of vision opened by the moving automobile and its mechanical props – what speaks of a kind of intimacy almost opposed to the Fun Palace's plural organization.<sup>14</sup> True to the Fun Palace's aversion to static pictorialisation, only a photo of Webb with the Sin Centre model illustrates the article. For '(Price) refuses to produce a conventional 'architect's impression' – which he says are always a confidence trick anyhow – because the Palace won't look the same two nights running. What it looks like will depend on the fun chosen by the punched-card programmer which is being worked out (...) it's the fun that decides the building's looks

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<sup>11</sup> 'Portrait Gallery: Joan Littlewood by Frank Norman', *The Sunday Times Magazine*, 16 August 1964.

<sup>12</sup> Priscilla Chapman, 'Sin Centres & Fun Palaces', *The Sunday Times Magazine*, 6 September 1964, 50.'

<sup>13</sup> Mark Dorrian, 'Auto-Affection: On Michael Webb's Sin Centre and the Drawing of Mobility', in Desley Luscombe, Helen Thomas., and Niall Hobhouse, *Architecture through Drawing* (London: Lund Humphries, Drawing Matter, 2019), 20

<sup>14</sup> Dorrian, 'Auto-Affection', 27.



FIGURE 5.4: Priscilla Chapman, Sin Centres & Fun Palaces, *The Sunday Times Magazine*, 6 September, 1964.

on any given night.<sup>15</sup> In the same issue of the magazine, an article on World War II by the historian Martin Gilbert referred to Littlewood's recent stage hit through the title 'Oh! What a Phoney War.'

The Sunday press of 6 September offers us a cross-section of the different kinds of news that the Fun Palace became at the time. For, along with Priscilla Chapman's positive and insightful analysis of the project, snippets carried in broad circulation press reveal the critical condition of the project. Urging support, the Fun Palace trustee Professor Richie Calder addressed an open letter to the authorities in (the over 5,000,000 circulation) *The Sunday Mirror*:<sup>16</sup> 'Let us have, by all means, the University of the Air' – in reference to the inchoate Open University project – 'to give depth and meaning to the purposes of life' – and continues in support of the Fun Palace – 'but let us also have culture-for-the-hell-of-it'.<sup>17</sup> *The Observer's* minor theatre review of the week by columnist Colin Jones – illustrated by the optical trick of Bridget Riley's logo for the Theatre Royal Stratford East – voices the uncertainties that both the project and Littlewood's productions more generally were facing: 'Theatre Workshop is disintegrating (...) and Joan Littlewood's Fun Palace up in the air'. A few pages later, Bamber Gascoigne's 'In the Cage: Theatre' mentions in passing that: 'Joan Littlewood would hate her fun palace to be classified as theatre but apparently its plans forge ahead.'<sup>18</sup>

Littlewood's zest and radical ideas would also find an audience with the female readers of *Vogue* in its 15 September issue [FIGURE 5.5]. In this, the London-based drama critic Alan Brien develops – amidst polite advertisements by US business for fancy garments and hair styles for housewives – a thorough portrait of Littlewood, her ideology, theatre work and her Fun Palace, through the notes taken from an interview in her residency at Mill House, Blackheath, London SE3, the actual headquarters for several Fun Palace meetings and the correspondence address. Part and parcel of the image of Fun Palace under construction, the critic describes the environs in detail before turning to the ideas bursting out of Littlewood's head: 'It was a long and thin (room) with a romantic Parisian panorama of chimney pots from the window. It contained a double bed guarded by two large movieolas, a work bench piled with coils of wire, two tape recorders, a typewriter, equipment for cutting and cementing film, a model robot, and a stack of correspondence./ Above the mantelpiece was a picture of the Virgin Mary upon whose face someone had stuck a pair of red Marilyn Monroe lips cut from a magazine. Next to this was a long penciled series of quotations beginning with 'only

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<sup>15</sup> Priscilla Chapman, 'Sin Centres & Fun Palaces'. *The Sunday Times Magazine*, 6 September 1964, 50

<sup>16</sup> Williams, *Communications*, 46.

<sup>17</sup> *The Sunday Mirror*, 6 September 1964. Press cutting, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

<sup>18</sup> Bamber Gascoigne, *The Observer*, 6 September 1964.



FIGURE 5.5: Joan Littlewood by Alan Brien, *Vogue*, Vol. 144, Issue. 5, 15 September, 1964, 160-161; 190-191.

connect' and 'the slow burial that begins with birth'. On the other wall there were Ordinance Survey maps of the East End and aerial photographs of the docks'.<sup>19</sup> The Fun Palace's radical opposition to institutional practices unfolds in the article: 'You know those councilors are still making parks for people to keep off the grass in. I'd like to sabotage the whole theatre-museum-art-gallery bit. You educate yourself through your job. You never learn anything at Oxford. We're already in the middle of a revolution. Everything up to now has been pre-history. I want action. I want to canalize violence in my twenty-one acres (...) Come in my Palace and invent your own job. Break up houses if you like. Paint and sculpt with new materials. Play with computers. We are going to pipe in, twenty-four hours a day on a dozen channels, life in a mine, a prison, a workhouse, a mental hospital. There'll be no editing and no art, thank God. The bastards are editing the world on TV and in newspapers. You'll see what really happens. Kids can make their own films with cheap portable cameras and mikes. They'll be better than any of those Tennessee Truffauts. I don't care what they do. I'll watch. I'm a voyeur. / (...) A monkey hill for humans. Make the world a place to live in. It'll destroy the money system and free us all. You'll be able to shuffle each section like cards'.<sup>20</sup>

In comparison to the space given to the Fun Palace in the wider press during 1964, architectural attention seems delayed. Commentary in architectural magazines was limited in its analysis and often offered only generic descriptions of the project. Thus, the *Architectural Review's* June issue of 1964 would give extended coverage to the strategic plan for the River Lea Park but only limited attention to Fun Palace itself (in the article 'LEA VALLEY: Proposals for a linear park for East London'). *The Architects' Journal* followed up the Civic Trust conference in July with the brief note 'NEWS: CIVIC TRUST: Lea Valley regional park'. In August the architectural historian Reyner Banham circulated an enthusiastic review of the project's architectural strategy in the 'Arts and Entertainment' section of the weekly paper *New Statesman* [FIGURE 5.6]. His article 'People's Palaces' praises the 'kit of parts' strategy of the project for its ability to accommodate change, opposing it to the architectural manners and class-oriented agenda of two other cultural centres of the time. The Crystal Palace Sports Centre, designed by Leslie Martin and LCC architect's department, was, in Banham's words, 'a very exciting structure (which) suffers as architecture only when purely "architectural" considerations have been allowed to take precedence over the business of being a sports-hall'. Banham also criticizes it for its elitist programme: 'this place is not for

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<sup>19</sup> Joan Littlewood by Alan Brien, *Vogue*, 15 September, 1964, 190. Alan Brien is listed as Fun Palace Consultant in Stanley Mathews, *From Agit-Prop to Free Space*, Appendix A, 274.

<sup>20</sup> Alan Brien, 'Features/Articles/People: Joan Littlewood. "The Fizzing Fuse Which Revolutionized British Theatre": This English Producer-Director Who Put a Storm on Stage', ed. Diana (1963-1971) Vreeland, *Vogue* 144, no. 5 (15 September 1964): 191.

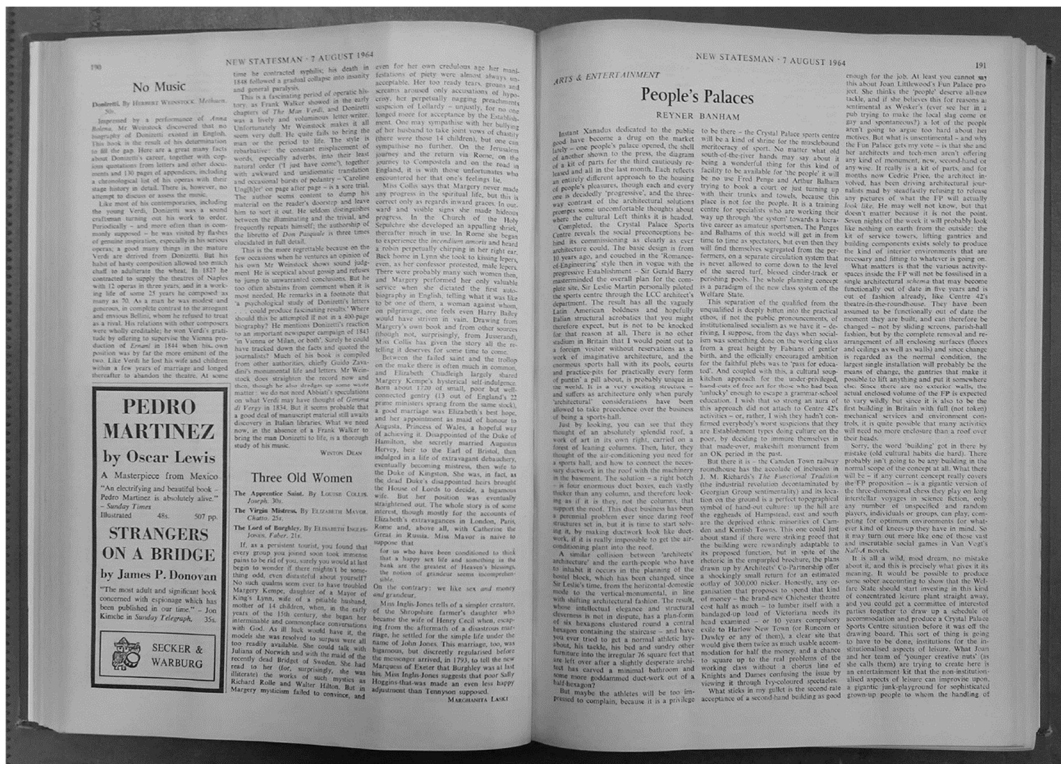


FIGURE 5.6: Reyner Banham, *People's Palaces*, New Statesman, 7 August 1964, 191-192.

### No Music

...long he contracted syphilis, his death in 1844 followed a gradual collapse into insanity and general prostration. This is the most dramatic period of organic life, as Frank Water showed in the early days of his period to life. The other chapters in *The Man Verdi* and *Donizetti* were a lively and voluminous letter writer, and very dull. He quite fails to bring the man or his period to life. The other chapters: the constant employment of words, especially adjectives, make their final natural order (I get have come), together with occasional bursts of pedantry - "Carlini English on page after page" - a very bad attempt to do so.

Like most of his contemporaries, including the young Verdi, Donizetti was a second-rate composer - his work is a second-rate parody - and more often than in comedy he is a good parody. He is a second-rate Verdi as distinct from Donizetti. But his habit of heavy composition allowed him much more to do than he should. In 1837 he was connected to supply the theatres of Naples with 12 operas in three years, and in a working life of some 25 years he composed as many as 70. As a man he was modest and generous, in contrast with the arrogant and envious Bellini, whom he refused to treat as a rival. His relations with other composers were wholly creditable. He was Verdi's graduate by affixing to his name the name of the person who in 1844 when the opera *Il corsario* was first performed in the theatre of St. Carlo in Naples. Like Verdi he had no wife and children until a few years of marriage and thought thereafter to abandon the theatre. At once

**PEDRO MARTINEZ**  
by Oscar Lewis  
A masterpiece from Mexico  
"An exciting and beautiful book"  
"Pedro Martinez is absolutely alive!"  
Sunday Times  
Illustrated 4s. 50p pp.

**STRANGERS ON A BRIDGE**  
by James P. Donovan  
"The most subtle and significant book concerned with espionage which has been published in my time" - *John Kenneth Galbraith* *Foreigner*, 35s.

**SECKER & WARBURG**

### NEW STATESMAN - 7 AUGUST 1964

...for her own credulity age her mind, feelings of pity were almost always inoperative. Her too ready tears, grief and accents, aroused only occasions of hypocrisy, but prefiguring practically certain success of *Lucy*, it is possible for no longer more for acceptance by the Englishman. One only sympathize with her husband to take some view of charity there were those 14 children, but she can sympathize no further. On the festival journey and the return via Rome, on the journey to Composita and on the road in England, it is with these understandings as encountered for that one's feelings are moved only as regards *Lucy* and her mother.

Miss Collins says that Margery never made any progress in the spiritual life, but this is correct only as regards outward grace, in outward and visible signs she made hidden progress. In the Church of the Holy Sepulchre she developed an appalling dread, especially during her first night in Rome. She was particularly clinging in her right ear. There were probably many such women then, as for confessor priest, made *Lucy* and Margery performed his only visible service when he denied the first state by a man of letters, a woman against whom Margery's own book and from other sources, though not necessarily, from *Lucy*, Miss Collins has given the story all the details. Between the first night and the night of her death, Miss Collins has given a complete and Elizabeth Chadwick largely based on Margery's own book, but with some general history (13) and of England's 19th century. Miss Collins has given the story all the details. Between the first night and the night of her death, Miss Collins has given a complete and Elizabeth Chadwick largely based on Margery's own book, but with some general history (13) and of England's 19th century.

**Three Old Women**  
The Appointment, by Frances Carter  
*English*, 30s.

**The Virgin Madonnas**, by Elizabeth Carter  
*English*, 25s.

**The Last of England**, by Elizabeth Carter  
*English*, 25s.

### NEW STATESMAN - 7 AUGUST 1964

...to be there - the Crystal Palace sports centre will be a kind of shrine for the architectural community of sport. No matter what kind of building it is, it will be a shrine for the architectural community of sport. No matter what kind of building it is, it will be a shrine for the architectural community of sport. No matter what kind of building it is, it will be a shrine for the architectural community of sport.

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**People's Palaces**  
REYNER BANHAM

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the people (...) The whole planning concept is a paradigm of the new class system of the Welfare State'.<sup>21</sup> He similarly saw Arnold Wesker's Centre 42 within the Roundhouse as compromised by elitist politics of cultural provision, a too-grounded building for the kind of adaptability needed: 'Establishment types doing culture on the poor (...) what sticks in my gullet is the second-rate acceptance of a second-hand building as good as enough for the job'. For Fun Palace he reserves his most compelling commentary: 'what Joan and her team of 'younger creative nuts' (as she calls them) are trying to create here is an entertainment kit that the non-institutionalised aspects of leisure can improvise upon, a gigantic junk-playground for sophisticated grown-up people (...)'.<sup>22</sup> Meanwhile, *The Architectural Association Journal's* 'Buildings for Pleasure and Leisure', September-October issue, circulated the Fun Palace broadsheet interior perspective and a summary of the project alongside Arnold Wesker's Centre 42 in what reads as a rather general commentary on the current state of architectural responses to the leisure question. Terence Bendixon's column 'UK news' in *Architectural Design* would reproduce the same Fun Palace interior perspective drawing as a snippet in November that year.<sup>23</sup> 'Bits of Fun Palace' appeared as a similarly brief mention of the project within Price's dedicated page in *Archigram 4*, 'Zooming Price'.<sup>24</sup> In 'Zoom wave hits Architecture', *New Society*, March 1966, Banham would enthuse over this London-based 'underground architectural protest magazines' for their improvised, funny format and for their attention to technologically driven architectures such as Buckminster Fuller's, Yona Friedman's and Cedric Price's.<sup>25</sup> These media contexts for the Fun Palace add to the editorial project envisaged by the situationist member Alex Trocchi *Sigma Portfolio*, as discussed earlier in the thesis.

The recently elected Labour Government of Harold Wilson would not be a decisive force encouraging the approval of the Lea Valley scheme at the time. For what the ambitious park encountered was a Greater London Council in formation, with competencies being transferred from London County Council to local boroughs from mid 1964. High expectations were set for local administration, which would be perceived as an instrument of change in British society. Three main areas of transformation were explored by Labour MP Ellis Hillman in his editorial project '*Essays in Local Government Enterprise*' between 1964 and 1966: the arts, festivals and welfare services; the programme of new towns and cities to be built across Britain; and the field of education. Thus, the editorial introduction to '*New towns and New Cities*', 1965, in which Fun Palace and the Lea Valley proposal were included as

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<sup>21</sup> Reyner Banham, 'People's Places', *New Statesman*, 7 November 1964, 191.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, 191.

<sup>23</sup> Terence Bendixon, *Architectural Design*, Nov. 1964: 533

<sup>24</sup> *Archigram* no. 4, 1964: 13

<sup>25</sup> Reyner Banham, 'Zoom Wave Hits Architecture', *New Society* 7 (3 March 1966): 21.

case studies, encouraged local government to look beyond parish boundaries and lead the process of development for these new environments through inter-authority cooperation and imaginative and scientifically-competent enterprise. 'Without vision', concludes Hillman, 'local government will perish, and it is the Labour, Trade Union, and Co-operative movement which has the material, cultural and spiritual resources to realise the extension of multifold forms of public and social ownership'.<sup>26</sup> Price's essay 'Public Space Programme', in the mentioned editorial, criticizes the current inter-borough rivalry for the construction of obsolete, self-contained civic centres, and argues for concerted action and a network form surpassing administrative boundaries as the progressive approach to planning for leisure. The Lea Valley Plan and Fun Palace illustrate the argument: 'The co-operation suggested between Local Authorities in the Lea Valley Plan is an indication of this attitude, enabling as it does uneven and specialized development to occur at any particular spot and providing, in total, amenities for an area far larger than that adjacent to the Valley. This progressive approach contrasts strangely with popular, medieval-type appetite for individual Civic Theatres.' And, Price goes on, 'An example of a regional, if not National, built amenity still requiring local attention and patronage is Joan Littlewood's Fun Palace. Situated in the Lea Valley and included in the Civic Trust's Valley Development proposals it provides a totally variable range of community and individual facilities, the range of which at any time is largely dependent on demand and degree of user participation'.<sup>27</sup>

Indeed, what Price and Littlewood had encountered was a stagnant attitude in the local authority of Newham Borough Council. By the end of 1964, the Fun Palace moved to formal public action, in relation to which the local press would take on a legitimating role. Formal public notice for the planning applications made by Littlewood and Price - to Newham Borough Council for the proposed development of 'a flexible education and entertainment centre, Mill Meads', dated 17 December 1964, and to London County Council for a 'proposed development at Hawley and Castlehaven Roads, Camden Town NW1', a day later - were published in the *Stratford Express* and in the *North London Press* respectively.<sup>28</sup> The Londoner's Diary column in the *Evening Standard* followed closely the fast pace of the project at the time, with news about the new Pilot Project venture for Camden Town being reported in 'Littlewood Fun Palace Plans Get Under Way', 8 December, and the alternative sites under investigation, including Bishopsgate Fire Station, in 'Miss Littlewood looks at Bishopsgate', 9 December. the *North London Press* would also join in hailing promising plans in the article 'Fun Palace may open next year', 25 December, 1964.

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<sup>26</sup> Hillman, *Essays in Local Government Enterprise*. Vol. 2. 11.

<sup>27</sup> Price, Cedric, 'Public Space Programme', in Hillman, *Essays in Local Government Enterprise*, Vol. 2, 158-59.

<sup>28</sup> *North London Press*, 25 December 1964; *Stratford Express*' notice is not dated in the archive. Folder DR19950188:525:003, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

However, headlines in the press of London boroughs show that the reception of the project was becoming increasingly contested. On one hand, the major Fun Palace scheme for the Mill Meads site in the Lea Valley Plan failed to gather support from the Newham Borough Council, as reported in the *Stratford Express's* 'Fun Palace Faces A Quick KO', on 4 December, 1964. The article revealed local authorities' support for alternative facilities for Mill Meads, such as the Chelsea's teachers' training college.<sup>29</sup> By 20 June the following year, *The Observer's* 'Slow struggle for super park' recounted difficulties that both the Lea Valley Plan and Fun Palace within it were encountering: 'Miss Littlewood has made a planning application to build a fun palace on G.L.C [Greater London Council] land at Mill Meads. But the land may be wanted for an outfall sewage works'. On the other hand, news of the rejection of the Camden Pilot Project by local associations began to spread through local newspapers' headlines. On 22 January, 1965, the *North London Press's* article 'Church slams "fun palace" project for Chalk Farm' reported the strong objections raised to the project by members of the parish and school of Holy Trinity in Chalk Farm, who argued against the noise, the destruction of the church's youth organizations, and the undesirable kind of crowds – 'rowdy and hooligan' – that the project would attract.<sup>30</sup> 'Residents hammer the Chalk Farm', 5 February, 1965, *North London Press*, and 'Fun Palace protests', 12 February, in the *Hamstead & Highgate Express*, homed into protests by local groups. Hailed by the church, the Clearance Way Estate Residents Association in Camden Town formally objected to the Pilot project in a letter to the London County Council, as the *Evening Standard's* 'Joan's Fun palace runs into trouble with residents' reported on 12 February 1965, now to a London-wide readership. The localized negative reception of the Pilot project was part of a wider sense of threat permeating the Community Association movement itself, as private correspondence held in Cedric Price fonds shows. Already, on 27 October, 1964, in a critical letter addressed to Joan Littlewood, the Chairman of the Lymington Community Association, which also happened to be Vice Chairman of the National Federation of Community Associations, had accused Fun Palace of being a purely commercial undertaking and, as such, in contradiction with the ethos of the voluntary and fragile movement: 'Our movement needs to go forward at the present time if it is not to go backward and if it is to face such keen commercial competition as is represented by your scheme. I regard this as a challenge which the Community Centre Movement can and must face.'<sup>31</sup>

The Mayor of Hackney, Fun Palace supporter and leading figure in setting up the Lea Valley Scheme, Lou Sherman, would point at the uneven reception of the project among target groups, and, in particular, its disengagement from the preoccupations of local communities,

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<sup>29</sup> 'The Fun Palace Faces a Quick KO', *Stratford Express*, 4 December 1964.

<sup>30</sup> 'Church slams "fun palace" project for Chalk Farm', *North London Press*, 22 January 1965.

<sup>31</sup> Folder DR1995 0188 525 002 003, Cedric Price fonds, CCA .

as the cause of the deep schism that opened in responses to the project. As a handwritten memo by Littlewood, dated 20 December, 1965, recorded from a conversation with Sherman: 'You need a real cross section. You've sold it to one section, very well – but you need to come down to the level of the people who really count. You've got to make the maximum stir and ferment. If you'd done this and succeeded in winning local support we could have got Mill Meads from the G.L.C and stopped the engineers building those storm tanks. As it is there's been a local revulsion to the FP idea (...) When they hear "Fun Palace" they think of pin-tables. You've got to get rid of that notion, replace it with your conception. People don't understand what you mean (...) Get your local people back. Your commandoes (...)'.<sup>32</sup>

In February 1965, Jennie Lee's White Paper, 'A Policy for the Arts. The First Steps', formalized the cultural policy of the Labour government, one that would be implemented by the Arts Council of Great Britain, amongst other institutions. The notice of refusal of a grant to the Fun Palace by that same institution arrived shortly after, on 1 April. With this, the distance between the radical democracy of Fun Palace's cultural project and the ambiguous and classist initiatives that would gain government support as made explicit in the document became increasingly evident in the wearing away of supportive headlines over the months that followed. As scholar Juliet Rufford argues, experimental theatre at the time would be excluded from funding from the Conservative-led Arts Council programme 'Housing the Arts', which, from 1965 on, tended to secure financial help for traditionally-moulded art practices.<sup>33</sup> Critical responses to the Art Council's policy appear as snippets of support for the Fun Palace, such as the closing remarks of *The Times's* 'Arts council patronage under fire', 28 April: 'Perhaps the Minister would consider the possibility of assisting major experimental schemes which were outside the scope of the Arts Council. She might accept some responsibility for schemes like Wesker's Centre 42 or Joan Littlewood's Palace of Fun.'<sup>34</sup>

Despite the uncertainty surrounding the materialization of Fun Palace – either by the Thames or as a pilot project for Camden following the negative reception by Newham Borough Council and by Camden local associations respectively – the project's divergent and expansionist trajectories continue to be registered in press through 1965. The active exploration of alternative locations for Fun Palace by Price and Littlewood gave headlines for papers in Greater London, Liverpool and Glasgow. Support was reportedly offered from up to 129 local authorities in the Greater London, as noted in the article 'Schemes to End the "Dead Town" Title. A Revolutionary Fun Palace' in *Welwyn Herts*, March 12. *Liverpool Daily*

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<sup>32</sup> 'Conversation with Lou Sherman', in 'Confidential, Items of Interest', 20 December 1965, DR1995 0188 525 005, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

<sup>33</sup> Juliet Rufford, "What Have We Got to Do with Fun?", 319.

<sup>34</sup> 'Arts council patronage under fire', *The Times*, 28 April 1965.

*Post's* 'Miss Lee to discuss fun palace idea', March 1, floated the idea that Minister of the Arts Jennie Lee would back a Fun Palace in Liverpool.<sup>35</sup> The *Scottish Sunday Express's* "'Fun Palace" planned', 15 August, announced Price's investigations of a corner site on Renfrew Street in Glasgow.<sup>36</sup> Notes of support for Littlewood's Fun Palace would also travel internationally – on 5 February, John Crosby, the London reporter for *The New York Herald Tribune*, wrote in 'A Fun Palace': 'It looks like an overgrown Meccano (...) Joan thinks one of the great malignancies of an automated world is just boredom. Housewives, she says, lead lives of quiet desperation. The young are delinquents. The old quietly go mad of frustration and repression. "The explosion of human potentialities will be worse than war" she says, if something is not provided to give it an outlet, canalize it, direct it. That's what the fun palace is for'.<sup>37</sup> The expansive aspirations of the project are humorously captured in Nickolas Gurland's cartoon issued in *The Sunday Telegraph* of 18 April and captioned: 'Multi-millionaire Joan Littlewood is trying to buy the Isle of Wight to turn it into a Fun Palace'.<sup>38</sup> At the same time, the national press circulated stories about the capacity of the idea to metamorphose into new international cultural ventures. News about Littlewood's fun palace in Hammamet, Tunisia, were aired in Tom Driberg's column in *The Sunday Citizen*, 13 June, 1965, which – reading between the lines – was a desperate call for support: 'A report from Hammamet, Tunisia, tells of a "theatre school" there – launched by President Bourguiba's personal adviser – with Joan Littlewood as one of the teachers. This does not mean that she has abandoned her long-mooted "fun palace" project. On the contrary, since "theatre", to her, means something far wider than the conventional stage-play and audience, she is able in Africa to conduct pilot experiments for his project with greater freedom than in Britain (...) I want to see the fun palace in being before I die, of a coronary or merely of old age'.<sup>39</sup>

Following the publication of the key drawings and montages of the project in *The Architectural Review's* 'Preview' section in January 1965, the Fun Palace image gains definition within an arts-based readership both in UK and USA. The two-colour cover of *New Society*, a weekly favourite of Price that would publish his Potteries Thinkbelt Project in 1964 and Pop-Up Parliament in 1965, dedicated its 15 April issue to 'Leisure' [FIGURE 5.7]. Following John Barr's 'Free Time Britain', an editorial analysis of what the average Briton does with his/her free time, Brian N Lewis, psychologist and collaborator in Gordon Pask's Systems Research Unit,<sup>40</sup> developed a thorough account of the project's activities and

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<sup>35</sup> 'Miss Lee to discuss fun palace idea', *Liverpool Daily Post*, 11 March 1965.

<sup>36</sup> "'Fun Palace" planned', *The Scottish Sunday Express*, 15 August 1965.

<sup>37</sup> John Crosby, 'A Fun Palace', *The New York Herald Tribune*, 5 February 1965.

<sup>38</sup> Mathews, *From Agit-Prop to Free Space: The Architecture of Cedric Price*, 156.

<sup>39</sup> Tom Driberg, 'Joan's Fun Palace', *Sunday Citizen*, 13 June 1965.

<sup>40</sup> His name is included in the list of addressees of the Cybernetics Committee Introductory Document, DR1995:0188:525:004:009, Cedric Price fonds, CCA, 1.

ambition in 'Fun Palace: Counter-Blast to Boredom'. Marked as 'not entirely accurate' in Price's log 'Articles on Fun Palace',<sup>41</sup> the openness of the Fun Palace idea is conveyed within the different appropriations it stimulates. Only the circus-like lettering of the Fun Palace broadsheet illustrates the article, but it elaborates on the distributed authorship and the constructivist ambitions behind its entertainment agenda. As the subtitle reads: 'Electronics panto? An off-the-peg persona? Peace and quiet? This psychology minded project shows one way Free Time Britain (see John Barr, page 6) could develop'.<sup>42</sup> Interestingly, *The Daily Mail* would follow up Lewis's informative account in Charles Greville's 'Will this be a lot of fun?', 19 April, introducing the author as 'the psychological adviser to The Palace'. On 4 April, 1965, the American theatre magazine *Playbill* would present a sample list of kinds of action that one could enjoy in the Camden Pilot project, in 'Joan Littlewood Theatre or Fun Palace?' Their heading 'example' reveals the difficulties that the indeterminacy of the programme presented for the public. As the editor Walter Wager clarified in a letter to Littlewood: 'It will be read by one-and-a-half million Americans, some of whom may send you money (...) Upon reading your material, I discovered that I could not surpass your unique prose, therefore, I have edited your descriptions into an article which presents a brief but fascinating exposition of what you have in mind.'<sup>43</sup>

By 1966 the Fun Palace project had reached a deadlock. The Isle of Dogs site was still 'live' for the supportive Millwall Residents Association in September 1965, but this wasn't apparently the case for the administration in charge, London County Council. The Camden Pilot would be declared dead by November that year.<sup>44</sup> However, the major crisis would come from the fate of the major scheme. The Fun Palace for Mill Meads had been kept on hold through 1965 due to a formal dispute with the GLC Engineering department about the engagement of the site for certain storm water tanks that were programmed in the site. The lack of formal response from the local authority and the GLC to Littlewood's application in December 1964 had triggered an appeal to the Minister of Housing and Local Government on 24 August, 1965. The short text read: 'Failure of Newham Borough Council to give notice of their decision in respect of the above development within the appropriate period specified in article 5(9) of the order of 1963.'<sup>45</sup> By January 1966, the Lea Valley Bill would exclude the disputed site in order to progress. In weighting the risks that the Fun Palace appeal posed

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<sup>41</sup> Folder DR1995:0188:525:003, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

<sup>42</sup> Brian Lewis, 'Fun Palace: Counterblast to Boredom', *New Society*, 15 April 1965, 8.

<sup>43</sup> Folder DR1995:0188:525:005, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

<sup>44</sup> Mathews, *From Agit-Prop to Free Space*, 153.

<sup>45</sup> Folder DR1995:0188:525:005, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

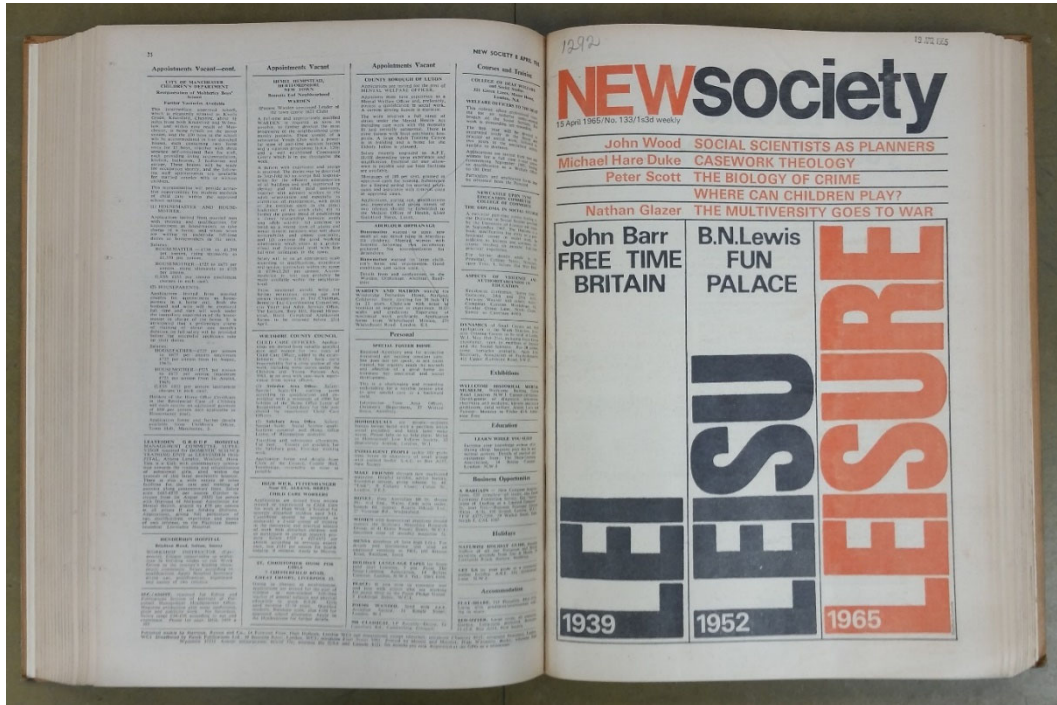


FIGURE 5.7: *New Society*, April 15, 1965, Cover.

for the approval of the whole Lea Valley scheme, the Fun Palace organization agreed to withdraw the appeal prior to the public inquiry, scheduled for 22 March. Thus, on 2 March 1966, the press release 'Notice of withdrawal of Fun Palace appeal', appeared certifying the death of the Fun Palace main project.<sup>46</sup>

The London press promptly dug out the details of the project's demise. A day after the Fun Palace issued the Notice of Withdrawal, Judy Hillman's 'London's Palace of Fun has nowhere to go', *Evening Standard*, 3 March 1966, summarized its critical condition: 'London's hopes of a fun palace have become exceedingly slim.'<sup>47</sup> Illustrated with Littlewood's portrait, captioned 'Joan Littlewood. Nowhere to go', the article praises the Fun Palace Trustees' generous public gesture of withdrawing the appeal against the public authority that should carry forward the whole Lea Valley scheme. And it closes by reflecting upon the radical novelty of the project as the ultimate reason for its struggle to secure support from London authorities and citizens: 'Was it a sports stadium? The trouble was that the fun palace was new and it did not really fit the rule book'.<sup>48</sup> Headlines made it also into the local press, such as 'Fun Palace not for Hackney', *Hackney Gazette and North London Advertiser*, 24 April. Jane McKerron's 'Who will support the Fun Palace', *Tribune*, 29 April, gives an account of the fate of the project for each of the sites that had been explored since 1963, within a spread that celebrates the May Day Demonstrations [FIGURE 5.8]. As a haunting image condemned to roam the media, one of the *Architectural Review's* black-and-white interior views animates the closing lines: 'Today the Fun Palace is only the spark of an idea. It could flare into life in any place where there is enough enthusiasm and resourcefulness to fan it'.<sup>49</sup>

While Fun Palace headlines would soon grind to a halt in British press, Littlewood's persona continued to draw press attention. *The Observer's* 'Littlewood in Exile', 10 July, 1966, gave an account of her second summer school in Hammamet, Tunisia. For its part, the Fun Palace idea-in-exile would itself encounter a receptive readership in New York at a time when the development of Lincoln Center was underway. In January 1966, Ruth Inglis aired potential associations between the two projects in the architecture section of *Art in America*: 'Producer-director Joan Littlewood and architect Cedric Price have a dream about England's answer to Lincoln Center: a giant erector that changes its shape and changes its sites' - the double-page interior perspective drawing illustrates the argument.<sup>50</sup> *The New York Times'* arts columnist Grace Glueck would elaborate further in 'Art Notes: Flotsam, Not Jetsam', 23

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<sup>46</sup> Mathews, *From Agit-Prop to Free Space*, 164; Appendix F, 276.

<sup>47</sup> Judy Hillman, 'London's Palace of Fun has nowhere to go', *Evening Standard*, 3 March 1966.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> Jane McKerron, 'Who will support the Fun Palace', *Tribune*, 29 April 1966, 9.

<sup>50</sup> Ruth Inglis, 'Architecture: The Fun Palace', *Art in America*, vol 54, Jan-Feb 1966, p. 69-72.

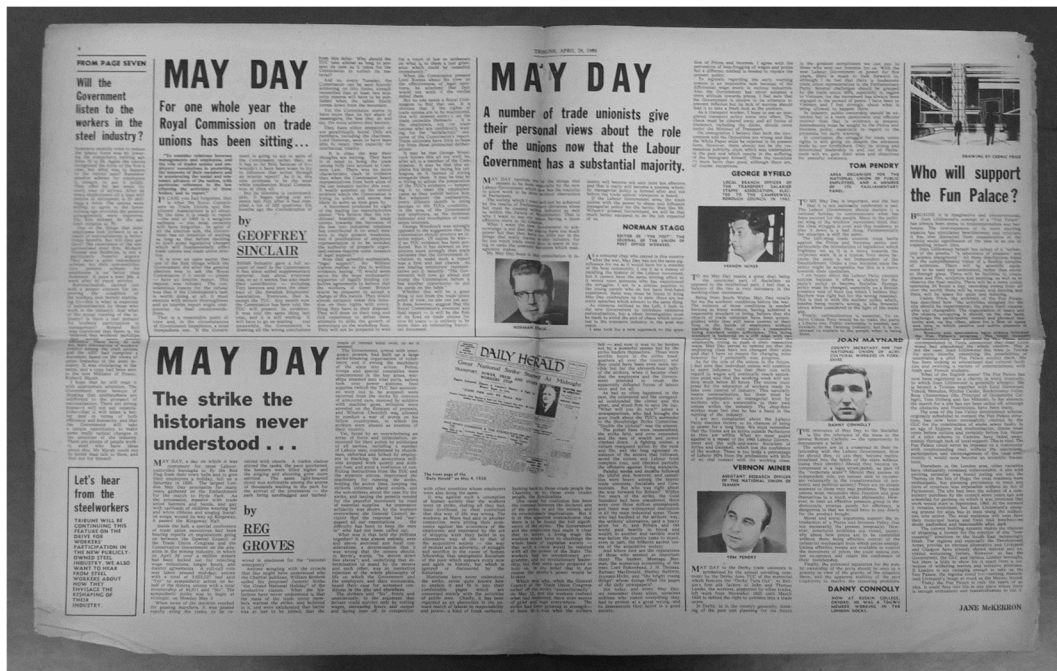


FIGURE 5.8: Jane McKerron, 'Who will support the Fun Palace', *Tribune*, 29 April 1966, 9.

January 1966: 'Who'll get the Fun Palace, the World's First Giant Space Mobile – London or New York? (...) Lincoln Centre the Fun palace isn't. Palacegoers will be able to do practically anything – and do it NOW- (...) Miss Littlewood's bubble has solid backing. F. P. trustees include Yehudi Menuhin, Buckminster Fuller and Lord Harewood. But so far, no Government OK. Price and Littlewood are pressing the authorities hard. They are convinced it will go up - and if necessary, somewhere else (...) "If we could find a site in New York..." says Price.'<sup>51</sup> A year later – with the Lincoln Center fully designed – the association between the two projects would be reiterated, if only in terms of their programme. Thus, *The Architects' Journal* titled their 10 January 1967 article on the Lincoln Center 'World: Fun Palace'. Alongside an axonometric drawing of the development, it reported: 'The new 29-floor office block is corny but in the fun palace itself (...) the architects, Charles Luckman Associates, have at least shown ingenuity in the vertical stacking of spaces. Above the new station (below the street level) are a 5000-seat "forum" for games or concerts, a 48-line bowling center and finally the new Madison Square Garden itself, seating over 20.000 spectators beneath a 425 ft. diameter clear span roof (...) The aesthetic impact will probably not be greater than that of the Bull Ring at Birmingham.'<sup>52</sup> From the 'monthly, cosmopolitan, intellectual, elitist' *Art in America* to the 'weekly, local, business-like, work-a-day' of *The Architects' Journal*,<sup>53</sup> as well as the elitist art section of *The New York Times'* Sunday paper, news of the Fun Palace of Joan Littlewood, even in exile, reached an ever-widening and diverse readership.

A powerful force itself, the news media wouldn't leave its readership indifferent to the stories, positions and arguments it presented. Commentary on the project would extend via the minor form of 'letters to the editor' sections in the papers. Controversial news would trigger responses by occasional engaged citizens, such as that by Richard Perry, SW12, on 17 February, 1965, which reacted to the *Evening Standard's* article, 'Joan's Fun Palace runs into trouble with residents', run five days earlier: 'Read with great weariness the report [February 12] of the Clearance Way Estate Residents Association and their protest against Joan Littlewood's Fun Palace. It is depressing to read about such a narrow-mindedness and snobbery – what's so exclusive about Camden Town anyway? – with the usual dreary catalogue of complaints about "undesirable elements". Good luck to Joan Littlewood. She might bring some life to an area which, if the residents had their way, would become another dead, dreary and "respectable" suburb'.<sup>54</sup> Concerns regarding the distinction between

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<sup>51</sup> Grace Glueck, 'Art Notes: Flotsam, Not Jetsam', *The New York Times*, 23 January 1966.

<sup>52</sup> 'World: Fun Palace', *The Architect's Journal*, 10 January 1967, 2.

<sup>53</sup> An observation appreciated by Banham in Reyner Banham and Penny Sparke, *Design by Choice* (London: Academy, 1981), 7.

<sup>54</sup> Richard Perry, Letter, *Evening Standard*, February 17, 1965. Folder DR1995:0188:525:003, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

entertainment and education made by Brian Lewis in his 'Fun Palace: Counterblast to Boredom', 15 April, were raised in the letters section of *New Society*. Cherity James from Goldsmith College, New Cross, London – one of the Fun Palace's educational committee members – criticized as 'paternalistic' and 'narrow psychology' the educational assumptions evinced by the Systems Research member, views which the letter-writer considered divergent from Littlewood's work in the theatre: 'Creative play makes for fun. Stimulus-response falsifies it. Mr Lewis has perhaps got his trademarks wrong'. General support would still resonate in the letters section of Glasgow papers in 1966, such as William MacLellan's 'St Enoch as a fun palace', in *The Glasgow Herald*, 24 October. Knowledgeable of the fate of the whole venture, this Glasgow publisher and cultural entrepreneur notes the already-metamorphosing Fun Palace idea of Littlewood, following the success achieved by her Fun Palace in Tunisia: 'The latest idea is to create a travelling fun palace on the lines of a circus which could visit city centers and demonstrate these possibilities. When Joan Littlewood addressed a meeting in Glasgow she said that a disused railway station with its large covered area would be ideal for her experiment. Why not ask her to consider St. Enoch site as a place to assemble her first travelling, what she now calls, "adult playground."'55

By 1966, having exhausted the means to materialize the Fun Palace either as the 'laboratory of pleasure' by the Thames or as the pilot designed for Camden, the idea faced the challenge, and also the opportunity, of radically redefining itself. What had been until then a joint venture of the so-called Fun Palace organization, became appropriated in different ways by both Littlewood and Price. While she would bring to focus the radical economy of the project within the local activism of Stratford Fair, Price, for his part, would permeate his active practice at the time with the technological impetus that shaped the project's open-ended agenda. Projects concurrent with the Fun Palace, such as the communication hub Oxford Corner House or the temporary exhibits designed for Sheffield Festival – and later initiatives such as the speculative Non-Plan research proposal and the built community center Inter Action, to mention just a few – all grew out of Fun Palace's culture of indeterminacy. The trace of the Fun Palace on the archival records of these projects is sometimes explicit in the archive, and at other times less overt but still detectable. Moreover, beyond Littlewood and Price, the impact that Fun Palace made through the press nurtured as well a diverse array of manifestations of the project in one form or another for decades to come. But none of these initiatives attracted the attention of British press as much as the major Fun Palace project had done.

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<sup>55</sup> William MacLellan, 'St Enoch as a fun palace', *The Glasgow Herald*, 24 October 1966. Folder DR1995:0188:525:003, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

## The construction of a media persona

The collection of press cuttings held in Price's archive reveals the major role that Fleet Street played in shaping the first public image of Fun Palace in the mid-60s – one upon which the project's realization in built form, had it been realized, would critically depend. Over and above, they introduce a key addressee of the work of the Fun Palace project: news media, and specifically the press. The minutes of a meeting held in Joan Littlewood's residence in Blackheath – where the interview for *Vogue* took place – between Cedric Price, the journalist and MP Tom Driberg, and Littlewood herself on 10 January, 1964, outlines the ambitious publicity strategy developed to that date and reveals the breadth of communicative modes strategized: '1. First announcement – Monitor programme [BBC] in April followed by article in *Sunday Citizen* by T.D [Tom Driberg]; 2. Comment in *Herald and Mail* - April 19<sup>th</sup> '63'; 3. Interview in *Telegraph* in July. It was then decided to hold back all publicity until a more concrete stage in planning is reached; 4. "Tonight" Programme [BBC] was abandoned at the risk of jeopardising the good will of Millwall tenants'; 5. Publicity has gone out in Greece, U.S.A, Japan, China, Vietnam, France in the last month; 6. University College Magazine interview; 7. Mention in *Vogue*; 8. Mention in *Architect's Journal*; 9. Article in *Architectural Design* coming up.' Following a list of several lectures by Price, the minutes continue, expanding the papers and magazines distributing the Fun Palace idea: '12. Articles in *New York Herald Tribune*, *Ark* (3 issues), *American Vogue* (...); 16. *New Scientist* – February 1<sup>st</sup>.<sup>56</sup> The minutes close by noting the graphic media of the film and booklet under development, which – along with photographic montages, drawings and the speech modes of the interview and the lecture – are all deployed as part of the comprehensive publicity strategy of the project at the time.

In fact, as the production of news was an integral part of the project's ambitious publicity strategy, so was its monitoring. Within this bulky collection of newspaper cuttings, copies of three records from 1963 note the employment of a well-established London press agency, Durrant's Press Cuttings [FIGURE 5.9]. Having been commissioned with monitoring the formation of the Fun Palace's public persona, this firm selected and collaged in a folio format the following news: 'Joan has her eye on a fun palace', from the weekly *East London Advertiser*, 14 June 1963; 'Pleasure park of rare design' from the daily *Bolton Evening News*, 1 May 1963; and 'Nonsense' row at drama conference' from *The Guardian's* Sunday

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<sup>56</sup> Folder DR1995:0188:525:001, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.



FIGURE 5.9: 'Joan has her eye on a fun palace', Durrant's Press Cuttings, 14 Jun 1963, folder DR1995:0188:525:003, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

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magazine *The Observer*, 8 Sept 1963. These cuttings invest the inchoate Fun Palace organization, formed at the time by Littlewood, Price and Driberg, with the role of clients. The note 'The Workshop' is hand-written over the header in the first of these cuttings. Operating in London since 1880, Durrant's Press Cuttings offered press monitoring to organisations and personalities with an interest in the construction of their public, mass-media personae, and most frequently acting professions. Newspaper cuttings are a specific modern discourse network, as the scholar Anke te Heesen argues in reference to Friedrich Kittler's media theory.<sup>57</sup> Heesen studies the cultural implications of these paper objects brought about by the industrialized mass-circulation newspaper. A crucial part of this discourse network is the organization of the bureaux that were established in major western cities such as London, Paris or New York, where interested customers for this modern global service were located. Employees, often women, scan-read the flow of information in search of defined keywords linked to the subject of interest. Selected pieces of information matching these keywords would be cut out and pasted in pre-printed corporate folios and delivered periodically to their customers. The ephemeral and cheap newspaper media would gain value and stability through the rudimentary but systematic techniques of scan-reading, cutting, pasting and periodic delivery, for a complete construction of the public persona under investigation could emerge – a 'collective singular', as Heesen describes it.

Alongside Durrant's Press Cuttings, Price and Littlewood would themselves work directly to construct this systematic information index of the project's public persona. They would write the editorial boards to collect any snippet of information on the Fun Palace disseminated in the press. As a letter from the *Stratford Express* states, dated ambiguously 11 April but possibly from 1966, and presumably written in response to a request by Price: 'I've asked the editor's secretary to send you two back copies of the *Stratford Express* containing items about Fun Palace. The issue July 24, 1964, contains a pretty comprehensive look at the Lea Valley scheme on pages 1 and 15, and the page 15 spread includes our first report about the Fun Palace. The December 4, 1964, issue includes a piece about Fun Palace on page 17'.<sup>58</sup> These press cuttings would be manipulated further in Price's office by collaging them into blank folio formats, with full reference to the newspaper name and the date added, and filed as a proto-information index. Additionally, some of the cuttings would be subject to further amendments [FIGURE 5.10]. Red boxes with annotations on translucent paper laid on top would mark relevant fragments of Fun Palace news for enlargement – perhaps up to 6

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<sup>57</sup> Anke te Heesen, 'News, Paper, Scissors: Clippings in the Sciences and Arts Around 1920' Lorraine Daston, *Things That Talk: Object Lessons from Art and Science* (New York: Zone Books, 2008), 297–328.

<sup>58</sup> Folder DR1995:0188:525:003, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

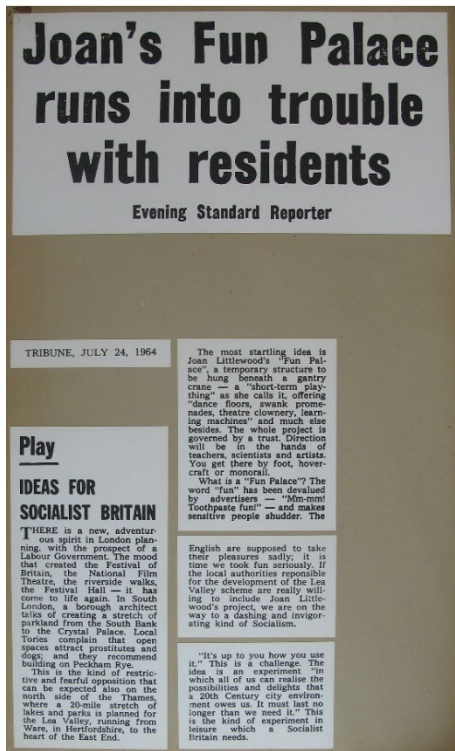


FIGURE 5.10: DR1995:0188:497 [left]; Folder DR1995:0188:525:003 [right], Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

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times, such as the one illustrated. Some of these augmented fragments would then be mounted on cardboard panels, possibly for further public presentation.

Price and Littlewood would fastidiously correspond with editors to contest inaccuracies in the information about the project, such as those related to authorship. A letter signed by Price to *The Times*' editor, dated 22 June, 1964, reads: 'In an article by your Estates Correspondent (16.6.64) on the Civic Trust's Lea Valley plan, a misleading reference was made to the above project [Fun Palace Project]. It inferred that as a result of a passing suggestion by Miss Joan Littlewood, the Civic trust has proposed a preliminary design. In fact, the Fun Palace project is under Joan Littlewood's direct control. Work on the complex itself is at an advanced stage in the offices of the Architect and the Consulting Engineers, and the design is such that various sites are equally applicable (...) Would you please be kind enough to publish a correction'.<sup>59</sup> Astragal's review of Archigram's Living City exhibition, to which we have already referred, ignited Price's indignation at the suggestion that the blank city pictured in the show could anticipate the Fun Palace – and this after opining that the latter suffered from 'pomposity'. 'With reference to 'Astragal's comments on Joan Littlewood's Fun Palace for which I am the architect' – Price replied – 'I would like to say, from the bottom of my arse, how deeply I appreciate his timely warning.'<sup>60</sup>

The Fun Palace's collection of press cuttings dutifully represents the construction of the first public image of the project by means of the British press. As a collection, this material speaks for the specific cultural conditions and constitutive practices that Littlewood, Price and Driberg encountered during its production. In considering the historical development of the modern means and institutions of communication, Raymond Williams argued that these cultural conditions were firstly to do with an expanding press readership in relation to theatre and cinemas, and with the competition for advertising revenue between the press and commercial broadcasting services.<sup>61</sup> National Sunday papers were at the time not far from doubling the circulation of daily papers, with figures for 1961 of 24,536,000 for the former and 15,812,000 for the latter.<sup>62</sup> Secondly, this rising readership was exposed to two specific structural patterns at the time, namely, the increasing dependence on commercial advertising revenue and the developing monopolist structure of ownership. Four corporations – Beaverbrook Newspapers, Reed International-IPC, News International and Associated Newspapers – controlled over eighty per cent of the morning daily press, Sunday papers, the two London evening papers, provincial press, women magazines and other

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<sup>59</sup> Folder DR1995:0188:525:002:003, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

<sup>60</sup> Mathews, *From Agit-Prop to Free Space*, 88.

<sup>61</sup> Williams, *Communications*, 21; 23.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid*, 20.

kinds of periodicals.<sup>63</sup> Editorial contents and advertising would progressively converge to appeal to target customers, and with it – argued Williams – the public use of the press would be diminished in favour of private, profit-driven interests: ‘The organization of communications is then not for use, but for profit (...) To set selling above it may seem normal, but is only a perversion to which some people have got used: a way of looking at the world which must be right and normal because you have cut yourself down to its size.’<sup>64</sup>

Thus, between 1963 and 1966, the production of Fun Palace news would be tailored to the expanding readership of British press by means of the practice of publicity, one that had to navigate the monopolist and commercial tendencies that Williams described. These involved practices of editing the content and format of news, which were shaped by the advertising that sponsored them. As demanded by a world impelled by publicity, the Fun Palace sets out to market its image-as-news in relation to the eyes of its readership. But how could an idea-without-referent, such as the Fun Palace, do so? Taking as an example the Fun Palace coverage in *The Sunday Times* during the summer of 1964, we can see how the image of the project is split between the cautious mention it receives within Littlewood’s portrait in ‘Joan Littlewood by Frank Norman’ and the detailed description it achieved in ‘Sin Centres and Fun Palaces’ by Priscilla Chapman, within the span of three weeks. The Fun Palace image borrows from the relative position it occupies between the force of Littlewood’s personality and productions – as embodied in the opening cartoon in the former – and the programmatic analogy with Mike Webb’s Sin Centre attempted in the later, without punch-cards but with a closing photograph of Sin Centre’s model, ready to lend plural fun palaces a form. Both in full-colour pages, these pictures mingle within a flow of half or full-colour page advertising of luxury products such as smart clothing, drinks, cigarettes and air travel. Crucially, these commercial sponsors are dialectically related to the project’s image attempted in *The Sunday Times*. Not only do the advertisements reflect the desires and aspirations of the paper’s target audience but, more importantly, these reveal the extent to which the culture of publicity dominates the social experience of the British public at the time, one which the Fun Palace project targets. In becoming news, the Fun Palace exposes mass media as a key constitutive social practice, one that transforms ordinary life into an image cut to its size. Yet, the Fun Palace submits to publicity practices in order not only to target a mass public. At the same time it issues a challenge to the medium itself through the friction that the project’s news inscribes in the pages of *The Sunday Times*, stuffed with advertisements. For these radical news interrupt the convergence of advertising and editorial content that William denounces.

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid, 18–19.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid, 25.

Going further in his analysis, Williams proposed active ways to fight the mercantilization of the British press by means of the critical effect of specific modes of writing. Beyond the traditional essay, he argued for the letter to the editor along with the minute, as active means of communication within any healthy cultural democracy: 'We need to practise' – claims Williams – '(...) such forms as committee discussion, the verbal report, or the detailed questioning of a speech. Similarly, in writing, we need to practise not only the essay, but also the written report, the memorandum and minutes (...) We could do with regular practice in all kinds of correspondence - the letter of protest to the local paper as often as the acknowledgement of your 'kind favor' (...) It would be something if we could learn to write to each other, on official or business occasions, in ways compatible with a self-respecting democratic society.'<sup>65</sup>

The multidimensional labour involved in turning the Fun Palace idea into news – the outcome of which is the collection of press cuttings under study – inscribes Williams' forms of critical writing. For these are practices aimed at constructing an educated and participatory democracy in Britain 1960s within mass media itself. Words formatted in quotations, enlarged into headlines and bounced in letters sections – rather than drawings for experts – ignited the imagination of a society that had been slotted into marketable readership. Crucially, these delegates of the Fun Palace went out to challenge the institution of the press itself. And they did so – at least if we are to tell both from the contested responses gathered explicitly through commentary in those letters sections, and also implicitly, from the shift in the horizon of expectations about what constitutes news in the headlines of the bulky collection of cuttings. For, as those pasted on the board of the figure illustrate [FIGURE 5.10], what constitutes an extraordinary event – and thus, deserving news status – evolves in less than 7 months from the possible realization of the project in 'Play. Ideas for a socialist Britain', 24 July 1964, to its negation in 'Joan's Fun Palace runs into trouble with residents', 12 February 1965. The imagination of the British reader runs the same route in reverse, namely, the ordinary state of things – that which is not news – develops from a life not poised by the Fun Palace idea to one that did, but has just lost it. As the Fun Palace's troubles became news, the project had gained a place in the collective imagination of Britons. These two kinds of response – the direct protest in editorials by engaged citizens and the indirect expectations mirrored in the news' valences – best convey the material affects that the Fun Palace image actually disseminates within the press to challenge the seizure that mass media imposes upon British ordinary life.

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid, 142–43.

The Fun Palace had become for Londoners between 1963 and 1966 a media event navigating the cultural politics of British press. Its intense dissemination of the Fun Palace in wider press contrasts with its timid reporting in specialized journals during the same period, whether those were related to theatre or architecture. By 1964, conscious of the success of the project's publicity strategy, Littlewood suggests that Price shares his Potteries Thinkbelt project under development with the local press in a note written on a cover of the proof of the *New Scientist's* 'A Laboratory of Fun': 'that boy *must* get his PTB in local pot-press tell him.'<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Folder DR1995:0188:525:002:004, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

## Chapter 6: Scholarly Discourse

### The Alterity of Indeterminacy, 1960s and early 1970s

The scholarly appreciation of Fun Palace developed later than the press interest in the project. During 1964 the architectural media inscribed the project within the pressing question of how to think about the increased leisure, possibilities afforded by automation. Thus, writing for the *Architectural Association Journal* in September of that year, Stephen Tietz offered a brief summary of the current state of 'Buildings for Pleasure and Leisure', including the Fun Palace, Mike Webb's Sin Centre, Arnold Wesker's Centre 42 and Rodney Pickering's Liverpool Joy Centre. Presented as an alternative to the organized leisure of official cultural policy, as embodied in the development of the South Bank's 'Metropolitan Arts Centre', with the Hayward Gallery and Queen Elizabeth Hall between 1960 and 1968,<sup>1</sup> the article describes rather than critically appraises the Fun Palace's programmatic critique of mid-century modern architecture's aesthetics and methods.

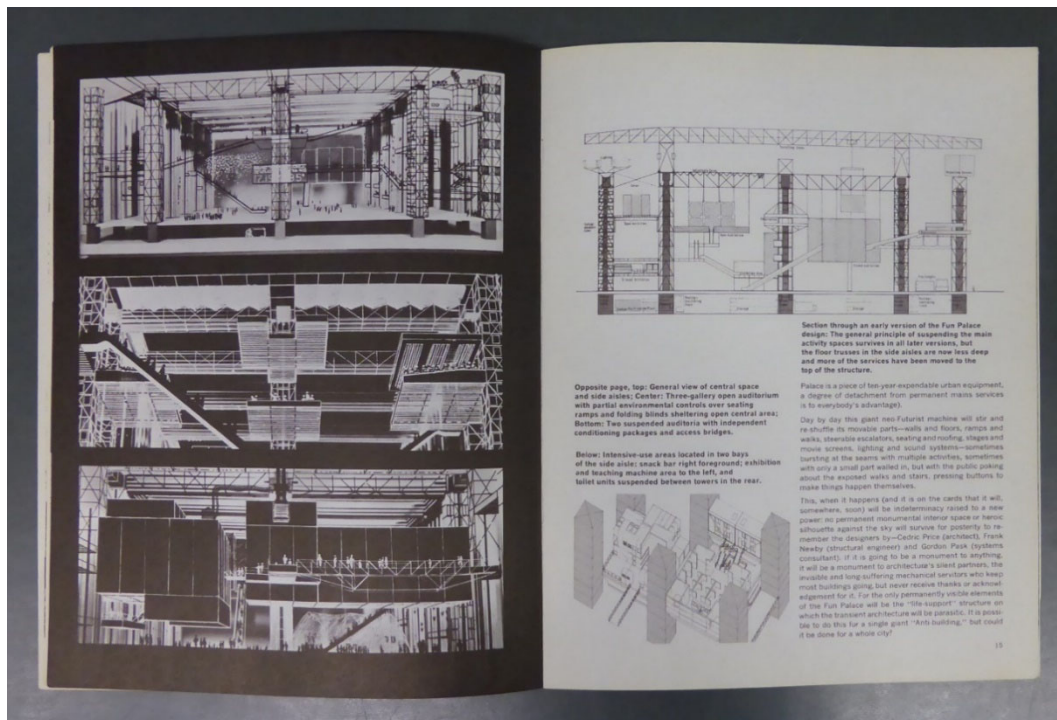
However, the concept of radical – or 'anti' – architecture that invests the project even today, was first elaborated, wittily and euphorically, by Banham in *Design Quarterly*, June 1965. His article, 'Clip-On Architecture', situated the Fun Palace as a readily-to-be-built example of British 'architecture of indeterminate form', then an inchoate history which the paper investigates.<sup>2</sup> Alongside the Fun Palace, Banham introduces visualizations of Archigram's projects Plug-In City and Montreal Expo Entertainments Tower – the latter revisits the television tower with a prefabricated core designed by Peter Cook for Taylor Woodrow Construction in 1963 - images disseminated in the little magazine *Archigram*. Banham's discourse located the Fun Palace and the visions of Archigram as a nascent technologically-infused components of a urban system that presaged an alternative path to the architecture of well-established practices such as Stirling and Gowan or the Smithsons.

Banham's genealogy of architectural expressions of indeterminacy begins with the neutral, repetitive aesthetic of US factory facades of the early 1950s, pregnant with technological

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<sup>1</sup> Designed by Warren Chalk, Ron Herron and Denis Crompton, while they worked for the London County Council and before Archigram group was formed.

<sup>2</sup> Reyner Banham and Walker Art Center, *A Clip-on Architecture* (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 1965), 3.



**FIGURE 6.1:** Reyner Banham, Clip-On Architecture, *Design Quarterly*, June 1965, 14-15.

potential. Indeed, Gerhard Kallman had already praised these in the *Architectural Review*, fifteen years earlier, for their overcoming of the singular and hierarchical in favour of the anonymous and undifferentiated.<sup>3</sup> The idea, according to Banham, developed in Britain through the extended plans of the Park Hill public housing project in Sheffield and the façade of Northwick Park Hospital in Greater London area, but also in the generative *schema* of cell with services implied in the Smithson's House of the Future. As Banham claims, closing the article: 'We started with Kallman making cautious propositions about what technology might do to aesthetics; we finish with aesthetics offering to give technology its marching orders, while magazines and pundits around the world wait for the word from London. No one – least of all the modest types who produce the magazine – wants to exaggerate the importance of *Archigram*, but its growing international reputation, backed by the threat of a real live Fun Palace (pilot scheme due later this year) suggests that the English contribution to the architecture of indeterminacy has now reached the point where its progress is worth recording'.<sup>4</sup>

Exuberant with images, the article recirculates three of the *Architectural Review's* photomontages, along with the typical plan and section, the *New Scientist's* two-bay axonometric drawing and an additional axonometric study of equipment for a lateral bay module of the complex [FIGURE 6.1]. These are foregrounded by two drawings of the Camden Pilot project that were issued for the first time, an exploration of potential usages of the project's inflatable components in a diagrammatic aerial view and a glimpse of the scene in use. Interestingly, Banham's map of architectures of indeterminacy edits out the kind of drawings that more closely convey the technological ambition of the project, namely, the Fun Palace grids. For these supporting grids made the claim of indeterminacy possible. Instead, the Fun Palace photomontages would establish the image of anti-architecture in the scholarly reception of the project, even if these simulated interiors seem to compromise the uncertainty built into the design process in favour of a definite architectural expression. Relentless travellers, one of these photomontages animated the pamphlet of Peter Cook's International Dialogue of Experimental Architecture (IDEA), a two-day international symposium and exhibition held at the New Metropole Arts Centre, Folkestone, in June 1966. The event provided a forum for discussion about the design preoccupations and techniques embedded in emergent critical architecture in an international context – for these radical visions of the city and emergent technologies challenged the stasis of the CIAM canon for modern architecture.<sup>5</sup> Along with Price's and Archigram's experiments in expendability,

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<sup>3</sup> Gerhard Kallman, 'Man Made America', *Architectural Review*, December 1950, in Reyner Banham, 'Clip-On Architecture', *Design Quarterly*, June 1965, 4.

<sup>4</sup> Banham, *A Clip-on Architecture*, 30.

<sup>5</sup> IDEA Folkestone, The Archigram Archival Project, <http://archigram.westminster.ac.uk/project.php?id=83>

contributors included the Reyner Banham and architects such as Paolo Soleri, Yona Friedman, the Japanese Metabolists, Hans Hollein, Paul Virilio and Claude Parent's Architecture Principe, Buckminster Fuller, and Frei Otto, amongst others. Aspects of the critical reception of this range of architectures of indeterminacy can be gathered from Bernard Huet's review circulated in the official publication for the student league of the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux Arts (ENSBA), which reported Yona Friedman's 'dismaying naiveté in order to justify several formal ideas' and Claude Parent and Paul Virilio's 'display of retrograde formalist and reactionary ideas' that apparently bore little relation to those of the rest of contributors.<sup>6</sup>

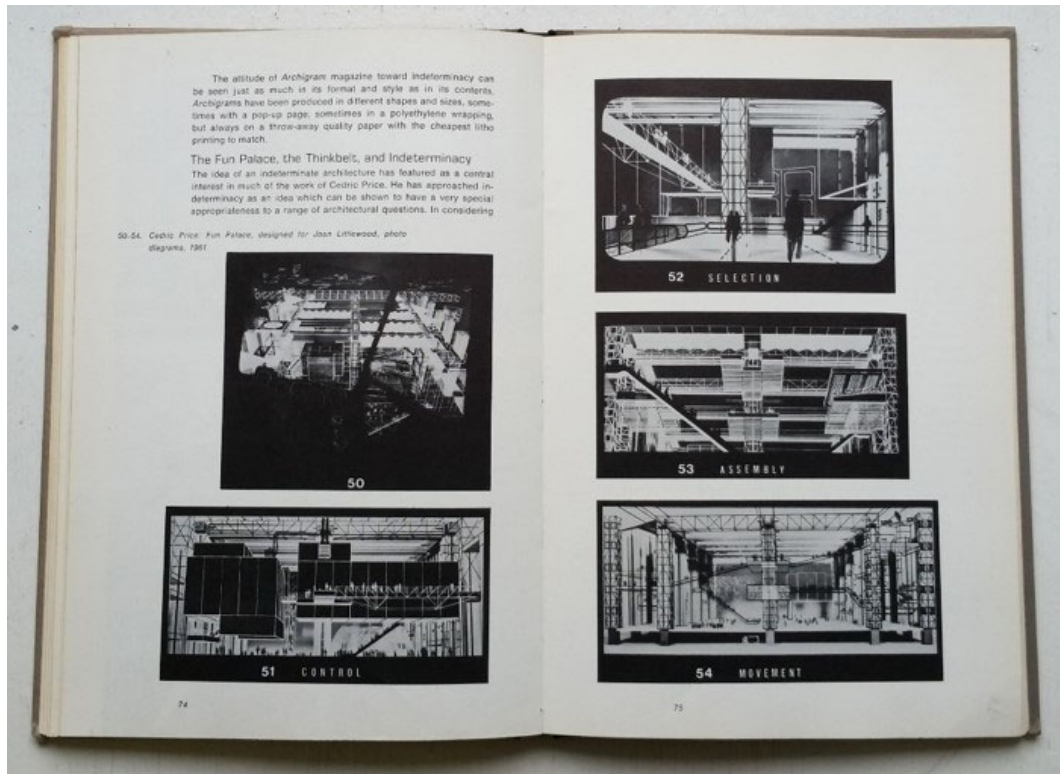
However, Price's responsive design aimed to surpass the graphic form of these speculations and to effect a change in concurrent planning debates. Thus, he introduced his strategy of 'calculated uncertainty' as an alternative to the undesirable closure caused by overly predictive planning in the conference 'Planning for Diversity and Choice: Possible Futures and their Relations to the Man-Controlled Environment' organized by Stanford Anderson at MIT in October 13-16, 1966. Price argued amidst planners and social scientists that designing for 'calculated uncertainty (is) concerned (...) with an order that we establish for progress that doesn't have, and never wants, a particular goal in any physical terms. If, in fact, the generative force of architecture should be calculated change, then the question of planned obsolescence employed in the artifactual act is primarily what I am suggesting. Therefore, I am convinced that the valid social life of the activity that one is asked to shelter or encourage is the governing factor of whatever is produced; and that need not always be a building'.<sup>7</sup>

In 1968, the book *New Directions in British Architecture* by historian Royston Landau would register Price's work to date as an expression of the indeterminate, theory-informed approaches to planning, which by means of informational technologies challenged the concurrent deterministic master planning of New Towns since the Abercrombie era. Alongside Price's work, non-deterministic planning was evident, in Landau's view, in the infrastructural grid of Colin Buchanan's Southampton-Portsmouth City, 1966, in the abstraction of Lionel March's diagrams for the 'City Federation alternative building distributions', 1967, and in the range of capsules and plug-in habitats drawn by Archigram amongst other. Landau expands his survey of relevant situations for architecture to note the different information systems through audio-visual aids, including data banks, video tapes,

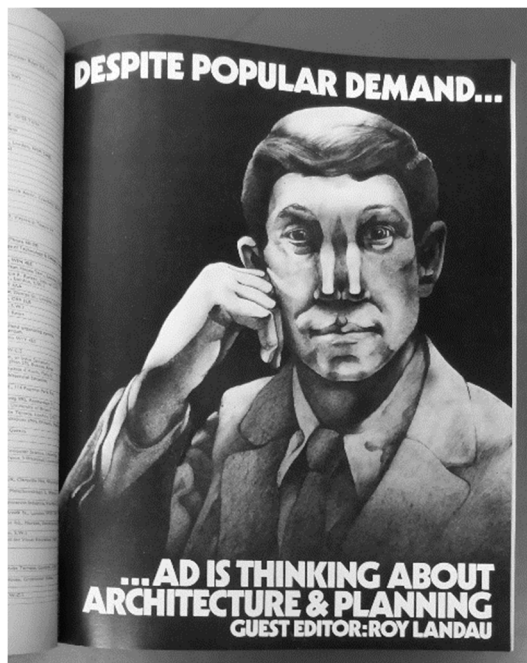
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<sup>6</sup> Larry Busbea, *Topologies: The Urban Utopia in France, 1960-1970* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2007), 101.

<sup>7</sup> Anderson, *Planning for Diversity and Choice*, 286.



**FIGURE 6.2:** Royston Landau, 1968, *New Directions in British Architecture*, 74-75.



**FIGURE 6.3:** Royston Landau, 'Despite Popular Demand... AD is Thinking About Architecture & Planning', *Architectural Design*, September 1969, cover.

films and micro slides instantaneously retrievable and transmittable, that were being implemented by public institutions to disseminate knowledge in the classroom. Among these were the pioneer educational programme led by the Educational Department of Glasgow Corporation in 1963, consisting of linking up schools by closed-circuit television,— an institution that had been actively involved in producing educational films, as well as documentaries on the corporation’s civic assets and practices since 1930s<sup>8</sup> – and the ambitious Open University, then called the ‘University of the Air’, promoted by the Department of Education and Science under the leadership of Jennie Lee in 1965 and established in 1969.

Landau establishes the thesis that information and communication technology will radically transform architecture into non-architecture, and illustrates the argument of an architecture *autre* with a similar selection of Fun Palace images to that which had appeared in Banham’s paper three years earlier, thus including the photomontages and the typical plan and section in full pages. He now adds the Potteries Thinkbelt and Oxford Corner House’s information hub alongside a range of new Archigram productions and Banham and Dallagret’s *The Environment-Bubble*. Not only do Price’s projects play a remarkable animating role in the book, but his lexicon also leaks into Landau’s closing remarks describing both the means and ends of these ‘not-architectures’: ‘the certainty which was a part of the classically discrete programme has moved towards a fluid but calculated uncertainty / So if architecture is becoming mathematical at one level and anti-building at another, perhaps it should be classified as not architecture (...) but this would signify that it had taken a New Direction’.<sup>9</sup> Like Banham’s clip-on history, Landau’s analysis focuses on the technological ambitions embedded in each project, but leaves unquestioned the collective, corporate, or individual conditions of their production. Thus, the complex thickness of the Fun Palace production appears somehow levelled, by thinning out both its commentary and the illustrations chosen, with the more personal research that Price carried for Potteries Thinkbelt and Oxford Corner House’s feasibility study.

Landau would pursue further his investigation into the alterity that indeterminacy could bring to architecture and planning in two editorial projects for *Architectural Design*. Aiming to establish a ‘wide multidisciplinary’ forum for discussion capable of changing attitudes and points of view, the first of these editorial projects, ‘Despite Popular Demand... AD is Thinking about Architecture and Planning’, September 1969, presented papers on the philosophy of science – such as Karl Popper’s ‘On Clocks and Clouds’ and Imre Lakatos’ ‘Sophisticated

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<sup>8</sup> Elizabeth Lebas, ‘Glasgow’s Progress: The Films of Glasgow Corporation 1938-1978’, *Film Studies*, 2007, 34-53.

<sup>9</sup> Royston Landau, *New Directions in British Architecture* (New York: G. Braziller, 1968), 115.

Versus Naïve Methodological Falsification’ – with others more specifically addressing the articulation of information sciences and architecture. Among these was Gordon Pask’s ‘The Architectural Relevance of Cybernetics’, a key paper which designates the Fun Palace as a model for the new design paradigm driven by cybernetics – one conceiving of architecture as an interactive and evolving system. In 1972, Landau’s editorial project ‘Complexity’, for the same magazine, published Price’s paper ‘Approaching an Architecture of Approximation’, in which he criticized the fragmentary approach to the planning of British New Towns as ‘a staccato movement (of) intermittent but sequential change’, which misses the ‘constructive complexity of continuity of process’.<sup>10</sup> The alternative Price put forward was the joint research proposal Non-Plan, developed alongside Reyner Banham, Peter Hall and Paul Barker and first presented in *New Society*, 1969, as one that integrates ‘doubt’ and is open to reassessing the whole order of given priorities. The radical deregulation suggested by the group found its inspiration in the spontaneity of the ordinary American suburban sprawl – one which Banham encountered in 1965 Los Angeles. Dismissing formalizations into building form once more, Price concludes by affirming the ephemeralization and economy built-in his non-plan thesis, ‘preventive – not curative architecture. How little need be known before action is worthwhile – not how much’.<sup>11</sup>

The optimistic and pragmatic idea of technology as means to engage uncertainty and facilitate delight in society turned, by the end of the Sixties, into a more critical appraisal of the social failure of its subservience to profit and power. The ever-present existential fear of the Cold War era saturated the pages of Alvin Toffler’s *Future Shock* and Jeff Nuttall’s *Bomb Culture*, both published at the turn of the decade. Toffler’s title referred to ‘the shattering stress and disorientation that we induce in individuals by subjecting them to too much change in too short a time’.<sup>12</sup> The Fun Palace was one of the collection of cultural manifestations of such social distress, a powerful image of the transient society that compounded Toffler’s *Future Shock*. Discussing with Toffler the traditional function of art as constructor of poetic metaphors that organise human experience – a role increasingly taken over by other agencies at the time such as media – artist John McHale appraised *Future Shock* as ‘a very tightly organized metaphoric set (of) those series of images which conformed to people’s experience around the world (...) [Future Shock] put them’ – the people – ‘into a larger Gestalt. So in that sense it is not really about the future, it is about the

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<sup>10</sup> Cedric Price, ‘Approaching Architecture of Approximation’ Royston Landau, ‘Complexity and Complexing’, *Architectural Design*, October 1972, 645–46.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, 646.

<sup>12</sup> Toffler, *Future Shock*, 1.

present.<sup>13</sup> For his part, Nuttall directly acknowledged nuclear self-destruction as the vector of violence in contemporary cultural experience. Addressed specifically to the readers of *Architectural Design*, Nuttall's 'Technology for What?', published in 1972, advised how technology had become an autonomous and abstract force ill-suited to cater for human joy and delight. 'A person's mystery requires a margin of uncertainty in its environment' – argues Nuttall's in resonance with the ambition of the Fun Palace project, although without naming it – 'whereby it can retain its own ambiguity; and indulgence of these ambiguities is called adventure and discovery; it is the source of animation, the prerequisite of joy and delight'.<sup>14</sup>

The uneasy association between the visionary and pragmatic responses to non-deterministic planning since Banham's Clip-on paper, namely those by Archigram and by Buchanan's report *Traffic in Towns* respectively, would be subject to intense interrogation at the turn of the decade. Megastructures that were being built had already been critically appraised in articles such as Peter Hall's 'Monumental Folly', *New Society*, October 1968, for the clearance that these oversized constructions effected in the fabric of British towns: 'what is happening in the name of planning, therefore, is the complete destruction of a landscape, and of a tradition of building which made English cities different from other cities'. Alongside Buchanan's realizations, Hall also draws up charges against the flaws of the megastructural fiction circulating in architectural magazines: 'This new generation [of architects] are devoted to preparing megastructures. Megastructures are difficult to describe, they have to be seen, but basically they are like everything in Montreal's Expo 67 rolled into one and built about a mile high. They are auto-destructive (important word, that) and auto-renewing, through the agency of giant machines which perpetually roll up and down within them, ultimately controlled by giant computers (...) The misplaced notions of the last decade will have produced enough monuments to folly to nag us for the rest of our lifetimes.'<sup>15</sup> Despite Hall's interest in exploring modes of loosening planning legislation in Britain, which he pursued through the speculative proposal jointly conceived with Price, Banham, and *New Society* editor Paul Barker 'Non-Plan: An Experiment in Freedom', 1969, he was disenchanted by the limited freedom afforded by megastructural rhetoric. Critiques such as those raised in Alan Colquhoun's 'Typology and Design Method', published in *Arena* in 1967, a journal published by the Architectural Association, had similarly anticipated the iconic power of these representations: 'Those in the field of design who were – and are – preaching pure technology and so-called objective design method as a sufficient and necessary means of

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<sup>13</sup> The Future and the Functions of Art - A Conversation Between Alvin Toffler and John McHale (Feb, 1973) John McHale, *The Expendable Reader: Articles on Art, Architecture, Design, and Media* (1951-79), ed. Alex Kitnick Afterword by Mark Wigley (Columbia Books on Architecture and the City, 2011), 194.

<sup>14</sup> Jeff Nuttall, 'Technology for what', in *Architectural Design*, 5/1972, 318

<sup>15</sup> Peter Hall, 'Monumental Folly', *New Society* 12, no. 317 (24 October 1968): 602–3.

producing environmental devices, persistently attribute iconic power to the creations of technology, which they worship to a degree inconceivable in a scientist (...) [I]t was in the power of all artefacts to become icons, no matter whether or not they were specifically created for this purpose.’<sup>16</sup>

It would be Canadian architect Melvin Charney who explicitly referred to Fun Palace when appraising the cultural role of these megastructural image-constructions beyond their scientific grounds in *Landscape*, Spring 1967. Charney claims that although the real performance of their mechanical base is obsolete when considered against current developments in other fields, these technological simulations envision new models of human organization that build-in probability to their performance: ‘the experimental megastructure and the plug-inville architecture are not ready-made environments but simulations of the physical form of new processes of human organization which are evident both in the way people live and in the possibilities of technology. In terms of new technology this work seeks to redefine some of the fundamental values which have marked every form of human settlement’.<sup>17</sup> ‘They are exciting because they oppose processes that inhibit the full articulation of technology’.<sup>18</sup> Illustrating Charney’s argument, the same Fun Palace photomontage that circulated in Cook’s pamphlet, along with an axonometric of one of the transfer areas of Price’s Potteries Thinkbelt project and a page of *Archigram* 6 on plug-ins, was set against a photo of the rear rack of the computer RCA Spectra 70 and an emergency unit transported by helicopter in Vietnam retrieved from a 1966 issue of *Life* magazine.

In the aftermath of May 1968, the architectural realizations of the rhetoric of informational technologies that permeated the design of the Sixties – which Landau supported, Hall denounced for the devastation they caused to the existing fabric of British cities, and Charney and Colquhoun uncovered as cultural analogues – would be further challenged. On the one hand, at events such as the conference Utopia y/o Revolution in Turin 1969<sup>19</sup>, Marxian critics argued against their flawed ideological positions, while positions informed by semiotics on the other, challenged their claims of value-free, objective design when examined as communicative events. What would mobilize scholarship between 1969 and 1993 was, as Michael Hays has argued, the mediation by theory – critical theory, semiotics and post-structuralism – of the methods of architectural criticism and historiography. Reflecting the two positions mentioned earlier, texts written in 1969 open Hay’s anthology *Architecture Theory Since 1968*. The first of these, Manfredo Tafuri’s seminal text ‘Toward a

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<sup>16</sup> Alan Colquhoun, ‘Typology & Design Method’, in Charles Jencks and George Baird, *Meaning in Architecture* (New York: Braziller, 1970), 268.

<sup>17</sup> Charney, ‘Environmental Conjecture: In the Jungle of the Grand Prediction’, 317.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, 326.

<sup>19</sup> Elena Dellapiana, ‘“Architettura e/o Rivoluzione” up at the Castle. A Self-Convended Conference in Turin, April, 25, 1969’, *Histories of Postwar Architecture* 1, no. 2 (12 September 2018).

Critique of Architectural Ideology', concludes with a declaration of the impossibility of an emancipatory architecture in a situation in which capitalist articulation commands the formalization of the discipline and prunes the agency of the architect in the social transformation the city. Post-structuralist critiques by French sociologist Jean Baudrillard, founder of the cross-disciplinary group Utopie in France in the mid-Sixties add to Tafuri's critique of architectural ideology. Baudrillard's conceptualization of simulacra animated the critical examination of the megastructural ideology as represented in the Center George Pompidou built in 1977.<sup>20</sup> As for the second of these positions, George Baird's "La Dimension Amoureuse" in Architecture' – a paper drawn, along with Colquhoun's, from the collection of essays *Meaning in Architecture* edited by Baird and Charles Jencks – explicitly addressed Price's Potteries Thinkbelt to criticize how its rhetoric of purely utilitarian design rendered the project vacuous of architectural meaning, and thus disengaged from any kind of audience.

Price would often ignore commentaries from architectural peers such as Baird, for his interests were rather in the dynamics of everyday cultures. Instead, it would be Banham who shrugged off Baird's objections to the objectification of occupants in the Potteries Thinkbelt project. Banham replies to Baird: "Life-conditioning" is little different to what is generally understood as 'life –support'. Baird's uninformed sarcasm and much of his argument therefore falls to the ground (but was well worth publishing as a clinical example of the Pavlovian response of certain academics to anything they suspect of Pavlovian or Behaviourist tendencies). Far from treating the occupants of buildings as "objects", Price pays them the compliment of treating them as independent-minded adults capable of ordering their own environments.<sup>21</sup>

It is within this contest that Cook's recollection in present tense and shallow critique of some of the visionary projects that populate his *Experimental Architecture* in 1970 may feel outdated, for even Banham's wholehearted support to the megastructural discourse of the 1960s would grind down at the turn of the decade, to admit by 1972 that 'the megastructure is dead and time has come to write its history'.<sup>22</sup> Unlike Cook's limited account of the project, the Fun Palace would become a key protagonist in Banham's 1976 account of the flexibility: 'The reasons why British alone seem prone to finnick over detailing are diverse

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<sup>20</sup> Conference 'Utopia e/o Rivoluzione', Turin, 1969. In Deyong, S., 'Memories of the Urban Future', in Terence Riley, *The Changing of the Avant-Garde: Visionary Architectural Drawings from the Howard Gilman Collection* (The Museum of Modern Art; D.A.P./Distributed Art Publishers, 2002), 24.

<sup>21</sup> Jencks and Baird, *Meaning in Architecture*, 81.

<sup>22</sup> Sarah Deyong, 'Memories of the Urban Future: The Rise and Fall of the Megastructure', in Riley, *The Changing of the Avant-Garde: Visionary Architectural Drawings from the Howard Gilman Collection*, 30.

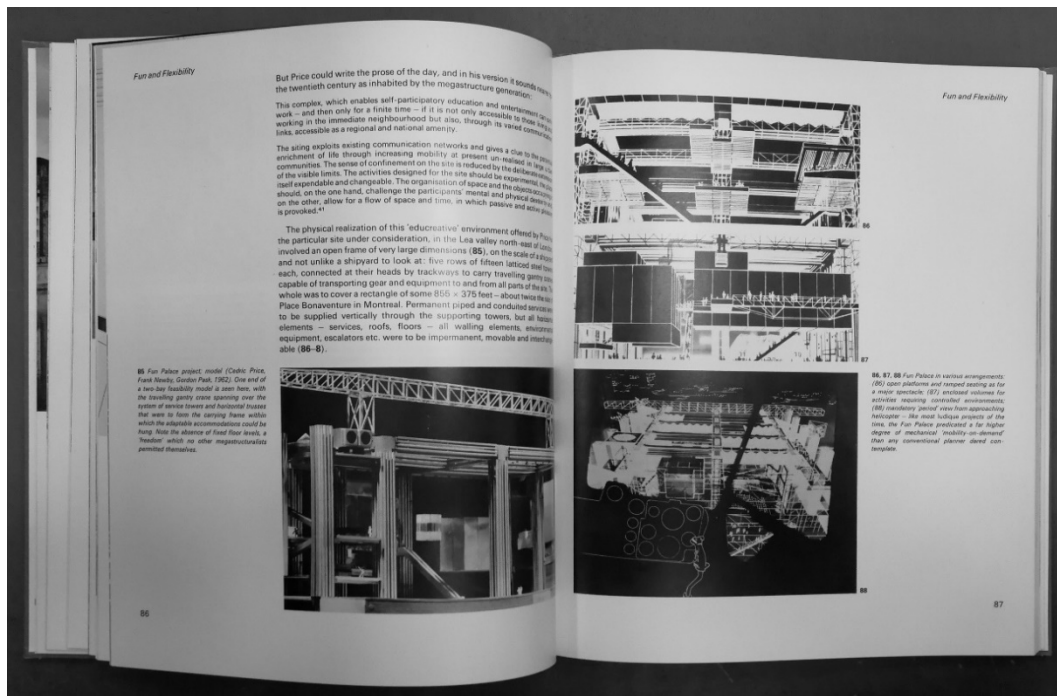


FIGURE 6.4: Reyner Banham, 1976, *Megastructure: Urban Futures of the Recent Past*, 86-87.

megastructure phenomenon [FIGURE 6.4]. Its integrity was for Banham related to the way the remarkable degree of development that the project achieved by 1964 kept its conceptual and often personal, but do seem somewhat connected to a national tendency to take refuge from ideology in pragmatics. Even so, it must be recognized that the Fun Palace (...) had to be taken to the point of detailed structural calculations and the satisfaction of fire regulations, while *Archigram*, by contrast, seemed to be motivated by sheer manic pleasure in proliferating drawings. In either case, the absence of any explicit ideology was found disturbing, or at least baffling, outside Britain.<sup>23</sup>

To illustrate the buildability that distinguishes the Fun Palace from the images of Archigram, Banham chose a photograph of the Fun Palace model, not yet disseminated in press alongside two of the interior photomontages and that of the helicopter aerial view of the complex – all drawn directly upon photographs of this model. The caption reads: ‘Fun Palace Project; model (Cedric Price, Frank Newby, Gordon Pask, 1962) One end of a two-bay feasibility model is seen here, with the travelling gantry crane spanning over the system of service towers and horizontal trusses that were to form the carrying frame within which the adaptable accommodations could be hung. Note the absence of fixed floor levels, a ‘freedom’ which no other megastructuralists permitted themselves.’<sup>24</sup> For its part, the journey travelled by Archigram – from Cook’s infrastructural Entertainment Tower for Montreal Expo (1963, 1967), Webb’s Sin Centre (1958), and Cook’s Plug-In City (1964), to Herron’s later Oasis (1968) and the range of autonomous capsule-assemblies that members of the group produced such as Webb’s Drive-In home (1966) or Green’s Cushicle (1968) – Banham advises not to take ideologically in response to the critiques that international megastructures had accrued such as Tafuri’s, but as ‘British graphic opportunism.’<sup>25</sup> Their role was that of steering a shift in focus from hardware to software by megastructural rhetoric. Peter Cook’s *Experimental Architecture* conveyed this transformation of design focus from the larger structural frameworks towards the more ephemeral and the fragmentary interventions when he selected for illustration the finer urban integration achieved by Camden Pilot modular plan: ‘since it tucks itself in among a railway viaduct and a piece of unwanted land surrounded by public housing’.<sup>26</sup> For Banham instead, the strength of the Fun Palace lays in its sufficient ‘detailing’ as well as its ability to retain its conceptual mobility. For it is such technical competence of the Fun Palace the one which prevents on the one hand, the kind of critiques raised upon New Babylon’s massive ludique environments and the under defined participatory modes implied in them according to fellow

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<sup>23</sup> Banham, *Megastructure*, 84.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, 86.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*, 101.

<sup>26</sup> Cook, *Experimental Architecture*, 141–42.

situationists, who perceived them as having surrendered to consumerism.<sup>27</sup> On the other hand, the flexibility that the technology of the Fun Palace allows for challenges the polyvalent yet static space of Centre Pompidou, whose fixed floors were by 1976 under construction.<sup>28</sup>

Banham would not refer to the Fun Palace but to Archigram when discussing the late megastructural efforts of the 1970 World Expo Osaka's Festival Plaza, which he downplayed as a reiteration of Montreal's Expo, even accusing Arata Isozaki of plagiarism with regards to his entertainment robots.<sup>29</sup> Banham's silence regarding the Fun Palace's influence on Expo Osaka might be seen as adding to the neutralization of the project in Cook's *Experimental Architecture*, which clustered the Fun Palace and Osaka's Festival Plaza in an undifferentiated set of 'fun places' including F. Van Klinger's The Agora, Dronten, Pietro di Rossi's L'Altro Mondo Club, Rimini, Yasuhiro Hamano's Astro Mechanicool and Archigram's Monte Carlo entertainment place.<sup>30</sup> However, the Fun Palace maintained its presence in reporting on the Expo Osaka in the architectural media, an association encouraged by the general brief for the Expo, which called for the integration of cybernetic methods in the design of responsive environments.<sup>31</sup> Thus the *RIBA Journal* of November 1967 reported that: 'the real lesson of Expo probably lies, in fact, not in any of the individual pavilions but in its success, as a whole, in affording a glimpse of the kind of environment, or facility, that cities need for leisure, where people can combine relaxation and fun with education and excitement - Joan Littlewood's Fun Palace in fact'.<sup>32</sup> More specifically, Arata Isozaki would refer to the Fun Palace in relation to his Festival Plaza in his essay 'Erasing Architecture into the System', 1975, pointing at the similar self-regulated organization as well as the different degrees of control and of freedom achieved in each project: 'The bottom line', writes Isozaki, 'was that the Plaza should have moveable mechanisms so as to accommodate whatever events might arise (...) Incredibly, all I knew of Price's Fun Palace was that such a project existed. Nothing precise. But when I looked over the plans, I discovered that already from

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<sup>27</sup> Banham, *Megastructure*, 83.

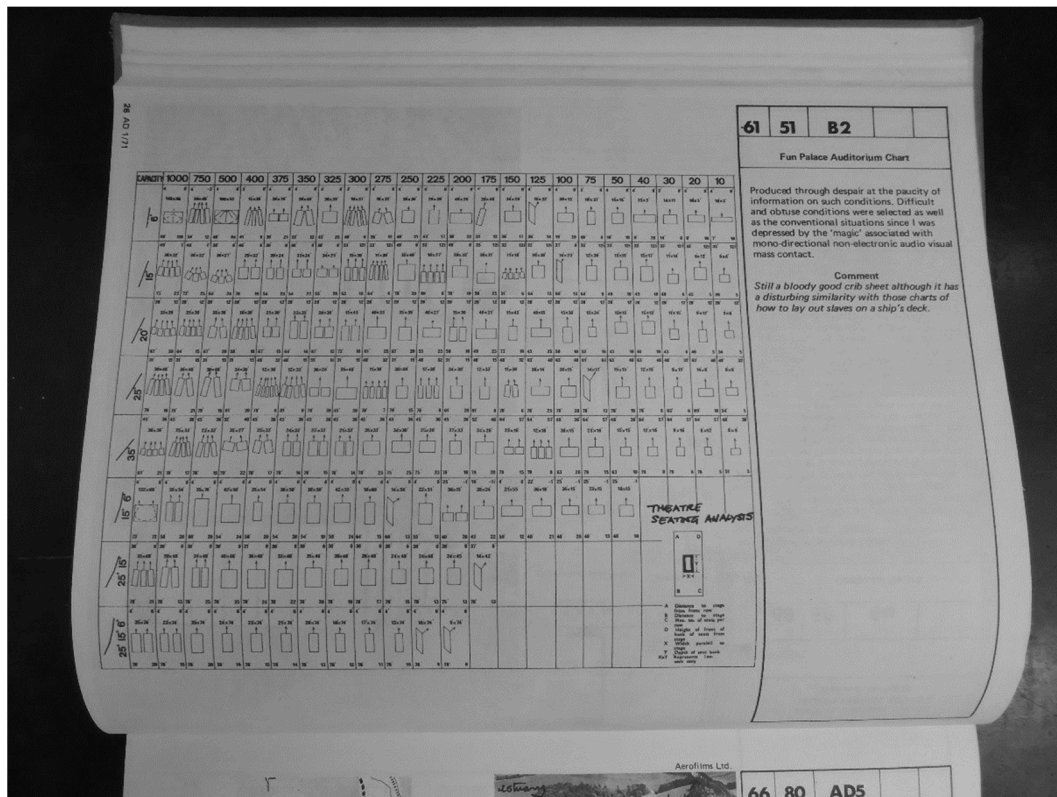
<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, 211.

<sup>29</sup> 'The mood had changed about megastructures, and too much seemed to have been plagiarized – notably Isozaki's two entertainment –robots in the Festival Plaza, enlarged in form and function from two domestic robots exhibited by Archigram four years earlier. More than this, everything about Osaka Expo '70 that smacked of megastructure, such as Tange's vast lattice space-grid over the whole Festival Plaza, was now seen as simply repeating an Expo formula that had peaked out, unrepeatably, at Montreal three years before. If Archigram had permanently changed the imagery of megastructure, Montreal Expo '67 had come close to exhausting all the megastructure imagery that could be effectively be built at the time, and thus, like Archigram, had left the whole concept permanently altered'. Banham, *Megastructure*, 103.

<sup>30</sup> Cook, *Experimental Architecture*, 141–42.

<sup>31</sup> The general brief set for the Expo addressed explicitly the integration of cybernetic methods in the design of responsive environments: 'How can we create physical environments that encourage people to directly engage with them, as if in a feedback loop, through information technology? Can architecture function as a communication media? Should architecture even do so?' (<https://au-magazine.com/shop/japan-architect/ja-113/>).

<sup>32</sup> Folder DR 1995:0188:525:004, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.



**FIGURE 6.5:** Cedric Price, Fun Palace Auditorium Chart. Cedric Price Supplement, *Architectural Design*, January 1971, 26.

around 1960 he had researched a project quite similar to our Plaza in concept and even drawn detailed plans. I remember being more than little flustered'.<sup>33</sup> Isozaki may have been perturbed, but his Plaza had, in view of curator Rasia Reichard, the edge in terms of its emancipation from the static conditions of conventional architecture. As he reported quoting the curator Rasia Reichard: 'Price's Fun Palace may profess uncertainty, but its individual facilities are limited, with little degree of freedom while the space is in use. Whereas your Festival Plaza is more open-ended and able to respond cybernetically to whatever eventualities, is it not?'<sup>34</sup> Illustrating Isozaki's account of the distinctive degrees of under-specification in both projects are, once again, the widely circulated drawings of the project, including two of the photomontages and the broadsheet's interior perspective along with a typical section and the two-bay axonometric.

With 1969's Non-Plan, the alterity that the idea of programmatic indeterminacy developed within architecture also percolated through planning discourses. Nurturing the joint 'Experiment in Freedom' conducted for the British press, Banham set out to explore the non-plan approach he had encountered in Los Angeles during his first visit in 1965. The collection of experiences, published in 1971 – a book of complex structure, as Anthony Vidler has argued –<sup>35</sup> was dedicated by Banham to Cedric Price, 'who first called upon me to testify in public on L.A'. Banham scholar Nigel Whiteley traces the relationship between LA's democratic model of culture and the Fun Palace's, one granting accessibility to all and each of its parts - a tradition that Whiteley observes to had also been embraced by the Independent Group. Whiteley claims, 'it could be seen as the urban equivalent of Cedric Price's *other* architecture with its well-serviced anonymity, "self-participatory elements" and "freedom of choice" which would help create "new activities, at present without a name" (...) "LA celebrates the culture of fun".<sup>36</sup> The figure of one of the Fun Palace's interior photomontages is selected to illustrate the argument.

Perhaps urged by the ambivalence surrounding the idea of indeterminacy, Price validated the heuristic design methods of the Fun Palace when reviewing the early – but at that stage not yet circulated – Fun Palace Chart 'Comparative Theatre Seating Analysis. 51/30' in his logbook 'Cedric Price Supplement' for *Architectural Design* in 1971 [FIGURE 6.5]. 'Produced through despair at the paucity of information on such conditions. Difficult and obtuse conditions were selected as well as the conventional situations since I was depressed by the

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<sup>33</sup> Arata Isozaki, 'Erasing Architecture into the System', in Cedric Price, Hans U. Obrist, *Re: CP*, (Basel: Birkhauser, 2003), 27–18.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid*, 28.

<sup>35</sup> Reyner Banham and Anthony Vidler, *Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Ecologies* (Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 2001), xxiv.

<sup>36</sup> Nigel Whiteley, *Reyner Banham: Historian of the Immediate Future* (Cambridge, Mass. ; London: MIT Press, 2002), 213.

“magic” associated with mono-directional non-electronic audio visual mass contact’. It closes with the following ‘comment’ – ‘still a bloody good crib sheet although it has a disturbing similarity with those charts of how to lay out slaves on a ship’s deck’.<sup>37</sup>

The Fun Palace image constructed by architectural scholarship in the Sixties and early Seventies brought to focus the alterity that the project’s engagement with the idea of calculated uncertainty opened within the tradition of architectural practice. This technologically-infused image was disseminated through editorial projects sympathetic to Price – by Banham, Landau and Cook, to name a few – and by Price’s participation in related events such as symposia and lectures held at academic institutions. Crucially, it is an image of anti-architecture developed out of insightful critical commentary – both supportive and challenging – but a narrow selection of the project’s media. At all points, the substance of the project that was circulated appears to have been limited, cut down to size, and shaped by the expectations of the discipline. Who is Littlewood in these reports other than the Fun Palace ‘client’? Where are her critical insights and the complex production of the Fun Palace organization in this image constructed by and for the architectural discipline? Each of these pages mirrors the limitations of the discipline, even as it is being challenged by the Fun Palace’s cultural project.

## Constitution of the Fun Palace Archive

As the history of the Fun Palace reception goes, the lively interest in the project during the Sixties gave way to almost three quiet decades during which it was mostly only Price and his close collaborators who would refer to it. The title chosen by Stephen Mullin for his review of Price’s projects a 1976 issue of *Architectural Design* – ‘Cedric Price or Still Keeps Going when Everything Else Has Stopped’ – conveys well the ways the experimental spirit of the 1960s had been arrested. But at the same time, it suggests an irreducible energy embedded in the Fun Palace idea, which kept dynamising Price’s production. Fun Palace drawings would leak slowly through Price-led public initiatives such as his two solo exhibitions in London, ‘The Evolving Image’ in the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) Heinz Gallery, 1975, and ‘Cedric Price’ at the Architectural Association (AA), 1984, whose catalogue became the first major publication of his work [FIGURE 6.7]. In the latter, the Fun

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<sup>37</sup> Cedric Price, ‘The Second Instalment in the Cedric Price Supplement Series’, *Architectural Design* 41 (January 1971): 25–25.

When she left the fashionable restaurant in the late afternoon, several of the staff lined up to speak to her, though she had never before. They knew she would be fun and she did not disappoint them, finally pleased by the warmth of their welcome. Joan Littlewood was back on one of her rare visits to London. When she returned, her shopping from the cloakroom, it included a vast bag of dog biscuits.

"For Jacques Tati", she explained to the startled waiter, remaining a moment later that this is her name for the staff-gagged monger she had befriended in Yvernoy, near Lyons, where she lives today.

Joan Littlewood's visit was brief but significant, suggesting a narrative return to the activity which came to a halt in the summer of 1973 with the sudden death of her companion Gerald Raffles during a boating holiday on the Ribble. Since then her life in France has been a void compared to the fullness before, and she has kept a form of vigil near his grave.

Gerry Raffles, as everyone knew him, was the general manager of the Theatre Workshop which they created together. Their partnership was one of the great love affairs with the British theatre this century, enhancing the stage of the Theatre Royal, Stratford East, with a series of triumphs. They started with *Queen Puffin* in May 24 1956, followed by *The Boatman*, also by Brendan Behan; *A Taste of Honey* by Shelagh Delaney; *Fingert's* near they loved *1776* by Frank Norman, and *Oh! What a Lovely War*, based on a radio programme but described by the late Kenneth Tynan as "essentially a one-woman show", though the programme called it a "female production". In fact the script evolved during rehearsals, with Joan Littlewood's usual encouragement to the actors to improvise as they went along.

Frequently, she began with little more than an outline. Shelagh Delaney says Littlewood's photograph in a newspaper, though "she looks a right character", and put her play in the post. Frank Norman was the first to admit that he sent her "a scruffy 48-page first draft"; but Littlewood had the gift of bringing an idea to life with the cast of music hall. Determined, sometimes ruthless, the one person she never spared was herself, haunting the theatre every night, peering down from the gallery like some phantom of the opera, making certain that her cast sustained the spontaneity she demanded. Referring to the work of a fashion designer, Joan Littlewood said her

## WHERE IS JOAN LITTLEWOOD?

It is 25 years today since Joan Littlewood's theatre company had its first London success. Daniel Farson traces her career, and finds out why she left her life in England



the highest praise: "She does it like we did *The Boatman* - a random mood, a random moment. There's a production's flow", she declared, "it's dead". When she flew back to London to check on a production which was enjoying a long run, she explained that she had heard it was getting a hard.

The other person she never spared was Gerry Raffles, and part of her grief is the pain that she could have been more considerate: "We did everything together, but when we had a success, I got the credit". Their legacy to the British theatre can be stated in a word - improvisation. This was the innovation which shattered the rigid conventions of

south London in 1914, the daughter of a 16-year-old unemployed girl, when she reached the age of 16, she left her convent school to live in "half a harem" on her skilful week, where she talked "mostly to women" until she won a scholarship to the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art - a typical parallel to a life of contrasts, for RADA came to substitute the establishment, also denied. A year later she began her career as a theatre group. Those subsequent marriage ended in divorce.

It was in the late thirties that Gerry Raffles, 17 and still at Manchester Grammar School, wandered into the theatre where Littlewood's troupe was performing and was so entranced that instead of entering the family business he became the manager of the Theatre Union, driving the nation's best defiant actors in a £25 lorry to singing events in Yorkshire, with the occasional break when they took temporary jobs in order to raise the money to continue.

During the war Raffles fought in the RAF while Littlewood wrote documentaries for BBC radio, but they were re-joined afterwards and formed the Theatre Workshop in 1945 as the logical successor to the Theatre Union and the various "revolutionary" groups Littlewood had founded with her husband in the south of England before the war. After eight years of penniless touring, through Europe as well as Britain, they reached London in 1953 where they rented the small but perfect Theatre Royal for £12 a week.

Joan Littlewood speaks affectionately of J. B. Priestley's concert party performers *The Good Companions*, for her troupe shared a similar comradeship, so poor that they slept in hammocks slung across the dressing-room, surviving at one point on hamper delicacies like peaches in brandy sent by a rich friend who had no idea they were close to starvation and bankruptcy. The critics were unimpressed and audiences sparse, but in retrospect a month an idyllic period of hardship.

It ended in 1955 when Joan Littlewood gave the first British performance of Bertolt Brecht's *Mother Courage in Bernadette*, taking over the part herself when the leading actress became indisposed (converting the dollars being remitted off, possibly because of the type-casting). In that same year the Theatre Workshop triumphed in Paris with its production of *The Good Soldier Schweik* by Jaroslav Hasek at the Paris

THEATRUM WEEKLY MAGAZINE 49



WORKS II ARCHITECTURAL ASSOCIATION

FIGURE 6.6: 'Where is Joan Littlewood?' asks Daniel Farson in *The Sunday Telegraph*, May, 24, 1981 [left]

FIGURE 6.7: Cedric Price, *Cedric Price: Works II*, Architectural Association, 1984 [right]

Palace was illustrated through media that had been in circulation for a while, which substantiates his life-long support of the ideas of spontaneity and self-regulation.<sup>38</sup> Lectures such as ‘Technology is the Answer but What Was the Question?’ in 1979 and ‘Autumn Always Gets Me Badly’ at the AA, 1989, would map the Fun Palace’s design principle of calculated uncertainty within his later practice. Amongst others, the Fun Palace informed closely the Inter-Action Centre, in Kentish Town, London, 1971, a temporary and highly adaptable arts and community center built for the eponymous trust led by Edward Berman, and the Generator project, a pilot for a modular and programmable architecture commissioned by Howard Gilman for the Gilman Paper Company estate in Florida, 1976, which involved the active participation of the company workforce.

‘Where is Joan Littlewood?’ Daniel Farson asks in *The Sunday Telegraph*, 24 May, 1981, on occasion of one of the rare visits she paid to London [FIGURE 6.6]. For in 1975 Littlewood shifted course after the sudden death of her partner and Theatre Workshop manager Gerry Raffles. She gave up the Theatre Workshop and the Fun Palace, and moved to Vienne, France. Opening the paper’s article, cartoonist Richard Cole portrayed her energetic figure protecting a standalone Theatre Royal. It conveys the ongoing personal struggle of preserving the Theatre Royal in Stratford, base for her Theatre Workshop since 1953, amidst ongoing commercial redevelopment plans in derelict Stratford neighbourhood, a battle Gerry Raffles had initiated by purchasing the Victorian structure in 1972 and achieving its listing. With the Theatre Royal damaged during demolition in the area and little institutional support, Littlewood had endured the years from 1967 to 1975 by working to strengthen the links between her theatre and the increasingly displaced local community through the Fun Palace-related project of Stratford Fair. It would be only in 1994 that she broke the silence she imposed upon herself after 1975. For in this year she published *Joan’s book: Joan Littlewood’s Peculiar History As She Tells It*, an autobiography scripted in agile prose and witty dialogue that seamlessly merges Fun Palace anecdotes and facts with reports on other concurrent initiatives such as the International Summer School at Le Centre Culturel in Hammamet, Tunisia: ‘The morning session always finished in time for a swim before lunch. One day, as I plunged into the cool waves, Mill Meads, our oasis in the desert of East End, flashed before my eyes. Planning permission? Our appeal against postponement? I’d no news and I’d long ago given up trying to get through to London by phone. Talking drums would have more reliable. Cecil Hourani sent a cable from Tunis for

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<sup>38</sup> The illustrations are: ‘component parts, pilot scheme’; ‘daytime use with footbridge, climbing frames and air-structured exhibition hall’; ‘night-time use with mobile kitchen feeding enclosed air structure and three-screen projection’; ‘typical high-level layout’; ‘centre-spread of original fund-raising folder’; ‘two of the fourteen bays’; ‘night-time view at Lea River, London E15’; ‘two suspended auditoria with independent conditioning packages and access bridges’; ‘arriving by helicopter’; ‘three-gallery open auditorium, Cedric Price: *The Square Book*, (Chichester: Wiley-Academy, 1984), 56–61.

me and received a reply two days later. "Decision on Mill Meads awaited. Meet pending. Dick"—in reference to Dick Boulder, Fun Palace administrator.<sup>39</sup>

Although the project was apparently quiet during the 1980s and 1990s, these were the years in which the key institutional archives of the Fun Palace became progressively constituted. Prior to this, the earlier exhibition catalogues, lecture recordings, written scripts - along with the newspaper articles - formed the only media repository of the Fun Palace. Thus, curator Pierre Apraxine purchased five key drawings of the Fun Palace for the private Howard Gilman Collection of Visionary Architecture in 1980.<sup>40</sup> The Michael Barker Collection of Joan Littlewood and the Theatre Workshop was also constituted that year at the Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin. This is a fragmentary collection that includes Littlewood's notebooks from the early period of her career in 1930s and 1940s, as well as some documentation from the early 1970s.<sup>41</sup> The comprehensive Cedric Price fonds was purchased by the CCA, Montreal in 1995, and an initial catalogue was produced. With the transfer of the archival records from Price's office in 38 Alfred Place, London, completed in 2004, the Cedric Price fonds holds the complete body of Price's work and constitutes the major archive of the Fun Palace project. The Arts Council of Great Britain Archive, London, where the Fun Palace's grant applications are held, was constituted at the Victoria & Albert Museum Collection in 1996. By 2002, The Howard Gilman Collection of Visionary Architecture was bequeathed to the Museum of Modern Art, New York. A year later the Royal Institute of British Architects, London, purchased a collection of publications and materials related to Cedric Price's major articles to constitute the Cedric Price Papers within this institution. Between 2008 and 2009, the Cedric Price fonds at the CCA completed its catalogue with funding from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. Around that time, the British Film Institute National Archive, London, received Joan Littlewood's film collection from her friend and collaborator Peter Rankin. Amongst other things, this includes extensive but fragmentary footage related to the Fun Palace film, according to communications exchanged between curators from the British Film Institute National Archive and CCA: '60 cans of 16mm negative which are presumably the offcuts from the film made to promote the Fun Palace which was shown at the BFI [British Film Institute] in the early 1970s but which we haven't found. The reels consist of shots of how the British spent their leisure time in 1963/4; none of

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<sup>39</sup> Littlewood, *Joan's Book*, 726–27.

<sup>40</sup> The five Fun Palace drawings of the collection are: 'Storyboard for film and sketches: felt-tipped pen, graphite, crayon, and ink stamps on diazotype, 15 x 27 V2" (38.1 x 69.9 cm); Perspective: gouache, ink, crayon, and graphite on gelatin silver print, with self-adhesive paper dot, 137ax 26 Va ' (34.3 x 67.3 cm); Perspective: felt-tipped pen, ink, graphite, crayon and ink stamp on tracing paper with tape, 6 Vi x 15 Vs' (16.5 x 40.3 cm); Perspective: graphite on diazotype, 17'A x 33" (44.5 x 83.8 cm); Aerial perspective from cockpit: cut-and-pasted painted paper on gelatin 3A silver print with gouache, 8 x 10 Va" (22.2 x 26.7 cm) an interior perspective sketch for the broadsheet, the Lea Valley site and helicopter view montage and a film storyboard drawing' Riley, *The Changing of the Avant-Garde*, 44–48.

<sup>41</sup> Nadine Holdsworth, Interview with the author, 19 January 2016.

it actually shows architectural models or plans although we do have footage of the three actors dressed as pierrots which would have led into the model shots'<sup>42</sup>. Recordings of Price's lectures have been made progressively available online by the Architectural Association Archives, and currently can be consulted via AA School of Architecture YouTube channel. And since 2012, St John's College Library, Cambridge, has been the custodian of Cedric Price's notebooks and other personal records, including a section of Joan Littlewood's personal correspondence. Meanwhile, the London County Council Collection, constituted at the London Metropolitan Archives in 1953, offers access to the Fun Palace's planning applications. Until recently, sparse records from the Fun Palace have also been held at the Theatre Royal Stratford East Archive Collection, London,<sup>43</sup> while others live within smaller private collections such as Peter Rankin Estate and Clive Barker Personal Archive.<sup>44</sup>

The Fun Palace archive is an uneven territory. A set of public and private institutions working independently indicates its distributed and plural nature. Their agency is determined by several factors, such as the quality and quantity of each collection, the conditions governing access – both physically and digitally – and the kind of patronage endowed by each institution in relation to the dissemination of the project.

The comprehensiveness of the Fun Palace Project folder in the Cedric Price fonds, CCA, makes it a main source for scholarship on the Fun Palace. The project's archival records are held within the 40,000 square-metre centre at the Montreal's Shaughnessy House. Founded by Canadian philanthropist and architect Phyllis Lambert in 1979, the CCA critically explores, develops and disseminates the history and theory of architecture and the built environment through scholarly research. It opened to the public in 1989 to deliver its research mission following a multifaceted agenda with an international reach, which includes exhibitions, publications, public events and research programmes.<sup>45</sup> The CCA Collection – structured around the four sections of 'Archives, Photography, Prints & Drawings, and Library' – is available for perusal by appointment at the Centre's study room. Scholarly research is actively supported by a number of programmes, ranging from the Visiting Scholar Program

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<sup>42</sup> Correspondence between Renata Guttman, Head Collection Reference at CCA and Jo Botting, Curator, BFI National Archive. Quoted from email received from Renata Guttman, 14 April 2015.

<sup>43</sup> Apparently these are now in transit to the British Library according to correspondence with archivist Murray Melvin, 4 June 2019.

<sup>44</sup> This latter collection was pointed at by Stella Duffy, co-director of *Fun Palaces*, when asked about her sources. Authorised interview with the author, 20 August 2020.

<sup>45</sup> CCA Director Mirko Zardini situates the constitution of the institution at a time of high scholarly interest in architectural theory, when other architectural research centres of similar ambition were also established, such as Deutsches Architekturmuseum] DAM in Frankfurt (1979), the [Nederlands Architectuurinstituut] NAI in the Netherlands (1988), or the Getty Research Institute in Los Angeles (1984) Mar González Palacios, 'Thinking Outside the Search Box: Finding New Possibilities for Discovery and Access at the Canadian Centre for Architecture', *Art Documentation: Journal of the Art Libraries Society of North America* 37, no. 2 (1 September 2018): 192,.



**FIGURE 6.8:** Research on Cedric Price fonds, Study Room, CCA, Montreal, 2015. Photography by the author.

(1997-2018), the Research Fellowship Program (2019-) and the Mellon Multidisciplinary Research Program (2014-).<sup>46</sup> The Cedric Price fonds was selected to discuss the relationships between architecture and post-war British society in 'British Architecture for Society', the first of the latter multidisciplinary research programmes.<sup>47</sup> Since 2005, an ambitious curatorial programme directed by ex-Casabella and Lotus editor Mirko Zardini focuses on research-led exhibitions and associated publications on how architecture responds to a range of pressing cultural issues.<sup>48</sup> And since 2016, the Centre's digital platform makes resources and scholarly initiatives available online, while at the same time disseminating the discourses produced throughout its research agenda to nurture architectural debate. As custodian of a main section of the Fun Palace archive, this institution has exercised a remarkable impact upon the scholarly reception of the project since then. Crucially, its active patronage organizes research on Cedric Price indirectly, by granting access and reproduction of its records, or directly, through sponsorship. A network of scholars, institutions and discourses orbiting around the figure of Cedric Price has been formed as a result.

Systematically catalogued, the 'Extent and Medium' of the Fun Palace Project folder consists of '275 drawings; 228 reprographic copies; 20 panels; 1 artefact; 1 film reel; 1 roll; 1.13 l.m. textual records; 0.04 l.m. photographic materials.'<sup>49</sup> A very detailed finding aid facilitates explicit and implicit traces of Littlewood's contribution. For instance, folder DR1995:0188:525:004 includes among other textual records, 'draft notes on Children's Learning Garden, financial record of Summer Fair 1974, planning application forms, sketches of temporary project at Salway and Great Eastern Roads, grant application, questionnaire, report on land redevelopment, 'Bubble City' publication by Joan Littlewood, renovation proposal for Theatre Royal, poster, kids village colouring book, and application for children's playground' – all related to Stratford Fair. Further material associated with Littlewood is to be found in folders of related projects. For instance, a handwritten memo by Littlewood slips into 'Oxford Corner House Feasibility Study' (1965-66); a key drawing of Camden Pilot along with documentation of Littlewood's summer workshops in Hammamet do so in the minor project 'Tunisia (Report on Tourism)' (1965-66); Stratford Fair records are filed in 'Open Space Utilisation Programme E15 (OSUP)' (1972); and 'Donmar' (1963-64) contains letters that evidence the association of both projects. Additionally, references to the

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<sup>46</sup> It develops collaborative research on CCA-led thematic projects with support from Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

<sup>47</sup> <https://www.cca.qc.ca/en/56738/multidisciplinary-research-program>

<sup>48</sup> *Sense of the City*, 2005-06; *Environment: Approaches for Tomorrow*, 2006-07; 1973: *Sorry, Out of Gas* exhibition, 2007-08 *Actions: What You Can Do with the City*, 2008-09; *Imperfect Health: the Medicalization of Architecture*, 2011. Paul Makovsky, 'Mirko Zardini', *Metropolis: Architecture Design* 31, no. 6 (January 2012): 72–75.

<sup>49</sup> <https://www.cca.qc.ca/en/archives/380477/cedric-price-fonds/396839/projects/399301/fun-palace-project>.

project are to be found in the range of typical memo-cards Price used in his lectures and their typed transcripts, in the sub-series 'Lectures, Conferences (Inc. T.V. & Radio)' (1955-2003). Cedric Price's is said to be the most popular archive in the institution, which researchers access by appointment. Even if only a small quantity of records have been digitized to date – a total of 251 at the time of writing – they constitute almost a fifth of those digitally available in the Cedric Price fonds.

In contrast to Price's, Joan Littlewood's archive is fragmentary and distributed. A significant number of memos and minutes slip into the 'textual records' folders of the Cedric Price fonds's section 'Fun Palace Project'. Loose footage from the Fun Palace film is split between this archive and the British Film Institute National Archive. Interestingly, communication between the CCA and the British Film Institute curators highlights the demarcation exercised by former CCA curator Howard Schubert based on the limited architectural significance of the film collection: '[his] view 6 years ago was that the material we have would not be relevant to the CCA. We are currently trying to get it digitized but it's going to be quite an expensive project due to the amount of material and the fact that it is all negative.'<sup>50</sup> For its part, the Theatre Royal Stratford East Archive Collection holds a thin Fun Palace section, consisting of four folders with a limited number of records each that mostly relate to the development of Stratford Fair, alongside some brochures concerning its reinterpretation today.<sup>51</sup> Effort has been made to gather together reproductions of some key material from the major development of the project in 1964 – such as the broadsheet, the helicopter view montage, the main architectural publications, such as *Architectural Review's* from 1965 and *Architectural Design's* from 1967, amongst others – according to correspondence between archivist Murray Melvin and Price's chief assistant Stephen Mullin in January 2003.<sup>52</sup> Additionally, the Theatre Royal Stratford East Archive Collection holds a number of

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<sup>50</sup> Correspondence between Renata Guttman, Head Collection Reference at CCA and Jo Botting, Curator, BFI National Archive. Quoted in email received from Renata Guttman, 14 April 2015.

<sup>51</sup> The four folders are: 'The Theatre Royal – Stratford Fun Palace Projects 2015'; 'The Fun Palace'; 'The Fun Palace trust. The Fun Palace Minutes'; 'The Fun Palace Trust. The Salway Road Fair Minutes and Contact Sheets'. Theatre Royal Stratford East Archives Collection. Accessed 2 February 2015.

<sup>52</sup> Letter from Stephen Mullin to Murray Melvin, 29<sup>th</sup> January 2003. TRSE Archive.

'Dear Murray,

JOAN'S KNEES-UP

Here's the material I promised you. Sorry it's taken so long, but it's taken a while to access and reproduce. I've put in decent prints of the two JPG images I sent you. So included in the pack are:

Photo of Joan and Cedric, March 2002

'Arriving at the Fun Palace by helicopter at night': multimedia, Stephen Mullin, 1964

Copies of pages 8,74 and 75 of the Architectural Review January 1965, covering the Fun Palace Project.

Copy of fold-out brochure for the Fun Palace. This is difficult to reproduce, so you have: a) the folded front and back covers; b) the half unfolded inside display; c) the fully unfolded inside display. Drawing Cedric Price: graphics Stephen Mullin.

Copy of notepaper for the Fun Palace Trust

Copy of notepaper for Stratford Fair

Copies of pages 522, 524 and 525 of Architectural Design November 1967, covering the Fun Palace Pilot Project

Blown up newspaper comments by the local Vicar which helped scupper the Pilot Project.

(...)

photographs of the 1970s Stratford playgrounds and the collection of photographs of Theatre Workshop productions, together with a portion of Littlewood's library – 'what was *left* of our library when she [Littlewood] left her keys', as Melvin recalls.<sup>53</sup> Remains of what could possibly be a notebook collection, alongside a few materials from Stratford Fair, belong now to what constitutes the previously mentioned Barker Collection at the University of Texas, Austin. Strikingly, in the same way that Littlewood's mobility is instantiated in the pithy memos she used to distribute around her – the ones found in Cedric Price fonds add to those that Theatre Workshop member Clive Baker remembers vividly in his obituary<sup>54</sup> – it also percolates through her dispersed archive. With little sense of permanence or propriety, hers was a sort of situationist practice comprised of actions that counted only as life-events and that were unconcerned for their future reception. In referring to the sheets of written notes that Littlewood distributed before and after a performance, Clive Baker recalls: 'We can only hope that when her wardrobe is opened she has stacked away all these sheets. Put together they would be a national treasure, a primary source on the art of the actor. She was eagle-eyed and never missed a trick. All the moments of lapsed concentration, loss of focus, generalization instead of clarity, loss of objective, would be there in the next night's notes. I once received a postcard from Orange in the South of France telling me she couldn't hear one of my lines in the performance before she left England.'<sup>55</sup> Littlewood scholar Nadine Holdsworth expands upon the nomadic personality of Littlewood: 'She would wander around with things in a plastic bag. She wasn't ever interested in possessions (...) There was no sense of permanence at all (...) worked things she was interested in (...) [other] things just didn't matter; or recording, which is very frustrating. So you don't have the archive that you do with Cedric'.<sup>56</sup> The Barker Collection presents an obscure dismembered section of her archive, for it is the outcome of a theft under conditions of financial instability surrounding Littlewood's career. Holdsworth recounts the story: 'items were stolen. It is called the Michael Barker Collection. She had this guy, Michael Barker, that used to work for them on a very sporadic basis (...) And he stole the items and sold them on to a bookseller and they ended up in the archive. He got the money for it and she didn't have the money at the time to fight it. It is all her early notebooks from the late thirties, forties and all the love letters of her and Gerry Raffles when they were apart when she was touring in the forties. Then big gaps

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<sup>53</sup> Authorised interview with the author, 3 February 2015.

<sup>54</sup> In referring to the sheets of written notes she distributed before and after a performance, Baker recalls: 'We can only hope that when her wardrobe is opened she has stacked away all these sheets. Put together they would be a national treasure, a primary source on the art of the actor. She was eagle-eyed and never missed a trick. All the moments of lapsed concentration, loss of focus, generalization instead of clarity, loss of objective, would be there in the next night's notes. I once received a postcard from Orange in the South of France telling me she couldn't hear one of my lines in the performance before she left England'. Clive Barker, 'Closing Joan's Book: Some Personal Footnotes', *New Theatre Quarterly* 19, no. 2 (May 2003): 103.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.

<sup>56</sup> Nadine Holdsworth, Interview with the author, 19 January 2016.

and then stuff from the early 1970s (...) even that she couldn't hang on to'.<sup>57</sup> Littlewood's archive is a displaced one; it lives as *other* in a constellation of institutional archives of agencies that crossed paths with this energetic and frugal traveller.

Michel Foucault has conceptualized the archive in the context of his archaeological description, a methodological approach that demarcates itself from traditional historical analysis to investigate the history of constitutions of knowledge by means of discourse analysis. Within the density of discursive practices, argues Foucault, the archive constitutes the system that facilitates the emergence of statements as events and regulates their modes of occurrence as things. 'The archive is first the law of what can be said, the system that governs the appearance of statements as unique events. But the archive is also that which determines that all these things said do not accumulate endlessly in an amorphous mass (...) but they are grouped together in distinct figures, composed together in accordance with multiple relations, maintained or blurred in accordance with specific regularities.'<sup>58</sup> For the statement-event the archive is 'the system of its enunciability' and for the statement-thing it is 'the system of its functioning'.<sup>59</sup>

If the archive regulates the possibilities of enunciation and occurrence of the statements in a given discourse, then the actualization of such possibilities for Fun Palace scholarship will be informed by the nature of the archive upon which they draw. 'The Fun Palace Reception Chart' discussed earlier shows an increase in the project's scholarly reception after 1999, one which follows the constitution of main sections of the Fun Palace archive. That coincidence demands interrogation. For what the fabric of the project's scholarly reception after 1999 seems to portray is precisely the systematic functioning of the asymmetrical Fun Palace archive. Thus, borrowing from Foucault's statements' analysis to investigate the modes of existence of the scholarly discourse on the Fun Palace – and the conditions that gave rise to each of the statements uttered – we may ask: 'what it means to them to have appeared when and where they did – they and no others'.<sup>60</sup>

## Price-Centered Scholarship since 1999

Scholarly reception of the Fun Palace becomes increasingly active after 1999, when the constitution of Cedric Price fonds at the CCA was celebrated with the exhibition 'Mean Time',

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<sup>57</sup> Nadine Holdsworth, Interview with the author, 19 January 2016.

<sup>58</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge, World of Man* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1972), 129.

<sup>59</sup> Foucault, 129.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid*, 109.

curated by Price himself in the Centre's Octagonal gallery. Concurrent with the exhibition, renewed interest in the revision of modernist principles during the post-WWII period stimulated key scholarship on the Fun Palace project.<sup>61</sup> Two conferences in North America, organized by the Graduate School of Design in Harvard, 1998, and by the CCA in Montreal, 1999, explored the complex synergies across post-war architectural experimentation and the former modernist tradition to challenge the reception of the latter as an expired style. In the second of these projects, *Anxious Modernisms: Postwar Architectural Culture, 1943-1968*, editor Sarah Williams suggests certain lineages within a range of architectural propositions. She situates the Fun Palace within a group of critical propositions in postwar modern architecture that shared the Marxist political orientation of the interwar architecture of Hannes Meyer, El Lissitzky, Ludwig Hilberseimer and Mart Stam.<sup>62</sup> An often cited text within the reception of Fun Palace, Mary Louise Lobsinger's chapter in this collection, 'Cybernetic Theory and the Architecture of Performance: Cedric Price's Fun Palace', skeptically reassesses the project's technological mediation, remarking on the potential capitalist affiliations of its free-choice rhetoric and suggesting its specific deployment of the diagram as a method of visual analysis remained its most relevant contribution to architectural theory. Crucially, Lobsinger's paper constructs an expanded image of the project through the range of drawings selected, including – amongst others not published before – the cybernetic chart 'Organisational Plan as Programme' by Gordon Pask, circulated with the minutes of the Cybernetics Committee meeting, 27 January 1965.<sup>63</sup>

In Britain, Simon Sadler and Jonathan Hughes's anthology *Non-Plan: Essays on Freedom, Participation and Change in Modern Architecture and Urbanism* (2000) conveys the contemporary relevance of 1960s debates on the democratization of decision-making processes and their design expression as part of a wider ambition of questioning architectural determinacy.<sup>64</sup> Along with the papers presented in the related conference 'Structures and Practices' in 1997,<sup>65</sup> Sadler and Hughes invited Price, *New Society's* editor Paul Barker, and other protagonists of the period, to reflect upon their work. 'Price's Non-Plan Diary', a title borrowed from his 1969 joint paper 'Non-Plan: An Experiment in

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<sup>61</sup> The post-war critiques to modernism were the subject of the two part conference 'Reconceptualizing the Modern: Architectural Culture, 1943-1968' in 1998, Harvard GSD, and 'Anxious Modernisms: Postwar Architectural Culture, 1943-1968' in 1999, Canadian Center for Architecture. Post-war indeterminacy was also discussed in the conference 'Structures and Practices', 1997, organised by the Association of Art Historians in UK.

<sup>62</sup> Two other politically defined sections with regards to the concurrent capitalist democracy complete the picture of modernist drawn by Sarah Williams. Reformists such as Fuller, Prouve, Neutra, Candilis, Jossic, Woods and the Metabolists share a machine-aesthetic while Aalto, Kahn, Smithsons and Van Eyck pursue a more nuanced situated modernism. Consensualism is to be found in the institutional work of Gropius at Harvard, Mies at Illinois or Bill at Ulm. Williams et al., *Anxious Modernisms*, 303-5.

<sup>63</sup> Lobsinger, 'Cybernetic Theory and the Architecture of Performance', 131.

<sup>64</sup> Jonathan Hughes and Simon Sadler, *Non-Plan: Essays on Freedom, Participation and Change in Modern Architecture and Urbanism* (Oxford: Architectural Press, 2000).

<sup>65</sup> Annual Conference of the Association of Art Historians (AAH), UK, 1997.

Freedom', adopts a synthetic image-plus-commentary cut-up format to map one of the Fun Palace montages within a genealogy of designs and related documents concerned with problematizing the deterministic methods of British planning. The marriage includes the Potteries Think Belt (1964), the Pop-up Parliament (1965), Non-Plan (1969), the Inter-Action Centre (1971) and Magnet (1996). These were introduced by cuttings, apparently taken from one of Price's scrapbooks, of the Crystal Palace and Kisho Kurokawa's Nakagin capsule tower in Tokyo. The retrospective is revelatory about the continuity of Price's open-ended planning approach across his projects, while it also suggests the persistent dissonance between the Fun Palace's ambition to escape fixity and the media selected to represent it. The Fun Palace would continue to be a referent in the architectural historiography of certain postwar experiments, such as Sadler's *The Situationist City* (1999) and *Archigram. Architecture without Architecture* (2005). These studies enhance the megastructural image of the Fun Palace, to identify – in the case of the latter publication – the project's neutral infrastructure for leisure as the agenda for the experimental architecture in Britain 1960s, a major referent for Archigram, and only partially materialized in Renzo Piano and Richard Rogers's Beaubourg Centre in 1977.<sup>66</sup> In the former study, Sadler maps the Fun Palace somewhere to the political right of the ludic liberation achieved in Constant's New Babylon. For the fun Constant seeks, Sadler suggests rather uncritically, 'should not be a commodity peddled in specialized leisure centres like Price's and Littlewood's Fun Palace, or the Sin Centre planned by Archigram's Mike Webb for London's entertainment area of Leicester Square'.<sup>67</sup> Two Fun Palace's montages underpin Sadler's architectural (mis) conception of the Fun Palace.<sup>68</sup>

Contributing to the events that were now gathering pace, in 2001 the curator and Price scholar Hans Ulrich Obrist presented two projects loosely clustered around the Fun Palace – 'South Bank Fairground' and 'Magnet City' – in the exhibition 'Cedric Price Drawings' at The Space, Institute of International Visual Arts, London. A foldable catalogue reproduces the interior perspective of the Fun Palace's broadsheet on one side and collates on the other a transcription of an interview with Price, illustrated by a portrait of the architect wearing comic glasses that was part of the press clipping 'GLC asks Price to 'transform' South Bank', *RIBA Journal*, March 1983. A collector of Price's anecdotes through interviews in the late 1990s, Obrist edited them in *Re: CP*, 2003, alongside contributions that recalled the indeterminacy

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<sup>66</sup> Simon Sadler, *Archigram: Architecture without Architecture* (Cambridge, Mass. ; London: MIT Press, 2005), 36.

<sup>67</sup> Simon Sadler, *The Situationist City*. 137.

<sup>68</sup> 'Fun Palace: helicopter view', DR1995:0188:521, Cedric Price fonds, CCA, in Sadler, *The Situationist City* (1999) 135; Fun Palace:interior perspective, DR1995:0188:518, Cedric Price fonds, CCA, in Sadler, *Archigram*, 36.

of the Fun Palace project such as the re-edition of Arata Isozaki's 1975 paper 'Erasing Architecture into the System'.

By 2002, the exhibition 'The Changing of the Avant-Garde: Visionary Architectural Drawings from the Howard Gilman Collection' at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, following the bequest of the collection in 2000, animated the ongoing celebration of post-war architecture. The 205 exquisite architectural drawings held in the collection gave body to the transition from megastructures to the theory-driven design of the postmodernist years. The Fun Palace drawings, dated 1959-61, featured alongside Michael Webb's 'Sin Centre' (1958), Yona Friedman's Spatial City (1959) and Arata Isozaki's Joint Core System (1960).

Joan Littlewood died on September 20, 2002 and Cedric Price, a little less than a year later, on August 10, 2003. These unexpected events fueled the soaring interest in the Fun Palace, for the project reverberated throughout the obituary pages dedicated to both personalities, both in scholarly journals and English-language newspapers. Only *The Economist* seems to have missed the Fun Palace in its piece on Littlewood. These obituaries would also afford a site to reflect upon and extend the significance of the project in later architectural undertakings. For instance, in the one for Littlewood written by Clive Barker – a Theatre Workshop member since 1955 and later trustee of the Inter-Action group for which Price worked – the author claims to have liaised with Price to modernise the Birmingham Midland Institute following the ideas of the Fun Palace: 'I gave up trying to found the Henry Chettle Memorial Theatre, and little remains of the concept of the Fun Palace. There is almost nothing in print about the way she [Littlewood] hoped it could work. After it was dropped, the original architect, Cedric Price, joined me in a scheme to build an archetype in Birmingham in response to an invitation to bring the Birmingham and Midland Institute into the twentieth century'.<sup>69</sup> Included in *Cedric Price Works II*, the re-organization of this hundred year-old educational and learning facility reflected upon the uncertainty of its own role as 'nerve centre' by designing a capacity to shrink and expand.<sup>70</sup>

In an informative obituary circulated in the editorial 'Cedric Price Disappears', *AA Files*, Spring 2004 – following the homage-symposium 'Aiming to Miss' held at the Architectural Association in November 2003<sup>71</sup> – the architectural patron and collector Niall Hobhouse framed the alterity of Price's work within the architectural profession as 'the long-run Cedric Price Project', and situated the Fun Palace at its apex.<sup>72</sup> Hobhouse defined the Fun Palace

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<sup>69</sup> Barker, 'Closing Joan's Book', 106.

<sup>70</sup> Price, Cedric Price: *The Square Book*, 42.

<sup>71</sup> Chaired by former Price's collaborator Simon Allford, it gathered close collaborators, scholars and clients such as Paul Finch, Rem Koolhaas, John Frazer, Will Alsop, Niall Hobhouse, Samantha Hardingham, Phyllis Lambert, Lord McAlpine.

<sup>72</sup> Hobhouse et al., 'Cedric Price Disappears', 73.

as an ever-expanding programme, whose life sprang out of the range of ambitions it united but never exposed in building form: 'It seemed to me', said Hobhouse, 'that the Fun Palace was famous because it was never built. Or rather that the almost infinite broadening of the programme, and the relentless effacement of the designer that went with it, led, both in a sort of formal *reductio*, and also in fact, to its not being built'.<sup>73</sup> Price's life-long practice was one of 'not-building', and thus, Hobhouse recalls how he formally executed and succeeded in his last commission: 'together we built nothing (...) Like the Fun Palace, the true originality of the project lay in its proceeding towards abstraction. It was always less of a building than a diagram – an open structure for the display and orchestration of ideas, on which its designer could hang new ones as he found them, and wherever it suited him. By this familiar and tireless process the fabric nevertheless became denser and more solid by degrees – and the figure of the architect beyond harder and harder to make out'.<sup>74</sup> These are relevant observations on the Fun Palace, yet the project's montages that illustrate the editorial 'Cedric Price Disappears' keep the ambition of the project grounded in its architectural expression.<sup>75</sup>

On 23 October, 2003, the exhibition 'Out of the Box: Price Rossi Stirling + Matta-Clark' opened at the CCA to present visitors, for the first time, a glimpse of these recently constituted archives. Mark Wigley's curatorial project for Price's section defined a pivotal point in the Fun Palace reception [FIGURE 6.9]. Dedicated entirely to the project, the exhibition represented for the first time the plurality of the Fun Palace media – over 200 objects mostly uncatalogued at the time – to argue for the project as a complex research programme through which Price constructed his persona of anti-architect. Price's extensive research practice proved the means to challenge the discipline of architecture which – as Wigley has recently argued, Price perceived as loaded with stupidity – by editing out 'architecture' from the project and reducing the 'ignorance' of the architect at one stroke.<sup>76</sup> Confronted with the question of how to produce an exhibition that conveys this reduction, yet also retains its ability to surprise, Wigley's curatorial project presents the Fun Palace section of the Cedric Price fonds itself in order to destabilize rather than consolidate the project's architectural image. 'In addition to any architect's usual accumulations of sketches, plans, working drawings, renderings and models' – Wigley argued in a related article published in

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid, 71.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid, 73.

<sup>75</sup> These included two interior photomontages as well as the typical section, a sketch showing the functioning of service towers and a configuration of ramps and scalators and two photographs of the model. Hobhouse et al., 'Cedric Price Disappears'.

<sup>76</sup> Mark Wigley, 'An Afternoon with Cedric Price No. 2' (Canadian Centre for Architecture, 9 February 2017), <https://www.cca.qc.ca/en/events/41605/an-afternoon-with-cedric-price-no-2>.



**FIGURE 6.9:** 'Out of the Box: Price Rossi Stirling + Matta-Clark', CCA, 2004. Price's section curated by Mark Wigley, Columbia University; Hubertus von Amelnunxen, CCA. Exhibition design and graphic design: Louis-Charles Lasnier, Montreal. Photography: CCA

*Domus* – ‘there is a vast array of charts, reports, questionnaires, comparative lists, theoretical statements, film-scripts, minutes of scientific committees, punch cards, legal documents, fundraising brochures, statistics, diagrams of cybernetic circuits, newspaper clippings, electrical devices for generating random decisions, and so on’.<sup>77</sup> Wigley refers to Price’s office as a kind of critical research laboratory operating under strict confidentiality to undermine the lore of the architectural profession:

*The atmosphere of Cedric Price's studio was that of a secret laboratory – endlessly testing different possibilities in excruciating detail. Design was treated as a form of research (...) His way of destabilizing architecture was just to go deeper and deeper into each of its most basic operations. Research became a weapon (...) Instead of designing a building, he redesigned the figure of the architect.*<sup>78</sup>

Thus, the exhibition constructs an image of the project as an open-ended, private research programme identified with the extensiveness of the Cedric Price fonds: ‘It was not until mid-1964 that a few images appeared and started to circulate in diverse architectural, art, theatre and political magazines. The exhibition (...) presents this set of public images in a traditional open gallery that acts as a kind of threshold to a more confined room dense with many of the unpublished documents from the architect’s archive, the private life of the studio finally coming to the surface. The intention is not to explain the [Fun Palace] project but to encourage the emergence and evolution of different explanations by giving a sense of what this particular archive feels like. As is true of any archive, there is more information displayed than can possibly be comprehended but also many gaps and uncertain traces. The archive is an array of intriguing puzzles. Each document can act as a vital clue, encouraging a different reading of the other documents. [...] As in Fun Palace itself, visitors have to plot their own paths, construct their own stories, carry out their own research’.<sup>79</sup>

The article itself is illuminating for in a few images it condenses, not the already worn-out public montages identified with the project by scholarship, but their vast media periphery in order to challenge the image of radical architecture that the project’s reception had visually constructed until then. Thus, *Domus* disseminates the following material: the remains of an elemental model used for filming held in a cigar box; a photo of the model in flare-flames and the film canister seemingly containing footage of its destruction; the sketch of an unfinished perspectival space (that bears perspectival similarity with the ‘Lea Valley Site’ photomontage); the draft for the publicity booklet ‘Do you Suffer From...’; a questionnaire

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<sup>77</sup> Mark Wigley, *Il Fun Palace Di Cedric Price. Anti-Edifici e Anti-Architetti [Cedric Price’s Fun Palace. Anti-Buildings and Anti-Architects]*, 2004, 22.

<sup>78</sup> Wigley and Shubert, ‘Il Fun Palace Di Cedric Price = Cedric Price’s Fun Palace’, 22.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

linked to the punch-card index and the activity affinity chart that it helped to build; a photo of the more sophisticated model used to generate the Fun Palace drawing-photographs; and the self-declaration memo 'Anti-Architect no. 1'. The exhibition gave a body to the thesis of the Fun Palace as anti-building and situated its centrality in Price's life-long project. As Wigley later recalled, 'Fun Palace is the laboratory within which Price invented himself as a kind of an anti-architect'.<sup>80</sup> At the same time, the exhibition presented a context in which Price's radical ephemerality was confronted to the substance of Rossi and Stirling. As Lobsinger argues in her review of the exhibition: 'the contrast between Price's celebration of anticipatory architecture and Italian architect Rossi's theory of typology and architectural permanence came as a conceptual and visual shock'.<sup>81</sup>

With wit and efficacy, Wigley's curatorial project unfolds the Fun Palace from the Cedric Price fonds to characterise Price's office as a research laboratory. However, what the exhibition portrays essentially is Price's role as a systematic collector and the guardian of the materials left behind by an inexhaustible and fundamentally collective research process conducted by the Fun Palace organization. It is the systematic double practice of Price as researcher-collector that created the Cedric Price fonds, and that is what the exhibition ultimately celebrates. For not only does it inaugurate new possibilities for scholarly research on the Fun Palace, as Wigley claims, but, at the same time, it anticipates the hegemony that the Cedric Price fonds will exercise on Fun Palace scholarship from that point. A key Marxist concept, often associated with Antonio Gramsci, hegemony refers to that condition whereby the dominant system of values – a 'selective tradition' – is actively consensually practised in lived experience rather than imposed. Hegemony, explains Raymond Williams, 'is the central, effective and dominant system of meanings and values, which are not merely abstract but which are organized and lived (...). It is a whole body of practices and expectations (...). It is a set of meanings and values which as they are experienced as practices appear as reciprocally confirming.'<sup>82</sup> The Fun Palace presented in this exhibition is precisely a most comprehensive construction of the project, yet one produced by the Cedric Price fonds only. Excluded from it there is precisely that range of Fun Palace production that may have escaped the collector's gaze – such as the existing footage from the Fun Palace film, now held at the British Film Institute but at the time of the exhibition, in custody with Littlewood's collaborator Peter Rankin. It is the image of Cedric Price as anti-architect, one self-produced through the Fun Palace process, that the exhibition ultimately constructs by

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<sup>80</sup> Mark Wigley, 'Homage-symposium "An Afternoon with Cedric Price#2: Mark Wigley"', CCA, Montreal, February 2017, 27:56. <https://www.cca.qc.ca/en/events/41605/an-afternoon-with-cedric-price-no-2>.

<sup>81</sup> Mary Louise Lobsinger, 'Review of Out of the Box: Price Rossi Stirling + Matta-Clark', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 63, no. 3 (2004): 385.

<sup>82</sup> Williams, *Culture and Materialism*, 38.

means of and within Price's archive and is further reinforced in the title of the related *Domus* article 'Cedric Price's Fun Palace'. Neither the gallery nor the page leave much room to explore Littlewood's agency, via the Fun Palace process, in the constitution of Price's critical architectural practice.

In parallel with the exhibition, the outreach programme 'Cedric Price and his Fun Palace' engaged students from three primary and high schools in Montreal in workshops at the CCA to imagine by means of models the ideas behind Fun Palace. A total of 123 contributions formed the exhibition 'Fun with a Palace' in 2004. It is through this programme that children, which were a key audience of the Fun Palace idea for Littlewood, would be temporarily represented – for the overall format of the exhibition and its location mainly addressed scholarly audiences. Scholars were further convened at the follow-up symposium 'Cedric Price Summit' that Wigley, by then Dean of the Columbia Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation, organized at that institution in New York in 2005.

Under the auspices of CCA, the image of the Fun Palace as an anti-building, namely a form of research-led architecture led by Price, would circulate intensively in scholarly events that followed. In 2004, the curator Hans Ulrich Obrist co-organised the conference 'Fun Palace Berlin 200X. Cultural Centres for the 21st Century', in Berlin.<sup>83</sup> A four-month cultural programme, scholars and practitioners inhabited the Palast der Republik in Berlin, which had been scheduled for demolition, to interrogate how cultural experimentation could take an open form, learning directly from the Fun Palace's systemic ambition. Academic Juan Herreros, one of the participants in the Columbia summit and in the Berlin conference, and curator of the exhibition 'Silent Architectures: Potteries Thinkbelt' held in 2001 in Madrid, launched the course syllabus 'Palacios de la Diversion. Isla de San Miguel, Azores' (2004) to interpret aspects of the Fun Palace project by means of contemporary architectural design pedagogy. The first detailed historiography of the Fun Palace, Stanley Mathews' *From Agit-Prop to Free Space: the Architecture of Cedric Price*, based on his doctoral research, was published in 2007. Prints of the Fun Palace's drawings would be exhibited in Barnabas Calder's 'Cedric Price: Thinking the Unthinkable' (Glasgow, 2011), while the Cedric Price fonds would be selected to inaugurate the CCA's Multidisciplinary Research Program 'British Architecture for Society' in 2014. Among the scholars invited, Ben Sweeting would develop an argument about the impact of the Fun Palace's conception of indeterminacy upon the field of British cybernetics.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Other organisers include Philipp Misselwitz, Philipp Oswalt, Stefan Rethfeld. 'Fun Palace Berlin 200X. Cultural Centres for the 21st Century' [http://www.urbancatalyst.net/fun\\_palace4.php?lang=en](http://www.urbancatalyst.net/fun_palace4.php?lang=en)

<sup>84</sup> Nick Beech et al., 'British Architecture and the Contestation of Postwar Cultural Consensus' (Seminar, Canadian Centre for Architecture, 10 September 2015), <https://www.cca.qc.ca/en/events/3531/british-architecture-and-the-contestation-of-postwar-cultural-consensus>.

Co-published by the CCA and the Architectural Association in 2016, Samantha Hardingham's systematic catalogue *Cedric Price Works 1952–2003: A Forward-Minded Retrospective* thoroughly presents Price's prolific professional career by reproducing a substantial quantity of Price's archival material from the Cedric Price fonds, as well as reproductions of notebook pages from the Cedric Price Collection, St John's College, Cambridge, and other materials. In providing access to substantial archival records it invites further scholarship on Cedric Price. Hardingham's introduction acknowledges the major role of CCA in preserving Price's legacy by acquiring and cataloguing the contents of his office, as well as the invaluable contribution of more specific collections such as 'Cedric Price Estate, St Johns College, Cambridge, Alistair McAlpine's Estate, Peter Rankin on behalf of Joan Littlewood, the Architectural Association and Museum of Modern Art in New York.'<sup>85</sup> Split into 'Projects' and 'Articles & Talks', designs and words – even if a number of Price's projects challenge this division, for they were created as reports, magazine articles and written speculations, Non-Plan among others – the compilation aims to provide contemporary scholars with a 'frame of reference' to dive into Price's world, as Hardingham argues. The Fun Palace opens the chronologically organised *Projects*, a volume with 112 works that seem to materialize what others have referred to as Price's life-long project.<sup>86</sup> With 40 pages dedicated to the Fun Palace, Hardingham chronologically records a plurality of the project's media held in Cedric Price fonds, introduced by 'matter-of-fact descriptions' in order to facilitate a frame of reference for scholars interested in Price's world – a strategy that Hardingham explains to differ from Price's heavy-editing practice.<sup>87</sup> To celebrate the launch of Hardingham's encyclopedic retrospective, the CCA hosted the two-stage symposium 'An Afternoon with Cedric Price#1' at the Lisbon Biennale in 2016 – where Price's McAppy project was exhibited – and its #2 iteration at the CCA in 2017. Recordings of the seminars are available online through the Centre's YouTube channel [FIGURE 6.10]. Participating in the first of these, Tanja Herdt shared her book *The City and Architecture of Change: The Work and Radical Visions of Cedric Price*, 2017, based on her doctoral research. Complementary to Hardingham's, Herdt subtly interweaves the Fun Palace with concurrent projects such as the Potteries Thinkbelt and later McAppy project (an investigation on building site safety) to draw an image of Price's life-long project as a social system of wider urban implications set against the background of British post-war culture.<sup>88</sup> Wigley recalled his curatorial approach to the Fun Palace in 2004 in the second of these

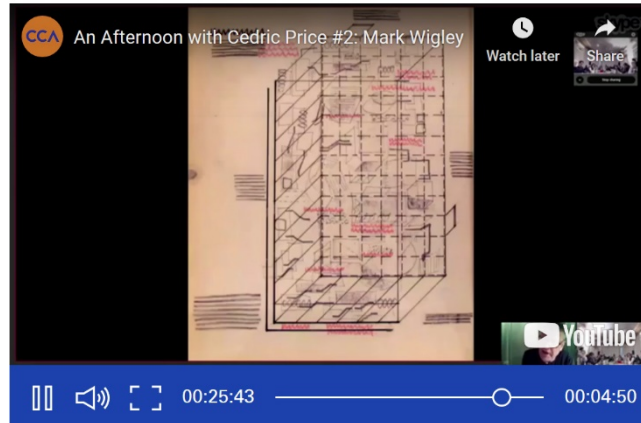
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<sup>85</sup> Hardingham, *Cedric Price Works 1952-2003*, 16.

<sup>86</sup> For example, Hobhouse et al., 'Cedric Price Disappears'; Wigley, 'An Afternoon with Cedric Price#2: Mark Wigley'.

<sup>87</sup> Hardingham, *Cedric Price Works 1952-2003*, 16.

<sup>88</sup> Herdt, *The City and the Architecture of Change*.



**FIGURE 6.10:** *'An Afternoon with Cedric Price#2: Mark Wigley'*, CCA, Montreal, February 2017, CCAchannel, YouTube. Produced on the occasion of the launch of 'Cedric Price Works 1952-2003: A Forward-Minded Retrospective'. <https://www.cca.qc.ca/en/events/41605/an-afternoon-with-cedric-price-no-2>

symposia.

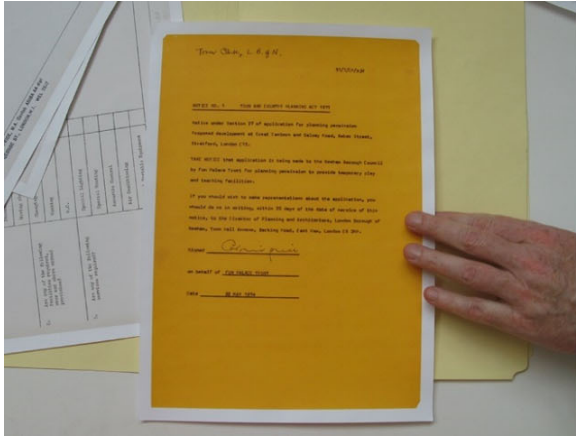
Supported by CCA, Cedric Price Estate and Lucius & Annemarie Burckhardt Foundation and commissioned by Swiss Arts Council Pro Helvetia, the exhibition 'Lucius Burckhardt and Cedric Price - A stroll through a fun palace' was curated by Hans Ulrich Obrist for the Swiss Pavilion, 14<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale, 2014. It was developed with a team of collaborators including the scientific director of the pavilion Lorenza Baroncelli, architects Herzog & de Meuron, and a group of over 60 students acting as ambassadors, amongst others. In responding to the year's general theme 'Absorbing Modernity, 1914-2014' – under the directorship of Rem Koolhaas – the exhibition yielded a joint homage to the legacy of Cedric Price and sociologist Lucius Burckhardt by staging their archives. Part of an ongoing investigation on the spatial productivities of archival curation since 2010,<sup>89</sup> Obrist's curatorial project reproduced a selection of the Fun Palace's archival records from the Cedric Price fonds – exhibiting media faithful in size, colour and archival reference – alongside the Potteries Thinkbelt, Atom, Westpen Agricultural Complex, Mean Time and A Lung for Midtown Manhattan projects.<sup>90</sup> The selection for the Fun Palace was broad, for it included media as diverse as Littlewood's handwritten and typed promotional drafts, a planning application dated 28 May 1974, the 'Preliminary Cost Indication' document, minutes from the 'Fun Palace Cybernetics Committee' dated 17/03/65, and Gordon Pask's Proposals for a Cybernetic Theatre, as well 'Preliminary Cost Indication' document, minutes from the 'Fun Palace Cybernetics Committee' dated 17/03/65, and Gordon Pask's Proposals for a Cybernetic Theatre, as well as some key drawings of the Fun Palace such as '51/65: Complex-Typical Short Section. Amended 21.4.64', sketches and two of the Fun Palace montages. Encased in methacrylate, the Fun Palace model was the only original non-reproduced object in the show [FIGURE 6.11]. The curatorial project was staged as a simulated archive. A series of carts loaded with archival reproductions were pushed and pulled so they temporarily occupied the gallery space as a hint of the dynamic Fun Palace environment. At intervals the carts retreated and a choreography, aided by both sound and visuals, rendered active the Fun Palace model. Projected on the walls, the model's figure grew into an immersive environment to meet Burckhardt's footage, which was projected on the gallery wall.<sup>91</sup> Ancillary art commissions installed temporarily in the garden and roof of the Swiss Pavillion freely interpreted Price and Burckhardt's archives and helped to revitalise

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<sup>89</sup> 'The Archive as a Productive Space of Conflict', co-directed with Markus Miessen at the Karlsruhe University of Arts and Design,

<sup>90</sup> Hans Ulrich Obrist, ed., 'Lucius Burckhardt and Cedric Price – A Stroll through a Fun Palace'. *Swiss Pavillion, Venice Biennale Architettura 2014*. (Swiss Arts Council Pro Helvetia, 2014), 11.

<sup>91</sup> Conceived by Asad Raza, Tino Seghal with Herzog and de Meuron, Dominique Gonzalez –Foerster, Dorothea von Hantelmann and Philippe Parreno. Obrist, 5.



**FIGURE 6.11:** Hans Ulrich Obrist and Lorenza Baroncelli, 'Lucius Burckhardt and Cedric Price - A Stroll through a Fun Palace', Swiss Pavilion, 14<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale, 2014. Photography by the author.

the archive on display.<sup>92</sup> 'A dramaturgy' – Obrist claimed – 'envelops Price's and Burckhardt's production, selecting drawings from the archive and re-presenting them to the public. Trolleys of original materials are constantly moved and rearranged, reflecting on the contemporary act of the curatorial selection that mediates between 20th century institution and the 21st century future'.<sup>93</sup> Strictly regulated and surveilled, the turnover of the exhibition's material was around twenty minutes, a choreography led by 'ambassadors' – a group of over 70 Swiss students and artists – distributed per cart.<sup>94</sup> The *Swiss Summer School*, coordinated by Lorenza Baroncelli, invited teachers and students from 22 architectural schools to research – following a weekly rota – the relevance of the projects today, with their reflections to yield 'a tool-box for tomorrow's architects' and materials to revitalise these archives.<sup>95</sup> 'While the archival material of Price and Burckhardt is gradually destroyed by humidity and transformed by the interaction with the artists emphasizing the decadence of the institutions of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the *Swiss Summer School* creates a new archive of ideas, an interlinked, gravitational center for open questions and discussions.'<sup>96</sup> The school is constituted, Baroncelli claimed, as 'a network that aims to rethink the current infrastructure of the production of knowledge for the approaching non-linear, four-dimensional, and un-deterministic world'.<sup>97</sup>

Facsimiles from the Fun Palace material exhibited in Venice Biennale would be re-staged in '*A stroll through the fun palace*' for *A Prelude to The Shed* in New York in May 2018. Commissioned by The Shed – a non-profit art organization run by artistic director Alex Poots and advisor Hans U. Obrist – *Prelude* offered a two-week, free programme as a foretaste to what will be on offer in the cultural centre The Shed, scheduled to open in spring a year later. Designed by Diller Scofidio + Renfro, The Shed is part of a large-scale real estate development in Hudson Yards, Manhattan. *Prelude* was a hybrid of exhibition and performance produced by a roster of choreographers, musicians, artists and academics. Architect Kunle Adeyemi designed a transformable and temporary pavilion to host the event in a vacant site within the ongoing corporate development. Art historian Dorothea Von Hantelmann gave intellectual support to the initiative in her essay 'What Is the New Ritual

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<sup>92</sup> Amongst other, 'Smelling Tree (Portrait of Cedric Price)' by artist Carsten Holler, coats an apple tree with a freely interpreted odor of Cedric Price.

<sup>93</sup> Obrist, 'Lucius Burckhardt and Cedric Price', 5.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid*, 59.

<sup>95</sup> The architectural schools invited are: Architectural Association School of Architecture, London; Accademia di Architettura di Mendrisio; American University of Beirut; Berlaque Institute, Rotterdam; Delft University of Technology; Dessau Institute of Architecture; Domus Academy, Milan; Ecole d'Architecture de Versailles, Paris; Eindhoven University of Technology; EPOKA University, Tirana; ETH Zurich; European University Madrid; Future Cities Lab, San Francisco; Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts; In Residence, Tutin; Rice University, Houston; Royal College of Art, London; Strelka Institute, Moscow; Tokyo Institute of Technology; Tunghai University, Taichung; University of Belgrade; University of California, San Diego; University of Thessaly, Volos.

<sup>96</sup> Obrist, 'Lucius Burckhardt and Cedric Price', 57.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid*, 57.

Space for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century?', a reflection upon the qualities of those spaces where society gathers, communicates and ultimately renews its underlying social order and worldview. Von Hantelmann closes importing the spatial flexibility of the Fun Palace as archetype of today's ritual space: 'Architecturally, an inspiration for this concern is a utopian plan known as the Fun Palace, by the visionary architect Cedric Price. In 1961, Price and theater director Joan Littlewood developed this idea as a modular, movable, and transformable structure that could be endlessly reorganized to display any form of artistic production. Concretely, it provided an adaptable space capable of hosting a large audience while still engaging them as individuals. Thus its architectural conception incorporated essential features of the current social formation into the processes of production: large, concentrated groups of people, individualization, flexibilization, constant change, and the increasing involvement of consumers.'<sup>98</sup> It is this latter audience in Von Hantelmann's list that appears at odds with Littlewood's popular theatre, rooted in agit-prop traditions, and with how that informs the Fun Palace concept. Similarly, the selected audience of the initiative 'Schema for a School' run by artist Asad Raza and Princeton academics D. Graham Burnett and Jeff Dolven for *Prelude* appears distant from the Fun Palace's inclusive ambition. An unprotected copy of the model was displayed as part of *A stroll through the fun palace* – here it is the site of a conversation in the open air between what may possibly be one of the *Prelude*'s ambassadors and a visitor [FIGURE 6.12]. Audiences consume at their leisure the Fun Palace's simulated model. Captioned in the 'Cedric Price's model for The Fun Palace at *Prelude to The Shed*' in the official website of The Shed,<sup>99</sup> this photograph by Stephanie Berger well conveys how enfeebled and unacknowledged the complexity of Price's and Littlewood's Fun Palace project is in presentations of the project today. An increasingly aestheticised Fun Palace offers first a rolling spectacle designed for the scholarly audience of the Venice Biennale and then the Manhattan public of The Shed. Significantly, this reified image of the Fun Palace departs from the ambitions of both Littlewood's dynamic and inclusive entertainment – action-driven, and utterly accessible through an unmediated actor-audience relation to deliver its critical message – and Price's own socially-useful design practice, as a means to equip and activate a wider public. According to Jean Baudrillard, the decisive shift from representation to simulation is achieved when the image, freed from its tethering to things in the real world, enacts the death of the referent: 'Representation stems from the principle of the equivalence of the sign and of the real (even if this equivalence is Utopian, it is a fundamental axiom). Simulation, on the contrary, stems from the Utopia of the

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<sup>98</sup> Dorothea von Hantelmann, 'New Ritual Space 21st Century', The Shed, 2018, <https://theshed.org/program/series/2-a-prelude-to-the-shed/new-ritual-space-21st-century>.

<sup>99</sup> [https://theshed.org/program/series/2-a-prelude-to-the-shed?feed\\_item=9](https://theshed.org/program/series/2-a-prelude-to-the-shed?feed_item=9)



**FIGURE 6.12:** 'Cedric Price's model for The Fun Palace at A Prelude to The Shed', *Manhattan*, May 2018. Photography: Stephanie Berger. © Stephanie Berger/The Shed.

principle of equivalence, from the radical negation of the sign as value, from the sign as the reversion and death sentence of every reference. Whereas representation attempts to absorb simulation by interpreting it as a false representation, simulation envelops the whole edifice of representation itself as a simulacrum'.<sup>100</sup> 'Lucius Burckhardt and Cedric Price - A stroll through a fun palace' and 'A Prelude to Shed', presented a simulated Fun Palace archive and a simulacrum of research practice itself. Even if the selection of media on show at both events was broad, it essentially complied with curatorial expectations about its audience of consumers. These events ultimately simulate the finitude and accessibility of the Fun Palace archive, and present it as an object ready to be consumed in short time by art-knowledgeable visitors, rather than stimulating its questioning by an active research practice. In neutralizing the complexity of the project's archive, these curatorial presentations seem to delimit and circumscribe the expanded possibilities of audience participation and interaction (even if that is now primarily through research practice) that animated and drove the original Fun Palace idea. Having attended *Prelude*, the art historian and theorist Claire Bishop challenged the uncritical rhetoric surrounding the event and its disengagement from the cultural project advanced by the Fun Palace in her article 'Palace in Plungeland', *Artforum*, 2018: 'the total impression was less of a new ritual space than of quality decoration for an area where a cozy pied-à-terre will set you back \$12 million. In this context, the Price trolleys offered the memory of participatory architecture in the register of defanged ancient history, rather than as a way to put critical pressure on actual real estate.'<sup>101</sup>

The Shed that *Prelude* celebrated opened in April 2019, a flexible gallery-space stack nested into an extraordinary telescopic shell that glides over the public front square designed by Diller Scofidio + Renfro's. Elizabeth Diller frames the association with the Fun Palace as that of spatial flexibility and variable programme, and discerns from the latter the conditions under which architectural practice operates today in her 'Soft Homage' to Cedric Price, within Obrist's 'Lucius Burckhardt and Cedric Price: A Stroll through a Fun Palace', 2014: 'the lineage is as obvious as it is elusive. Price's seminal "anti-building" produced an ethos within the architecture community without which Culture Shed' – to be renamed The Shed later – 'would never have been conceived. The new project uses the strategy of architecture as infrastructure (...) the organizing principle is flexibility for an unknowable future. Culture Shed offers shelter, conditioned space of different sizes, power, light, and equipment to enable endless possibilities of artistic engagement. With its variable program and spatial elasticity, the building is spontaneous and responsive to multiple and simultaneous desires. It exists in a perpetual state of change.' But Diller also notes the different socio-political,

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<sup>100</sup> 'The Precession of Simulacra', in Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, Body, in Theory (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), 6.

<sup>101</sup> Claire Bishop, 'Palace in Plunderland', *Artforum International* 57, no. 1 (2018): 93-+.

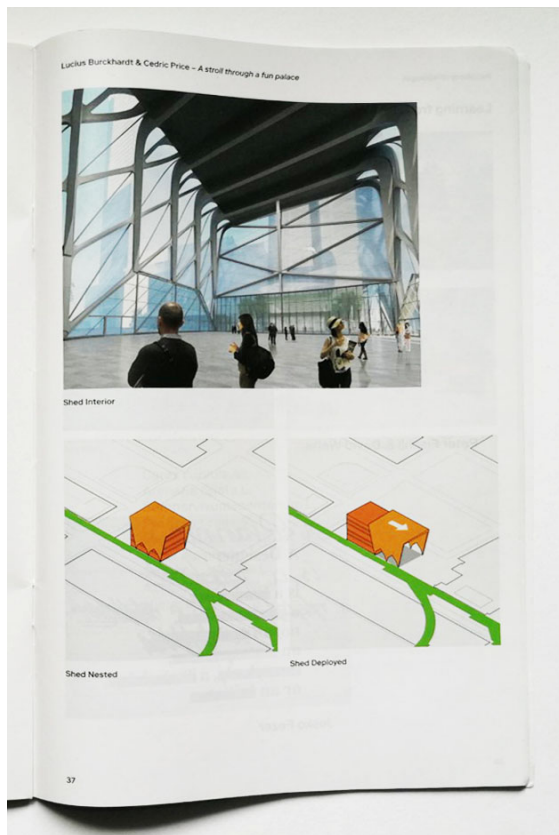
economic and technical conditions affecting today's architectural practice in relation to Price's 'unfinished intellectual project'. These are, the current liability of rapid-changing technology rather than its enabler role for Price's; the ambiguous role of digital technology, facilitator but also tracker of open-source culture; the empty spaces afforded by pre-determined mechanical servicing in spite of an animated kit-of-parts; the parsing of disciplinary boundaries by academia and the professionalization of expertise versus the blurring contours of inter-disciplinarity in which the architect operated as a generalist amidst sub-committees; and the financial dilemma for independent culture provision without government or philanthropy funding.<sup>102</sup> The modernist rhetoric of spatial flexibility of The Shed distracts the selected audience of the booklet '*Lucius Burckhardt and Cedric Price – A stroll through a fun palace*' [FIGURE 6.13], and that of *Prelude*, from the broader picture. The reconfigurable arts centre is buttressed by an 88-storey luxury residential tower, itself part of the 16 high-rises of the Hudson Yards redevelopment in Manhattan. The tower's dominant 'contoured cloverleaf' top profile affords financial stability to the centre, and servicing capacity in its base [FIGURE 6.14]. The scale of the hybrid silhouette gives a body to the corporate model of cultural provision in Hudson Yards, and exhibits the spectacular transaction with the Fun Palace image in this context of large-scale land privatization. As Clare Bishop objects to such an ideological gloss and decries the missed opportunity for socially-oriented projects: 'This is clearly a very different type of operation than Littlewood's progressive "laboratory of fun" and "university of the streets."' Influenced by cybernetic theory, Price conceived the Fun Palace as a self-regulating environment in which visitors would adapt the spaces and walls to their own needs, forming an architectural feedback loop. The Shed, by contrast, will be programmed by a team headed by impresario Alex Poots, formerly of Manchester International Festival and the Park Avenue Armory, where he became known for pricey, high-end spectacle'. 'The more radical proposition' – Bishop suggests – 'would be a cultural institution that includes within its architecture crucial services like a public school, day care, or a branch of the New York Public Library' – and mentions the leisure centre for workers SESC Pompeia in Sao Paulo as an example.<sup>103</sup>

Alongside scholarship on Price and the way his legacy pierces historiographies on post-war architectural experimentation since 1999, discussions of the project in architectural theory

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<sup>102</sup> Obrist, '*Lucius Burckhardt and Cedric Price*', 36.

<sup>103</sup> Bishop, 'Palace in Plunderland', 3.



**FIGURE 6.13:** Elizabeth Diller, 'Soft Homage' in H.U. Obrist and L. Baroncelli, 'Lucius Burckhardt and Cedric Price – A Stroll through a Fun Palace', 2014.

**FIGURE 6.14:** Diller Scofidio + Renfro, The Shed, Hudson Yards, Manhattan, 2019.

and historiographies of digital cultures elicit key preoccupations of the discipline such as authorship, mobility and indeterminacy, and the emergence of a post-human subjectivity. Thus, Tim Anstey's study 'Architecture and Rhetoric: Persuasion, Context, Action', published in the collection *Architecture and Authorship* (2007), assesses the ambivalent authorship of Price's practice as exemplified in the Fun Palace, one which is highly contingent with regards to the control exerted upon architectural form but dictatorial with regards to architectural representation. The project's diffused production, developed through an interdisciplinary team, questioned the self-sufficient nature of architectural action that was constitutive of the modern tradition: 'a complete set of documented manoeuvres and exchanges, rather than as an unrealised architectural "work" (the project was never finally built), it revealed a new kind of ground for thinking about architecture'.<sup>104</sup> Furthermore, the Fun Palace's diagrams and charts challenge the nature of architectural representation itself – and in particular the hegemony of the architectural drawing in the modern tradition. These, Anstey argues, reveal Price's authorial rhetoric, for he remains tightly in command of the affects that these architectural images distribute to persuade their audiences. Anstey situates Price alongside the Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter of *Collage City* in the long tradition of the Albertian model of the architect, one whose authority rules less the building site than the representation of buildings. The chart 'Camden Fun Palace: Network Analysis' – published here for the first time – and the Lea River Site Photomontage illustrate the article. In the same monograph, Stanley Mathews' hones upon the idea of Price's 'authorship at a remove' in the Fun Palace in 'Cedric Price as Anti-architect', arguing for the collaborative endeavor of his production on one hand – a sort of '*cadavre exquis*' – and the way the neutrality of response afforded by its technological core so switched off authorial intention or meaning on the other hand.<sup>105</sup> It is interesting how the article opens pointing at the paradox that Price's disavowal of architectural authorship, pithily materialized in a handwritten self-declaration of 'anti-architect', takes place at the CCA, an institution concerned with preserving the paradigm of authorship. However, the discussion is concerned with Price and his understanding of architectural production as exemplified in the Fun Palace.

In *Words and Building: A Vocabulary of Modern Architecture* (2000), Adrian Forty discusses the Fun Palace's contribution to the language of modernist architectural criticism in terms of its technically-driven flexibility and its formlessness. The former quality operates by removing weight from architecture to make it mobile as a whole, a property the Fun Palace shares with Yona Friedman's urban propositions in Forty's account, yet one assigned to the modern architect's business of securing the functionality of his structure rather than with the politics

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<sup>104</sup> Anstey, 'Architecture and Rhetoric', 25.

<sup>105</sup> Stanley Mathews, 'Cedric Price as Anti-Architect', in *Architecture and Authorship* (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2007), 144.

of its destabilization through occupation by its user, as situationism does.<sup>106</sup> It is the latter quality, the anti-form affiliated to the idea of technology, that challenges the modernist principle of determinate form for it refers to an architecture of indeterminate volume and endless rearrangements to accommodate ludic encounters of situationist inspiration, a quality which Forty appreciates as well in the work of Archigram and the Centre Pompidou.<sup>107</sup> Thus, Forty's analysis focuses the Fun Palace as an architecture for which technology both tethers the project to the modernist functionalist canon – through its flexible rhetoric –and frees it from such – through its indeterminate form. A vignette of the Fun Palace's section from the film storyboard, in which random objects insinuate free occupation of the space [FIGURE 6.15], and a draft of the broadsheet's interior perspective drawing illustrate respectively the flexible and formless architecture of the Fun Palace – even if swapping them would enhance these two qualities of the project.

For their part, historiographies of digital culture eagerly revisit the encounter of the Fun Palace with cybernetics that had captured the scholarly imagination of 1960s and early 1970s, although often in a way more valuable for the contexts afforded than for the depth of the analysis. For instance, historian of science Andrew Pickering, in *The Cybernetic Brain: Sketches of Another Future*, 2010, situates the Fun Palace within the legacy of Gordon Pask, as part of a cross-disciplinary historiography on the impact of cybernetics upon epistemology, psychiatry or management through the pioneering work of William Grey Walter, Ross Ashby, Gregory Bateson and R.D. Laing and Stafford Beer.<sup>108</sup> More critical with the permeation of architectural practice by digital culture since the 1950s up until today than the collection of contributions gathered by Antoine Picon in *Digital Culture in Architecture* (2010),<sup>109</sup> Anthony Vidler's 'Cities of Tomorrow' (2012) challenges the 'fetishization of technology' for their historical promise of an architecture 'autre' at the service of current social problems that has yet to be realized.<sup>110</sup>

The Fun Palace's cybernetic atmosphere is for practitioner and scholar Ariane Lourie Harrison part of a genealogy of responsive mediums, gridded frames and technological prostheses that, having emerged in the post war to challenge the autonomy of modern architectural production, constitute today a valuable precedent for a 'posthuman'

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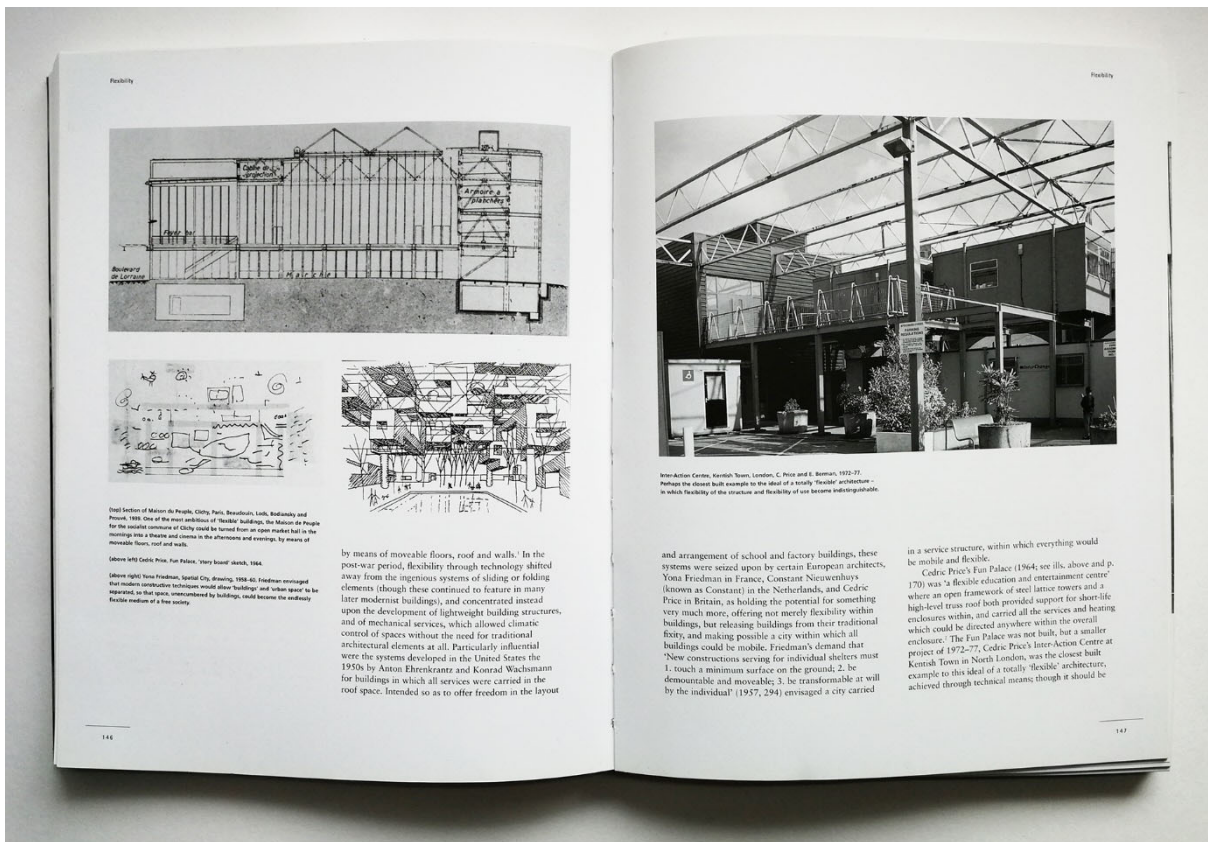
<sup>106</sup> Forty, *Words and Buildings*, 147.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid, 171.

<sup>108</sup> Pickering, *The Cybernetic Brain*, 364–80.

<sup>109</sup> Picon recalls the impact of cybernetics in a cluster of architectural manifestations including Price's Fun Palace and Generator projects, Rogers and Piano's 's Beaubourg, Archigram member Denis Crompton's Computer City and Control and Choice system, Yona Friedman's Flatwriter, Lionel March's Land Use and Built Form Studies at the University of Cambridge, and Nicholas Negroponte's Machine Group at the MIT. In Picon, *Digital Culture in Architecture*, 36.

<sup>110</sup> Anthony Vidler, 'Cities of Tomorrow: Anthony Vidler on Technology, Ecology, and Architecture', *Artforum International* 51, no. 1 (1 September 2012): 484.



**FIGURE 6.15:** Adrian Forty, *Words And Buildings. A Vocabulary of Modern Architecture*, 2000, 146.

architecture,<sup>111</sup> Post-human, as a quality, borrows from theorizations since the 1990s on hybrid informational-biologic nature, networked form and fluid states of subjectivity, argues Harrison.<sup>112</sup> Forerunner of this emergent subjectivity, the Fun Palace and Price's Aviary for London's Zoo sit along Gordon Pask's Musicolour Machines and Nicolas Schoffer's responsive contrivances of mid-1950s, Arata Isozaki's Osaka Demonstration Robot and other landmarks of the Expo Osaka of 1970, together with more recent realizations such as the cybernetic interface of Blur, by Diller+ Scofidio for the Swiss Expo 2002, and the sensory environments of Philippe Rahm's Gulf Steam in 2008.

### Joan Littlewood in Scholars' Accounts

In contrast to the richness of Price's organised and coherent archive, the sparse condition in which Littlewood's archival records endure today seem to inform the quiet evolution of scholarship on her. This begs the question of how scholarship navigates the sparse archive of Littlewood and finds its sources. The first historiography of Theatre Workshop, by former member Howard Goorney (1981), took the form of a 'piece of oral history', undertaken through interviews with a number of company members and registered on tape. Goorney explains his approach: 'by interviewing on tape a cross section of those involved at different periods, I was able to draw a collective memory of events, and divergent views and opinions. By using these tapes as a source of verbatim quotation rather than as research material, and thereby retaining the different idioms of speech, I hope something of the atmosphere of the events has been created in addition to an account of the events themselves. No one person has total recall, but by putting the pieces together, as in a jigsaw, hopefully the picture emerges.'<sup>113</sup> Following Goorney, Littlewood scholar Nadine Holdsworth has since 1999 mapped the Fun Palace within Littlewood's Theatre Workshop radical practice, its enduring financial struggle due disagreements with Arts Council policy, and its development into the community-driven activist form of Stratford Fair. Sources for this have been identified in the Barker Collection in Texas and in the Theatre Royal Stratford East Archive Collection (in *Joan Littlewood*, Routledge Performance Practitioners series, 2006),<sup>114</sup> The Theatre Workshop Company Files at the Arts Council of Great Britain (in "'They'd Have Pissed on My

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<sup>111</sup> Harrison, *Architectural Theories of the Environment*, 14.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid, 13–14.

<sup>113</sup> Howard Goorney, *The Theatre Workshop Story* (London: Methuen, 2008), xi.

<sup>114</sup> Holdsworth, *Joan Littlewood*.

Grave": the Arts Council and Theatre Workshop', 1999)<sup>115</sup> and *Stratford Express* clippings and other archival and secondary sources (in 'Spaces to Play / Playing with spaces: young people, citizenship and Joan Littlewood', 2007)<sup>116</sup>. Expanding this focused scholarship, the monography *Joan Littlewood's Theatre*, part of Cambridge Studies in Modern Theatre series, 2011, includes a general account of the Fun Palace project in one of the chapters, drawing largely on media such as key press articles from 1960s,<sup>117</sup> Price's and Littlewood's curated publications,<sup>118</sup> and scholarship on Price such as Landau's (1968), Lobsinger's (2000) and Mathews' (2007).<sup>119</sup> 'Cultural democracy and spatial encounters: the Fun Palace project' offers no illustration of the project – only Clive Barker's Personal Archive is mentioned in the notes to have afforded a few Fun Palace records. It closes suggesting associations of the Fun Palace with later architectural developments such as Richard Roger's The Millennium Dome in London (1999) and Will Alsop's The Public in West Bromwich (2008), and more broadly with programmes concerned with aspects as varied as lifelong learning, brownfield regeneration, intelligent environments, multi-use leisure centres or online game-playing.<sup>120</sup> Juliet Rufford, a scholar working on exchanges between drama and architecture, draws on material from the London County Council archive at London Metropolitan Archives, The Arts Council of Great Britain archive and Cedric Price fonds in her article "What Have We Got to Do with Fun": Littlewood, Price, and the Policy Makers' (2011) to investigate – through the misencounters registered in these records – the alterity with the Fun Palace constituted within Arts Council policy at the time.<sup>121</sup> On its part, Stanley Mathews' *From Agit-Prop to Free Space: the Architecture of Cedric Price* draws on Littlewood's highly edited self-portrait *Joan's Book* (1994) and Howard Goorney's *The Theatre Workshop Story*, 1981 to situate Littlewood's interests and concurrent professional work within the rise of the Fun Palace, while the main sources for his research are live exchanges with Price and his close collaborators, the Cedric Price fonds, and the Barker Collection.<sup>122</sup> This distinctive sourcing in scholarship reveals the partitions of discipline in relation to the Fun Palace archive - Cedric Price fonds stands a main referent in architectural studies, but remains essentially unexplored in Littlewood's scholarship, which instead finds its grounds in Littlewood's fragmentary and dispersed collections.

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<sup>115</sup> Holdsworth, "They'd Have Pissed on My Grave": The Arts Council and Theatre Workshop', *New Theatre Quarterly* 15, no. 1 (February 1999): 3–16.

<sup>116</sup> Holdsworth, 'Spaces to Play/Playing with Spaces', 293–304.

<sup>117</sup> Littlewood and Price, 'A Laboratory of Fun'; Banham, 'People's Palaces', Lewis, 'Fun Palace: Counter-Blast to Boredom'.

<sup>118</sup> Price, *The Square Book*; Littlewood, *Joan's Book*.

<sup>119</sup> Holdsworth, *Joan Littlewood's Theatre*.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid*, 233.

<sup>121</sup> Rufford, "What Have We Got to Do with Fun?"

<sup>122</sup> Interviewees include Cedric Price, Royston Landau, Mike Webb, Peter Cook, David Green, Mary Banham and Peter Smithson.

The activation of other sections of the Fun Palace archive has been slower than that of the Cedric Price fonds. The bequest and catalogue of Cedric Price's notebooks at St. John's Special Collections, Cambridge, led to the exhibition 'Cedric Price: Outside the Box' (2014). 'Joan Littlewood Compilation' at the British Film Institute began digitization in 2008, but it would not be until 2014 that it granted online free access through the programme 'Britain on Film' with the support of Heritage Lottery Fund. In 2016, Price's alumnus and collaborator John Lyall, with the support of the Royal Institute of British Architects, grafted the ambition of Price's 1971 architectural education programme Polyark onto that of the Fun Palace in 'Polyark 4: Fun Palace Futures'. Framed as a collaborative design studio between 30 schools of architecture, it investigated how the idea of indeterminacy could be enhanced within contemporary digital cultures to resituate the original idea in 21<sup>st</sup>-century architectural education and practice. The Arts Council England has funded the ongoing UK-based cultural campaign *Fun Palaces* between 2014 and 2016.<sup>123</sup> Theatre Royal Stratford East commissioned the project 'The Palace that Joan Built' in 2014 from composer Gwyneth Herbert and artist Mel Brimfield, which consisted of a musical documentary film and live-event performed at Stratford Station based on the Fun Palace in relation to Littlewood's life and work.

## Conclusions

'Why, after decades of obscurity, have Price's work and ideas captured the imaginations of architects and historians in the present day?', asked Mathews in 2007 before attempting three, perhaps limited, answers – namely, the ease of speaking about radical ideas of the past at a safe historical distance, nostalgia for the naïve optimism of the 1960s, and moral duty towards Price's key radical propositions.<sup>124</sup> By 2014, the question of the Cedric Price fonds' per-eminent popularity at the CCA – alongside that of Gordon Matta-Clark – since its exhibition 'Out of the Box' a decade before, remained open. In attempting a reply, the CCA's research director Mirko Zardini reflected upon the necessity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century of Cedric Price's critical attitude, an 'active and critical dismantler of the clichés and attitudes afflicting society and culture – and of course, architecture – during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century'.<sup>125</sup> To these considerations one could add the renewed interest in post-war

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<sup>123</sup>Funds received by Arts Council England amount to £196,470 – a 90% lump sum of which received in 2014, and the rest between 2016 and 2017. Additionally, the digital project has received from the same institution and BBC via The Space, a total of £55,000 in 2014.

<sup>124</sup> Mathews, *From Agit-Prop to Free Space*, 255–56.

<sup>125</sup> Obrist, 'Lucius Burckhardt and Cedric Price', 10.

architecture by architectural historiography since the late 1990s, the specific challenges Cedric Price's work posed to the determinate form of modern architecture by means of his credo of 'calculated uncertainty' and the importance of his legacy for an expanding digital culture in architecture, as discussed in this chapter. However, as the case of the Fun Palace shows, the attention that scholarship has paid to Price's work since 1999 cannot be understood without the remarkable stimulus exercised by the CCA itself.

Constructed by prolific architectural scholarship, the scholarly image of the Fun Palace constantly celebrates the alterity that the project's indeterminate form and dynamic agenda – one that, closely informed by a systems approach to design, would be achieved by means of the under-specification of its programme and the heuristic expediency of its method – poses to architecture's own modern disciplinary tradition. It did so in the late 1960s and early 1970s, when historians close to Price such as Banham and Landau hailed the project's 'calculated uncertainty', and it has continued to do so since 1999, when interest in the project revived after two decades when its pulse was feeble. With the plenitude of the Cedric Price funds in operation since then, the Fun Palace has become thoroughly studied as the catalyst of Price's radical practice, and thus, the project permeates the range of scholarship – essentially architectural – for which his legacy represents a turning point. The Fun Palace is, in all these cases, the architectural realization of Price's design principle of 'calculated uncertainty'. The project earns its critical quality 'anti-' while at the same time affirming its substance as 'architecture'. Scholarly discussions approach this valence from different interests and contextualize its impact in different domains, but the image stays still – the Fun Palace is an anti-building within architecture. And the way the project is illustrated in scholarship conveys well this stasis. For the Fun Palace montages that accompany scholarly arguments speak only of the architectural realization of the Fun Palace project, while the grids that the project draws in its engagement with the cybernetic logic of self-organisation tend to be edited out. Meanwhile, media that represented a core production of the Fun Palace's cultural project and aimed to reach out to wider publics – such as the Fun Palace film, the Stratford Fair's diaries and the range of marginalia – await silently in the archive. Only when analysis moves outwards to interrogate the practices and agencies that produce this Fun Palace image, the cultural politics of scholarly production emerge. It reflects on the one hand, the precise functioning of the project's distributed and uneven archive, one in which the critical role of Littlewood has to be actively reconstructed in order to resist the affirmative presence of Price in the project. Underpinning the stasis of this scholarly image on the other, one meets the robust disciplinary boundaries that the project once tore down. As a result of these frictions governing the interaction between scholarship and the archive,

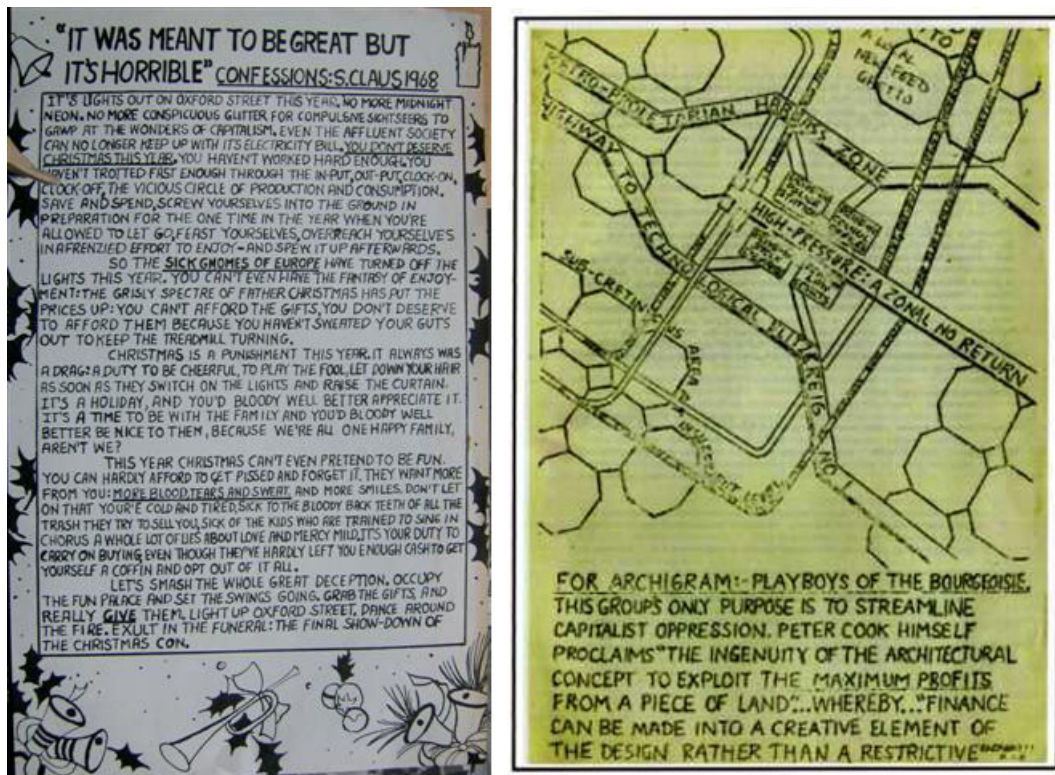


FIGURE 6.16: King Mob leaflets by David and Stuart Wise, 1968.

'Xmas leaflet which accompanied the invasion of Selfridges in 1968. Many were handed out to shoppers and many scattered across Oxford St.' [left];  
 'A piss take on the technocratic and future ultra capitalised city centre of Newcastle as conceived by the planners in 1968. Reproduced in a local gestetnered mag.' [right].

the multifacetedness and complexity of the Fun Palace as a cultural endeavour, and Littlewood's role in it, have been eroded.

## Postscript. Occupations?

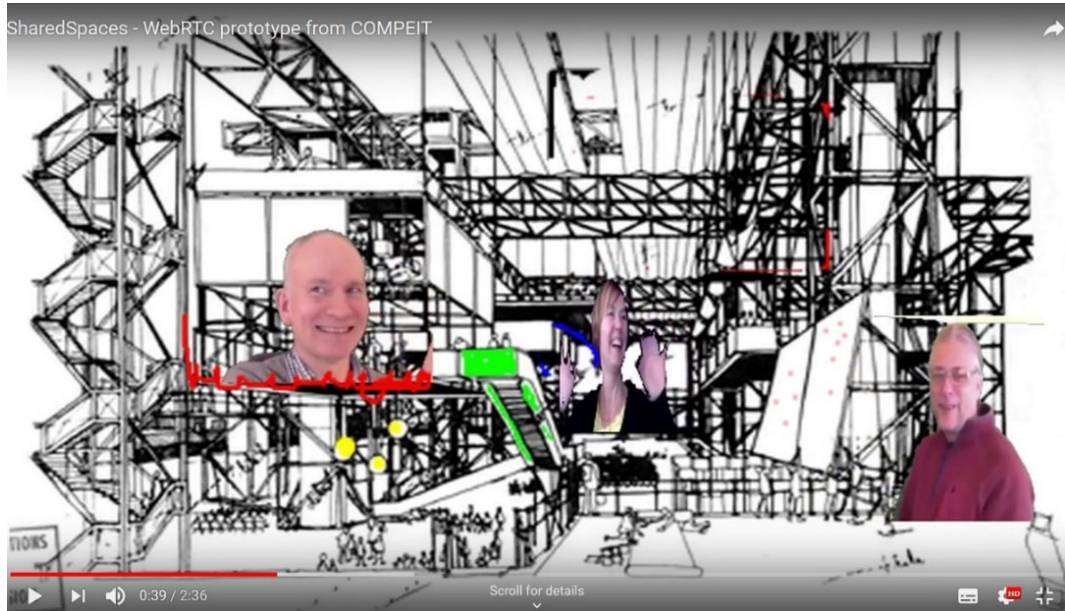
By 1968, amidst the saturation of media by the Fun Palace image, the project became a situationist target. Strikingly, only four years earlier the British situationist Alex Trocchi had heralded the project's revolutionary ethos in his *Sigma Portfolio*, as explored in Chapter 1. Developed out of a revulsion to the total penetration of social relations by the commodity, the revolutionary practice of situationism operated in various ways across Europe in the 1960s. Consolidated with the formation of the Situationist International in 1957, and a major protagonist in the student revolts of May 1968 in Paris, situationism aimed to activate everyday life with critical-political artistic practice.

King Mob was an anarchist group based in Notting Hill, London, formed by art students David and Stuart Wise and ex-situationist member Christopher Gray.<sup>126</sup> One of the early actions of the group consisted of a loosely planned riot at Selfridges department store in Oxford Street at the peak of the Christmas shopping period. Designed by David Wise, the handbill "It was meant to be great but it's horrible" Confessions: S. Claus 1968' derides the spectacle of obsessive consumption and invites clients to 'occupy the fun palace':

*It's lights out in Oxford Street this year. No more midnight neon. No more conspicuous glitter for compulsive sight seers to gawp at the wonders of capitalism. Even the affluent society can no longer keep up with its electricity bill. You don't deserve Christmas this year. You haven't worked hard enough. You haven't trotted fast enough through the in-put, out-put, clock-on, clock-off, the vicious circle of production and consumption (...)*  
*This year Christmas can't even pretend to be fun. You can hardly afford to get pissed and forget it. They want more from you: more blood, tears and sweat (...) Let's smash the whole great deception, occupy the fun palace and set the swings going. Grab the gifts, and really give them. Light up Oxford Street. Dance around the fire. Exult the funeral: the final show-down of the Christmas con.*

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<sup>126</sup> They were part of 'Heatwave' group Tim Clark, Donald Nicholson-Smith and Charlie Radcliffe.



**FIGURE 6.17:** Charlie Gullström, COMPEIT [COnnected Media and Presence from European Institute of Technology] Fun Palace, 2014, KTH Smart Spaces: Architecture and Interactive Media, KTH Department of Architecture, Stockholm.

The undated King Mob handbill 'For Archigram: playboys of the bourgeoisie' [FIGURE 6.16], more explicit than Selfridges', conveys the group's attack to the commodification of architectural media production by the architectural *establishment* represented, in the group's view, by Archigram - and possibly by Price given the former call. It appropriated the streets of Denis Crompton's Computer City and re-named them – for instance, 'Highway to technological blitzkrieg number one' and 'riot control sector / unfreeway'. Examining King Mob's activism, the scholar Britt Eversole has concluded that the occupation and *détournement* of the imagery of the British architectural neo-avant garde was, for the group, a strategy of subverting architecture's spectacularization.<sup>127</sup> 'The spectacle' – Guy Debord argued in point four of *The Society of Spectacle* (1967) – 'is not a collection of images; it is a social relationship between people that is mediated by images'.<sup>128</sup> Spectacularization identifies the atomisation of a society in thrall to the technologies and products of mass media, the privatization of information and the consequent atrophication of any collective public condition. The spectacle manifests itself through the increase of images, but these are images that are deprived of any transformative power in ordinary life. For instead, within their spellbinding enchantments, life is held in suspension.

To judge from the representation of the Fun Palace in FIGURE 6.17, one could speculate that the occupation of the Fun Palace imagery is still entertained today by a similar situationist practice to that exercised by anarchist King Mob in the late 1960s. However, it isn't. The figure illustrates the functioning of an online software that allows distributed users to interact in mediated and virtual spaces. COMPEIT – COnnected Media and Presence from European Institute of Technology – directed by Charlie Gullström, Architecture and Interactive Media Department of Architecture, KTH Royal Institute of Technology, Sweden, is part of the EU funded research programme. A main feature of this, SharedSpace, facilitates a virtual environment for users to inhabit and transform by scaling and rearranging a suite of digital objects such as softwalls, instant acoustic dividers, among others. The researchers claim that sharing a mediated space such as the one proposed improves the sense of community and encourages remote interaction and collaboration for online communities. The Civic Trust interior perspective drawing of Fun Palace, 1964, seems to be particularly suitable for the echoes it brings to the research. As Gullström argues, 'in line with the ambitions of the original Fun Palace, intended for fun and learning, it can be concluded that contemporary web technologies, such as employed in COMPEIT, enable users to control

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<sup>127</sup> Britt Eversole, 'Occupy the Fun Palace', *Thresholds* 41 (January 2013): 41.

<sup>128</sup> Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle* (New York: Zone Books, 1995), 4.

design features inside a building both for leisure and for professional purposes'.<sup>129</sup> A catalogue of nine possible rooms is on offer – Centre Pompidou Paris, the Why Factory, Delft, City Library Stockholm, alongside the Civic Trust's Fun Palace drawing. Instructions for the 'funster' – as Gordon Pask referred to the Fun Palace user in one of the Cybernetics Committee meeting – follow in the menu: 'If you follow the link (<http://compeit.eu/sharedspaces>), the browser window will offer a range of architectural atmospheres, such as 'Centre Pompidou, Paris' or 'Fun Palace, London'. Now simply choose a suitable background for a virtual SharedSpace by clicking the icon (and tell your friends to join you in 'London' too)! (...) Enable your camera, and you will suddenly find yourself inside the Fun Palace, like me! Depending on the lighting conditions you may need to calibrate, following the instruction on the screen.'<sup>130</sup> Eradicated from any corporeality, and thus detached from the material processes that once linked the Fun Palace project with the specific social material processes that constituted Britain 1960s, the spectacle of academic corporatism that this spectral image of the Fun Palace exhibits is further confirmed by the claim that COMPEIT to holds potential for commercial exploitation.

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<sup>129</sup> Charlie Gullström, 'Furnishing the Fun Palace – with New Digital Design Materials', in Proceedings from What the Matter? *Materiality and Materialism at the Age of Computation*, International Conference, ENHSA, Barcelona, September 4-5-6, 2014 (Barcelona: European Network of Heads of Schools of Architecture, 2014), 239, <http://kth.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:808635/FULLTEXT01.pdf>.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid, 231.



## Chapter 7: Other News. Carnival Time

### News from the Stratford Fair, 1960s and 1970s

Following Littlewood's participation in the International Cultural Centre in Hammamet, Tunisia – to which she contributed an acting techniques workshop at the Centre for Higher Theatrical Studies during the summers of 1965 and 1966 (an episode that she considered part of the Fun Palace story) – she began working with, and for, local youth in transforming cleared sites for redevelopment that neighboured the Theatre Royal, Stratford, into adventure playgrounds. Supported by the Fun Palace Trust and a team of volunteers, the intermittent activism of Stratford Fair, as the whole Littlewood-led Fun Palace initiative was referred to, stretched between 1967 and 1975. An agenda of fundraising fair events and festivals during Easter and summer sustained the vital, often feeble, pulse of the ordinary and enduring playground activity in the neighbourhood.

Six years apart, two cuttings held in the Cedric Price fonds record the traces that the Stratford Fair left in the press. The *Daily Mirror's* 'Like man, fun is a 3-letter word', 8 May, 1968, by David Clemens, celebrated the forthcoming realization of Littlewood's Fun Palace in the form of an inflatable structure designed by Bruce Lacey for the Mobile Fun Fair set in Tower Place during the City of London Festival in July 1968 – the summer fair that had been announced in the pamphlet *Bubble City*, which we have already discussed in Chapter 1.<sup>1</sup> The article, illustrated with a cartoon-like drawing of Lacey's Humanoid, reported the experience of an adventurous journey into the interior the human body that audiences encountered after crossing a Pop-inspired open female mouth. The inflatable would afford, Clemens reports from an interview with Lacey, 'an environment in which people can lose their inhibitions a bit.'<sup>2</sup> On 10 May, 1974, the news of a temporary zoo set up by Alex Duncan for Stratford Easter Fair circulated in the London-wide *Evening Standard*: 'In Stratford, E15, Easter, working with Joan Littlewood's Fun Palace Trust, he turned a derelict open space into a throbbing, imaginative zoo, and attracted all the kids for miles around. "In 10 days we didn't have one serious act of vandalism (...) On one day we had over 3000 children. You should have seen the joy on those kid's faces. Some of them had never seen a

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<sup>1</sup> Holdsworth, *Joan Littlewood's Theatre*, 299.

<sup>2</sup> David Clemens, 'Like man, fun is a 3-letter word', *Daily Mirror*, 8 May 1968.



FIGURE 7.1: Press Cuttings from Stratford Fair, folder DR1995:0188:525:003, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

POUR FINS D'ÉTUDE SEULEMENT  
 Propriété du  
 Centre Canadien d'Architecture, Montréal  
 FOR RESEARCH PURPOSES ONLY  
 Property of the  
 Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal

lion before”<sup>3</sup>. The press cutting ‘Joan’s spectacular helps the children’ – unreferenced in the Cedric Price fonds – shows a photograph of the full team of child-activists to which the fair was dedicated [FIGURE 7.1]. Meanwhile Nicholas de Jongh, ‘A flop, or a long run ahead?’, *The Guardian*, 6 February 1974, had reported forthcoming support from the Arts Minister Norman St. John-Stevas for Littlewood’s theatre and fair, which was on the edge of financial disaster: “Miss Littlewood wants a spring fair on the site, with artists and roundabout. Some people think her ideas are cranky. I think it’s very good taking theatre out to the people”. The Minister then took his own little road show to the site of the gypsy encampment.<sup>4</sup>

Only the local *Stratford Express* would disseminate the daily activities and success of Stratford’s playgrounds, a self-organized activist agenda run by local children with some volunteers’ support – which included initiatives such as façade decoration in the scheduled-for-demolition Angel Lane in August 1967, and tree planting in a vacant plot in Salway Road to transform the site into a playground in May 1968.<sup>5</sup> Thus, ‘A Right Royal Splash’, 25 August, 1967, records that ‘as the youngsters worked the shopkeepers beamed. They are convinced it will bring trade to the area. Mr Harry Shingler, who has kept a second-hand clothes shop in The Lane for 28 years was full of praise for the young painters. “It can do nothing but good”, he said. “It will bring more people to The Lane. It’s about time something like this happened. Good luck to the Theatre Royal.”<sup>6</sup> A picture of the children at work on site features in a photocopy of an unsourced paper cutting in the Cedric Price fonds with the caption: ‘Fork, rake, shovel – and bare hands! Children clear rubble on an East London site’. Another press cutting with a portrait of Littlewood and the Stratford Fair coordinator Carole Christensen contextualizes the activity: “Joan’s spectacular helps the children” but is in need of funds: From Tunis to New York she plans to turn rubbish-strewn demolition sites into fun-packed playgrounds (...) All we need is the money’.<sup>7</sup> By 1974, the local press would take stock of the benefits Littlewood’s fair brought to local youth: ‘I’ve been coming here for about ten years. If this place hadn’t existed I reckon I’d have been inside by now (...) At one time I used to hang about in the streets. When I got really bored I’d smash windows. I was the best window smasher in Stratford. But I don’t need to do that anymore.’<sup>8</sup> The activities were not free of conflict though, which the local press promptly voiced: in ‘Playground plan runs into trouble’, the *Stratford Express*, July 28, 1967, reported complaints by residents about the

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<sup>3</sup> ‘Alex dreams of a zoo in heart of East End’ press cutting, folder DR1995:0188:525:004, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

<sup>4</sup> Nicholas de Jongh, ‘A flop, or a long run ahead?’, *The Guardian*, 6 February 1974, folder DR1996:0188:525:004, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

<sup>5</sup> ‘Touch of Kew in Salway-Rd’ *Stratford Express*, 1 September 1967, in Holdsworth, *Joan Littlewood’s Theatre*, 251.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, 252.

<sup>7</sup> Folder DR 1995:0188:525:003, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

<sup>8</sup> ‘Palace of Fun Cast a Spell’ *Stratford Express*, 26 July, 1974, in Holdsworth, *Joan Littlewood’s Theatre*, 253.

clearance operation led by voluntary activists and the local children: 'as dozens of children cleared away old mattresses and tons of bricks and rubble on a deserted bombsite, nearby residents complained about their behaviour'.<sup>9</sup> Neither the neighbours nor the presses' headlines were as optimistic as Littlewood was about the achievement of earning the participation of local children. The article claims: 'A spokesman for Miss Littlewood told the Express: "the thing that is so wonderful is that these kids have taken hold of the project and are working hard every day. We hope to present films and have a stage on the site."' <sup>10</sup>

The production of media became a key activist practice of Stratford Fair. Littlewood encouraged the children to engage in forms of critical writing as part of the activities such as the explanatory letter that the local children wrote to the complaining neighbours in defense of their playgrounds. *Bubble City*, the pamphlet produced to register the playground activities and to fundraise for the events, tells how, on 31 July 1967, 'a group of older boys collect electoral register, address envelopes and distribute explanatory letters to 400 neighbours to counteract the petition which is being organised against the playground'.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, Littlewood extended local activism into mass media itself – as she had done alongside Price and Driberg for the major Fun Palace – by giving voice to the group in the open letter to the editor, *The Guardian*, 3 April, 1970, 'Available to all':

*Sir - On behalf of a mob of some standing in the East End of London may I point out that we prowl your streets, play our war games, set fire to slums and rats and take bets on the next Ronan Point to collapse because- so many of your prestige buildings, art centres [centers] and fine old parks and precincts are not geared for our urgent needs. We are mainly illiterate, not lacking intelligence nor creative ability, rather the means to develop them./ You have written us off, pity, we are your future / Our game in Victoria Park on Sunday was not designed as work of art for the initiated, it was a ritual available to us all. Build more opera houses, theatres for outmoded needs, enjoy your mausoleum art, let the gap widen between you and the untouchables, it will be at your peril – Yours faithfully,*

*Joan Littlewood (pp. The Stratford Nutters). "Stratford Fair" c/o Theatre Royal, London E15.*

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<sup>9</sup> 'Playground plan runs into trouble', *Stratford Express*, Friday, July 28, 1967, in *Bubble City*, 10.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> *Bubble City*, 12.

Unlike the Fun Palace building and Camden Pilot projects, the Stratford Fair would not trigger the same interest either in the press or in architectural discourse. The Fair's news would achieve only immediate and local impact through the *Stratford Express* between 1967 and 1975.<sup>12</sup> It is omitted altogether from 'Cedric Price Supplement', a Price-led review of the work of his office for *Architectural Design*, structured in five instalments issued between October 1970 and January 1972, and from the recent scholarship on the Fun Palace examined in the previous chapter. Instead, it would be director Barney Platts-Mills who filmed Littlewood's experimental theatre and playgrounds in Stratford in the documentary *Everybody's an Actor, Shakespeare Said* in 1968, which he then transformed a year later into the black and white, 35mm, low-budget and award winning *Bronco Bullfrog* (1969).<sup>13</sup>

Alongside the film medium, only the limited scholarship on Littlewood that existed then seemed to pay attention to Stratford Fair. Judith Goodman's doctoral dissertation *Joan Littlewood and Her Theatre Workshop* (New York University, 1975) comments upon Stratford Fair in the context of Littlewood's complex career. 'Where are Joan Littlewood and Theatre Workshop today?', she asks to conclude that Stratford's community work was at the heart of her theatre and that the local youngsters were her audience at the time, rather than the coal mine workers for whom she used to perform in the 1930s and 1940s. 'Those who do not understand her have decried what they see as her abandonment of theatre. Like Barnett Kellerman [a Theatre Workshop member in 1967 and interviewee of the author] they have described her as "desperately struggling to be in the twentieth century – which she sees in terms of her Fun Palaces, her street kids, and Bubble Cities". What they have not understood is that for Littlewood the word "theatre" must be interpreted in the broadest sense possible. (...) The Fun Palace idea has not materialized, but at Stratford East, amidst the dismal landscape of warehouses and empty lots, the fun indeed goes on'.<sup>14</sup> The Fair would also feature in Howard Goorney's *The Theatre Workshop Story*, 1981. In this, a significantly compressed account of the Fun Palace Lea Valley scheme conveys the limited support the idea accrued among the company, whereas the unfolding of the range of memories from Stratford Fair's playgrounds, drama workshops and fair events underpin the renewal of Littlewood's theatre into community activism amidst the intermittent production of a financially strained Theatre Workshop between 1968 and 1975. Quoting Littlewood, Goorney argues:

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<sup>12</sup> The story of Stratford Fair's reception in *Stratford Express* is referenced in Holdsworth, 'Spaces to Play/Playing with Spaces'.

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.screenonline.org.uk/film/id/1231325/index.html>.

<sup>14</sup> Judith Lea Goodman, 'Joan Littlewood and Her Theatre Workshop.' (Ph.D., New York, New York University, 1975).

*Over the years Joan had been increasingly aware of the limitations of working with actors in theatre buildings: "Theatre is not just the putting on of plays. It is everywhere; the transformation scene, in the markets, processions, meetings, parting, in the clothes we wear, our manners and mores and the front we put on. At its best it is the great educator, keeping our language alive, giving us the music and poetry which seem to identify us and add some value to our brief journey. Theatre knows no boundaries and only withers when it is confined."<sup>15</sup>*

### **Keith Albarn's Fun Palace, 1968**

News of a multi-media fun palace had circulated in the *The Observer* of Sunday, 10 March, 1968. The article 'Fibre-glass fun palace', by Iane Bown, shows an image of a labyrinthine structure made of glass-reinforced plastic, due to open in April that year at the Dreamland amusement park in Margate, Kent [FIGURE 7.2]. *The Spectrum*, as it was called, was by Keith Albarn, the 'sculptor, architect and inventor'.<sup>16</sup> The snippet makes no mention of Littlewood or Price. They were however, well aware of the appropriation of the Fun Palace name by Albarn, as suggested in a handwritten memo-card by Price of a meeting with Littlewood about the planning of Stratford Fair on the day the article was issued: 'keep Fun Palace name – re Albarn et al'.<sup>17</sup> Listed in the pamphlet *Bubble City*, Albarn was to contribute 'spheres and crystals for a new playground' to the eponymous event in Tower Square for the City of London Festival in the summer of 1968, which Littlewood coordinated.<sup>18</sup> As Littlewood's biographer and friend Peter Ranking recalls, a preparatory meeting at the Architectural Association in April that year, was attended by then Royal College of Art student James Dyson, artist Bruce Lacey, entrepreneur Keith Albarn and *Archigram* member Peter Cook. Rankin's colourful description of the event refers to Bruce Lacey's humanoid: 'his was still the main attraction. You climbed up steps to the mouth, clambered over a lusciously upholstered lip and slid via the tongue into the stomach. There you found giant tomatoes, carrots and some organs you would find in a stomach, nothing

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<sup>15</sup> Howard Goorney, *The Theatre Workshop Story*, 133.

<sup>16</sup> Iane Bown, 'Fibre-glas fun palace', *The Observer*, 10 March 1968

<sup>17</sup> Folder DR 1995:0188:525:003, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

<sup>18</sup> Littlewood, *Bubble City*, 19. The list of contributions also includes Michael Barker's 'balloons, painting and kinetic art',



**FIGURE 7.2:** Keith Albarn's Spectrum, Dreamland, Margate, Kent, April 1968. 'Out Takes/ Cuts From Cp719 – Fun Palace, Air Cushion And Balloon Race 1968', min. 0:03/4:25 [left], min. 0:30/4:25 [right] British Pathe.



**FIGURE 7.3:** Bubble City, City of London Festival, summer 1968. Setting up the event. 'Out Takes/ Cuts From Cp719 – Fun Palace, Air Cushion And Balloon Race 1968', min. 3:00/ 4:25, British Pathe.

revolting though, just brightly coloured soft toys. When you had enough, you walked through a fiberglass maze of inner tubing and out the other end. In fact, apart from the audiovisual tower, soft and squishy was the theme that ran through most of the events, including Keith Albarn's tubes. The soft wall was a row of big, jelly female nudes which you could bounce against as hard as you liked Who did the bouncing? City gents in their bowler hats, just what Joan wanted.'<sup>19</sup> The still in the figure from British Pathe footage 'Air Cushion' [FIGURE 7.3], appears to show the setting of Littlewood's *Bubble City*. Keith Albarn's kit of parts is piled up in the background of one of the inflatables limply draped over the Tower Hill site, London, "The Movie-Movie mark 1" by Jeffrey Shaw.'<sup>20</sup> A review of Albarn's fun palace in Dreamland had also circulated in March 1968 in the monthly magazine *New Worlds*, edited by writer Michael Moorcock since 1964 with the support of Arts Council 'to make science fiction more respectable'.<sup>21</sup> An ambitious editorship expanded the topic of science fiction to accommodate contributions that investigated the subjectivity of an increasingly mediatized culture, such as those by author J.G Ballard.<sup>22</sup> The article by Charles Platt – designer of the magazine at the time – 'Fun Palace - Not a Freakout', disclosed the plan and model alongside close-ups of the pavilion's inner surfaces after a sequence of satirical collages to posit the project in contrast to the cultural hyper stimulation that saturated social experience at the time [FIGURE 7.4]. 'The Keith Albarn fun palace' – writes Platt – 'is a fantasy environment. Wander through colours /odours /sounds /textures. Waterfalls of smoking foam gush out as you approach. Push-buttons control the colour/sound environment. There are tactile tunnels, op and strobe effects to sever your visual hold on reality. Get lost in it. The ultimate freakout? Hippie gimmick to add more stimulation to jaded senses?/ Not quite. Keith Albarn, who heads the team that designed it, has serious aims and tries to stay clear of psychedelia.'<sup>23</sup> Brought into the raucous picture through quotation marks, Albarn situates the initiative in 1965 – 'before psychedelia hit London' –<sup>24</sup> and naturalizes the artifact as an aesthetically reactive, even therapeutic, environment: 'All our activities are directed towards a more fluid relationship between man and environment. Creating an environment more responsive to man's actions — machines, and so on. The other side to this is play; play as a social activity has ritual and pattern, and also the possibility of an open ended situation --- a degree of exploration. Our

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<sup>19</sup> Rankin, *Dreams and Realities*, 204.

<sup>20</sup> British Pathé, 'Air Cushion', accessed 21 August 2017, <https://www.britishpathe.com/video/air-cushion/query/PM0463>.

<sup>21</sup> Bryan Appleyard, *The Pleasures of Peace: Art and Imagination in Post-War Britain* (London: Faber and Faber, 1991), 246.

<sup>22</sup> Mark Dorrian, 'Banham Avec Ballard: On Style and Violence', *Cabinet: A Quarterly of Art and Culture*, 66, Spring 2018-Winter 2019.

<sup>23</sup> Charles Platt, 'Fun Palace-Not a Freakout', *New Worlds*, March 1968, 38.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, 38.

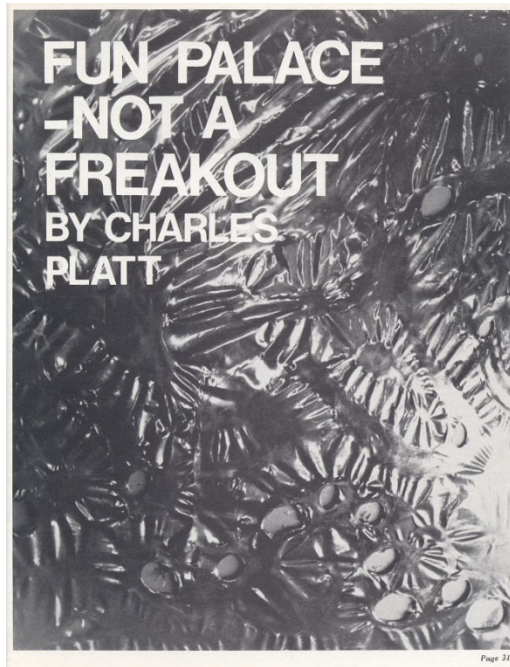


FIGURE 7.4: Charles Platt, 'Fun Palace-Not a Freakout', New Worlds, 180, 31, 37.

fun palace at Margate is obviously very play-oriented; it is after all going to be at a fairground. It's a sort of plug-in system that can be easily re-arranged; the lighting and effects are all responsive to the movements and noises the people make as they go through. Another scheme we're doing is very therapy-orientated, for autistic and handicapped children. It will be almost a small hospital'.<sup>25</sup> While Platt's commentary positively welcomes the constructivist ethos of the initiative, he closes noting the conspicuous borrowing of the name: 'Keith Albarn is a quietly-dressed, quiet-spoken man. In his ex-warehouse workshop near Holborn he is building environment hardware designed for stimulation, but not over-stimulation, of the senses. It is an important difference; (...) Albarn sets a highly individual example that a lot of people could consider copying.'<sup>26</sup> Similarly to Platt, Jeff Nuttall's *Bomb Culture* (1968) points at Cooks' Plug-ins, Price's Fun Palace, Geoffrey Shaw's plastic constructions and Albarn's 'furniture sculpture' as the referents for a renewal of London counterculture, one that aims to activate the individual craftsmanship rather than stay adrift amidst concurrent cultural overstimulation. Nuttall addresses the Underground in his closing paragraphs: 'It is time that we gave power and body to the true music of the gods by cultivating the craftman in us (...) It is time the hipsters learned how to count. It is time we asked ourselves what we are going to do with a future should we know, after the sickness and the vision, gain one (...) Let us build adventures, environments, mazes and gardens we can walk in and be reinforced continuously of our fine vitality. Let us turn away from the contemplators and listen to the architects, the activists, the engineers, the Archigram Group with their Plug-In City scheme, Cedric Price the Fun Palace designer, Geoffrey Shaw and his constructions in plastic, Keith Albarn and his furniture sculpture. And let's do it off our own bat, independently, like we did the movies and the mags, winning what we can on casual jobs and confidence tricks, and never waiting for the handout or the commission'.<sup>27</sup>

Referred to by Albarn as 'Ekistikit' – in reference to the statistical control of planetary issues addressed by Constantinos Doxiadis' "Ekistics"<sup>28</sup> – Albarn's was a fibre-glass kit of parts of easy assembly-disassembly. The structure would resurface again in 1969 as a £10000 and 800m<sup>2</sup> structure for the seaside resort of Girvan, South Ayrshire, Scotland. The kind of stimulation offered in the 'Fifth Dimension', as it was written at the keyhole entrance of this large, hermetic pavilion, was considered by others irrelevant - to judge from the critical reception circulated in the magazine *Design*, November 1969. As Alastair Best's article, 'Funny business at the seaside' deflatingly comments: 'the two essential ingredients of the fun palace concept – surprise and mystery – are both missing. Daylight filters through the

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid, 38.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 39.

<sup>27</sup> Jeff Nuttall, *Bomb Culture*. (New York: Delacorte Press, 1969), 244–45.

<sup>28</sup> Mark Wigley, 'Network Fever', *Grey Room*, no. 4 (2001): 83–122.

pale coloured walls of the shell to reveal a none too impressive array of kinetic hardware. Strobes wink feebly onto crudely assembled sheets of corrugated Perspex; textured floor and wall surfaces are easily detected, and come as no surprise; and electronic music, which we expect to hear played at a deafening pitch, merely rumbles ineffectively in the background. Alice, had she been let loose here, might have remarked that it all got less and less curious as you went along'.<sup>29</sup>

The last time it was seen, Albarn's fun palace-in-disguise had been re-tooled as an exhibition space addressed to middle-class homebuyers at the edge of Letchworth Garden City,<sup>30</sup> a modular commodity detached from the ambition of cultural democracy of Stratford Fair, and the overall Fun Palace initiative. Meanwhile, media often indulged the association fostered by the appropriation of the Fun Palace name. Kenneth Cooke's review of the state of 'Buildings for Pleasure' after Fun Palace in *Building Design*, 1970, lists Albarn's 'Fifth Dimension' at Girvan, along with Blackpool Tower, Archigram's Monaco entertainment centre, and Hunstanton Entertainments Centre by Gillinson, Barnett & Partners.<sup>31</sup>

## Activism and the Reception of Stratford Fair since 1990s

Distinct from the wealth of scholarship since 1999 on the Fun Palace's major realization and its significance within Cedric Price's design approach, the Stratford Fair's absence in both studies of Price and, more broadly, the historiography of activism, is indicative of the asymmetrical agency of the Fun Palace archive. For the affirmative certainty of the Cedric Price fonds dominates the open and displaced form of Littlewood's records. Thus, the Stratford Fair is absent from Colin Ward's 1990 study of playground experiences, which aimed to re-connect the post-War European child to the city.<sup>32</sup> So does from Roy Kozlovsky's historiography on the adventure playground movement in British post-war culture, *Architectures of Childhood. Children, Modern Architecture and Reconstruction in Postwar England* (2016).<sup>33</sup> Rather than the Stratford Fair, it would be drawings from the Fun Palace's major realization – a selection from Howard Gilman Collection of Visionary Architectural

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<sup>29</sup> Alistair Best, 'Funny Buisness at the Seaside', *Design*, November 1969, 251, p. 61 in Paul Sorene, 'From 1968 And 1970 Visitors To Margate And Girvan Took A Trip Through Keith Albarn's Fun Houses', *Flashbak* (blog), 30 April 2014, <https://flashbak.com/from-1968-and-1970-visitors-to-margate-and-girvan-took-a-trip-through-keith-albarns-fun-houses-1595/>.

<sup>30</sup> *Design*, no. 264, Dec 1970 (52-53) in Sorene.

<sup>31</sup> Kenneth Cooke, 'Building for Pleasure: Whatever happened to Joan Littlewood and Cedric Price's fun palace of the early Sixties?', *Building Design*, June 26, 1970

<sup>32</sup> Ward, *The Child in the City*, 194–95.

<sup>33</sup> Kozlovsky, *Architectures of Childhood*.

Drawings at MOMA – that were selected for ‘Playgrounds. Reinventing the Square’, an exhibition curated by Manuel J. Borja-Villel, Tamara Díaz and Teresa Velázquez at the Museum Reina Sofia, Madrid, in 2014. The show aimed to explore the political and activist dimension of the playground from the late-19th century to the present day as, its curators claimed, a model for ‘an ideological interrogation of an alienated and consumerist present.’<sup>34</sup>

With the Stratford Fair’s archival records distributed between the ‘Fun Palace Project’ folder and the minor project ‘Open Space Utilisation Programme E15 [O.S.U.P.]’ in the Cedric Price fonds, Stratford Fair appears somewhat misrepresented in Price scholarship. For instance, O.S.U.P is not part of the 112 initiatives that comprise the volume ‘Projects’ in Hardingham’s *Cedric Price Works 1952-2003* – nor are some of the notes that Price recorded in his notebook number 1 related to the Fair.<sup>35</sup> Instead, ambivalent captions accompany key drawings of Stratford Fair included in the pages dedicated to the Fun Palace: ‘Left: “Sketch summarizing the horizontal and vertical schematic layout for Fun Palace, 1974”’; Right: “Cartoon on the subject of adaptability and multiple uses of one building”’.<sup>36</sup> For its part Tanja Herdt’s study *The City And Architecture of Change: The Work and Radical Visions of Cedric Price* (2017), explores closely these drawings as part of Price’s involvement in Littlewood’s initiative, which is credited as ‘Fun Palace Playground’ and contextualized within the self-organized activism of the 1970s in London – which also facilitated Price Inter-Action Group’s commission in 1971. These drawings represent minimal constructed elements and their sphere of influence, and convey in Herdt’s view, the system-oriented approach of Price that she refers to as an ‘architecture of ecology’.<sup>37</sup> However, the range of initiatives comprising Stratford Fair remain unattended to in Herdt study of Price’s own ecology.

As examined in the previous chapter, only scholarship on Littlewood pays attention to Stratford Fair, to inscribe it within Littlewood’s ambition to reconnect her theatre with the local community, as Howard Goorney argues (1981);<sup>38</sup> and to locate the Fun Palace on the map of community activism in the 60s, as Nadine Holdsworth suggest (2007).<sup>39</sup> Joan Littlewood’s biography by friend and Theatre Workshop member Peter Ranking yields anecdotes that bring to life Stratford Fair as part of a thorough account of Littlewood’s legacy. Despite these dedicated attempts, the ultimately quiet reception of Stratford Fair indicates the extent to which Littlewood’s activism succeed. For in being consumed in action,

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<sup>34</sup> Manuel Borja-Villel et al., *Playgrounds. Reinventing the Square* (Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía and Siruela, 2014).

<sup>35</sup> Cedric Price Collection, St John’s College Library, Cambridge.

<sup>36</sup> Hardingham, *Cedric Price Works 1952-2003*, 52–54.

<sup>37</sup> Herdt, *The City and the Architecture of Change*, 110.

<sup>38</sup> Goorney, *The Theatre Workshop Story*, 1981, 133.

<sup>39</sup> Holdsworth, ‘Spaces to Play/Playing with Spaces’.



**FIGURE 7.5:** “The Fun Palace” by Caroline Bird. Poem etched into wood’, in ‘London 2012: Poetry in the Olympic Park – in pictures’, The Guardian, 27 July 2012. Photograph: Olympic Delivery Authority.

it avoided the ill-fated roaming in scholarship of the Fun Palace's major realization. Instead, a number of initiatives has rendered homage to Littlewood's activism in the last decade.

In 2011, poet Caroline Bird was invited to contribute to 'Art in the Park', an initiative by the Olympic Delivery Authority in London that concealed the electrical boxes sprinkling the Olympic site in East London with wooden boarding engraved with poems [FIGURE 7.5]. Facing the stadium, Bird etched a memorialisation of the Fun Palace along with that of Littlewood's life and work at the very centre of the Olympic spectacle that overtook Stratford East in 2012, and was claimed to be the largest regeneration site in Europe at the time. It continues to whisper to passers-by, and weathers in the Olympic Park:

*... ) It is a love story. Joan Littlewood and her theatre.  
She was blacklisted from Broadcasting House.  
She knew that two tons of coal equalled more  
than two ounces of cheese. The Fun Palace was never built  
on the banks of the River Lea. She almost cracked it.  
She kicked the bucket. She changed the world.*

Caroline Bird muses about the commission retrospectively, when Bird's work developed into 'The Sparked Fun Palace', an exhibition and Easter parade with songs and protest banners in the adjacent Olympic Park venue View Tube in 2014:

*Unightly electrical boxes (or 'transformers'), adorned with dramatic  
'danger of death' signs, were dotted around the Park and they wished to  
beautify these boxes with wooden slats and carve poems into them.  
Poems about the local area. Amazing. My 'transformer' is situated just  
outside the stadium. When I thought of Stratford, I thought of Theatre  
Royal Stratford East Theatre – 'the crumbling slum in E15' – so lovingly  
resurrected and restored by Joan Littlewood and her company back in  
1953. I talked to people who knew Joan. I read about her life and career.  
Back in the seventies, The Who played a gig at Stratford East and donated  
a thousand pounds to 'The Invisible Fun Palace' and this joke got me  
thinking. Sometimes an idea is so powerful that even 'invisibly' it still lives.  
The idea hovers – firmly, invisibly, powerfully – in the air, just waiting for  
the world to provide it with body and substance. As a poet, playwright and  
workshop leader, I breathe the benefits of Joan's work and philosophy. I*

wrote the poem 'The Fun Palace' as a small reminder, a collage of facts, a little offering. Hopefully the reader will feel Joan's personality alive between the lines.<sup>40</sup>

In 2014, 'The Palace that Joan Built' by artist Mel Brimfield and composer Gwyneth Herbert, rendered homage to Littlewood through a multifaceted project driven by her legacy and that of her Theatre Workshop. Commissioned by Art on The Underground and Theatre Royal Stratford East to celebrate the centenary of Littlewood's birth, it offered a hybrid format in which the eclectic and popular tradition of the music-hall and the documentary approach of Living Newspapers met,<sup>41</sup> the authors argue both core to Littlewood's practice. A 4-hour programme on the central concourse of Stratford Station engaged the flow of commuters [FIGURE 7.6].<sup>42</sup> An episodic musical documentary film was played in the station, Theatre Royal and nearby Picture House Cinema as part of a media installation that occupied the station for almost two years. Crucial to the project was – the artists note – the construction of an archive of imaginary documents of Theatre Workshop productions and Fun Palace marginalia through a structured community art activity. Workshops in Newham schools were set up to rehearse the songs and to collect suggestions from children for a potential Fun Palace project, which were registered in a cutaway view cartoon that hanged in Stratford Station, whereas Littlewood's techniques of acting were addressed in professional workshops. A digital publication documents the process and the varied media output, including song scores, film stills, photographs, posters and cartoons. Given the fragmentary and incomplete condition of Littlewood's archive, authors set out to collect direct testimony via informal interviews with ex-Theatre Workshop members and Littlewood's researchers to inform the project.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Caroline Bird, 'The Sparked Fun Palace', n.d., brochure, TRSE Archive Collection.

<sup>41</sup> Murray Melvin elaborates upon the relationship between Living Newspapers and Littlewood's theatre. Authorised interview with the author, 3 February 2015, 266.

<sup>42</sup> The engagement of public was gathered in the following commentary: 'It was exciting and memorable. A joy to see the people's faces as they came off of the trains and stopped to be entertained. Why oh why is that not transferring to the stage. Elements of it smacked of Les Miserable. The sign of having been moved by something is if you are still singing the songs days after, I wake up and go to sleep singing Puppet on a shoestring. I have paid a lot of money and not had the kind of experience I had on Saturday. Fun exciting, exhilarating. It must transfer. Let's start a petition right now. Congratulations and a well done. Makes you feel good to be alive doesn't it?' Beryl Riches, in Mel Brimfield and Gwyneth Herbert, 'The Palace That Joan Built', *Art on the Underground* (blog), n.d.

<sup>43</sup> Theatre Workshop members Murray Melvin, Karen Fisher, Jan Sharkey-Dodds, Stratford Fair collaborator Christine Jackson and by then The Nutters gang members Paul Bird, Roy Haywood and Paul Prendergast, and scholars Nadine Holdsworth and Robert Leach. In Mel Brimfield and Gwyneth Herbert, "'The Palace That Joan Built'", 2015, 62.



**FIGURE 7.6:** 'The Palace that Joan Built', Mel Brimfield and Gwyneth Herbert, Stratford Station, October 2014. Photograph: Benedict Johnson [right]. <http://art.tfl.gov.uk/projects/the-palace-that-joan-built/>. Accessed 3 August 2020.

Dynamic, porous and inclusive, this assemblage conveys the kind of responsiveness that the ephemeral nature of Littlewood's archive incites in those touched by her charisma and work. This performative approach to the archive of the Fun Palace contrasts significantly with that offered at the Swiss Pavilion of the Venice Biennale the same year. Each of these initiatives emerged in relation to a distinctive disciplinary background and ethos. Where the former was situated in the culture of London-based community-led visual and performing arts, the latter was embedded in contemporary European transnational curatorship, art and architecture, whose interests are detached from Littlewood's radical theatre practice. The funding agencies that supporting these underscore the divergent goals – namely, the community art programme of Art on the Underground and the people's theatre ethos of Theatre Workshop, as opposed to the institutional orientation of Swiss Arts Council Pro Helvetia, in its role to promote Swiss culture, and the LUMA Foundation, alongside the facilitating role of CCA. The sites of the events also index their distinctive audiences – a ticketed Architectural Biennale venue and the public stage of Stratford Station. The observation could be extended to Wigley's curation of Cedric Price fonds for the exhibition 'Out of the Box: Price Rossi Stirling + Matta-Clark', at the CCA a decade earlier. The gap that the Fun Palace once filled by challenging in one stroke the institutionalized condition of both theatre and architecture seems yet an unsurmountable challenge for each of these cultures today – whereas scholarship on architecture delves into Price's legacy, that on theatre reconstructs Littlewood's.

Equally, there is a qualitative difference in the kind of representation that each of these disciplinary positions construct in the archive of the project. Whereas rigorous research underpins all three projects – Obrist's, Wigley's and that of Brinfield and Herbet – the object represented and the irony that invests the representation of the Fun Palace in each of these image registers diverges. As for the object, Wigley presents fragments of the Cedric Price fonds itself to convey the multiplicity, ambiguity and excesses of the Fun Palace production. Yet such excess is finite – it exists buried within the interior of the CCA. Obrist instead simulates an unambiguous and limited Fun Palace archive, properties that become projected into research practice itself. On their part, Brimfield's and Herbert's aim to represent precisely the incommensurability of the Fun Palace archive, and specifically, the openness that Littlewood's distributed and ultimately inaccessible archive brings to any attempt to determine the Fun Palace. The Fun Palace archive is ungraspable not only due to the heterogeneity and multiplicity of productions to which the Fun Palace idea gave rise and which Price recorded dutifully, but also with regards to what he did not. Bound to Littlewood's practice, absences cannot be traced nor discovered, only imagined and collectively celebrated.

*And here's Joan*  
*Blowing all of Stratford apart*  
*And here's Joan*  
*Opening up her world and our hearts*  
*And here's Joan*  
*Giving us a dream and a voice*  
*And here's Joan*  
*Giving us a chance, giving us a choice*  
*O! JOAN FLASH THE ASH!*  
*[The Nutters' chorus]* <sup>44</sup>

While this is sung for everybody to hear, Brimfield and Herbert refer to their project as an 'intentionally ridiculous mode of academic address'.<sup>45</sup> 'The Palace that Joan Built' appears to raise a general commentary upon the limits of scholarly reception, whose images miss the carnivalesque form of the Fun Palace archive. For, carnival images – conjured up from 'the laughing chorus of the marketplace' as Mikhail Bakhtin <sup>46</sup> – emerge precisely to upend the official account of the way things are.

In 2016, filmmaker Wendy Richardson produced 'In the Company of Joan', an hour-long documentary that reconstructs the memory of Littlewood's life and work through a series of interviews with a number of Theatre Workshop members and Stratford locals to which she was close, and also those that have more recently been inspired by her [\[FIGURE 7.7\]](#). Theatre Royal archivist and ex-Theatre Workshop member Murray Melvin, scholar Nadine Holdsworth, historian Robert Leach, the theatre artists and entrepreneurs Stella Duffy and Sarah-Jane Rawlings discuss the main ideas of the Littlewood's and Price's Fun Palace, while the later development of Stratford Fair is vividly recalled by Theatre Workshop member Phil Davis, by company's activist Christine Jackson and by Paul Bird and Roy Haywood, both part of the local youth known as 'The Nutters' at the time – all of whom discuss the key role that Theatre Royal played as a catalyst for the Stratford community during the 1960s

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid, 18.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, 53.

<sup>46</sup> Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, 439.



**FIGURE 7.7:** Wendy Richardson, 'In the company of Joan', 2016, 1:19.

and 1970s. As Jackson argues, Stratford Fair episodes such as the decoration of the derelict fronts of Angel Lane's market street, clearing of existing rubbish from nearby wasteland and bombsites and the turf-paving or tree-planting that followed in these sites, these were all part of a wider ambition of Gerry Raffles and Joan Littlewood of finding 'fresh ways to try to involve local people to come to the theatre', for which they constituted the company's activists group.<sup>47</sup> As Richardson argues, the company's activists group became 'instrumental' for Joan's programme to occupy and utilise these sites for the local community by the time redevelopment plans in the area got under way.<sup>48</sup> Roy and Paul recall how Littlewood 'pulled us into the theatre and got us off the streets. We became the Nutters.'<sup>49</sup> Davis remarks how the Theatre Royal was 'the theatre for everybody, for the local community and for everybody. It was run in those lines, not just when you were on stage, but also when you were in the bar or in the box office. Local kids would hang about outside the theatre. They weren't told to go away.'<sup>50</sup> Rather than in archives, Littlewood's legacy lives on in their memories, and it is passed on from person to person, as the producer of the musical 'Joan Littlewood', Sam Kenyon, claims. Importantly, Richardson collects these memories in film medium and constructs an archive for those wishing to learn from Joan's company. 'A Free for All Film' created out of genuine interest and generosity, Richardson's voluntary work disseminates Joan Littlewood's legacy, and the ideals of the Fun Palace within it, with no institutional funding or sponsorship – conditions under which Littlewood's own work often took place.

These projects have all contributed to and been amplified by the ongoing UK-based cultural initiative *Fun Palaces*. Directed by writer and theatre-maker Stella Duffy and arts professional Sarah-Jane Rawlings, *Fun Palaces* operates since 2014 as an ambitious cultural campaign aimed at invigorating local communities within the increasingly threatened public cultural infrastructures in the UK – as the 2014 Evaluation Report of the initiative points out.<sup>51</sup> *Fun Palaces* takes inspiration from the user-driven agenda that was core to Littlewood's and Price's unrealised Fun Palace, and their shared belief in the genius of every person, with the ambition to activate local communities and facilitating access to existing cultural infrastructures. The idea took off in Twitter, claims Duffy, with the support of a number of senior women in British theatre who saw in Joan Littlewood a model and

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<sup>47</sup> Wendy Richardson, *In the Company of Joan*, 2016, 58:50, <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt7573474/plotsummary>.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:19:10.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:00:00.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 59:40.

<sup>51</sup> Stella Duffy and Sarah-Jane Rawlings, 'Fun Palaces. Evaluations 2014-2019', *Fun Palaces*, Evaluation 2014-15. <https://funpalaces.co.uk/about-fun-palaces/evaluations-2014-2019/>.



## Evaluation Report

February 2014



Supported using public funding by  
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**FIGURE 7.8:** Stella Duffy and Sarah-Jane Rawlings, Fun Palaces Campaign, Evaluation Report 2014. <https://funpalaces.co.uk/about-fun-palaces/evaluations-2014-2019>.

appealed by the open-ended agenda of an inchoate *Fun Palaces* in 2013.<sup>52</sup> Unlike the ill funded Littlewood and Price Fun Palace, *Fun Palaces* is now in its seventh season thanks to a successful business plan. A non-profit association run by a handful of part-time staff, hosted by the performing arts centre The Albany, Deptford, it was funded in 2014 by the Arts Council England Exceptional Awards programme and The Space— an agency jointly created by Arts Council England and the BBC to support digital engagement across the arts.<sup>53</sup> The *Fun Palaces Campaign* coordinates a national weekend of community action every October, with events set up on voluntary bases and separately financed by individuals, cultural organizations and institutions. The word ‘campaign’ overcomes the neutralization of the critical stance in ‘festival’ culture according to Duffy – ‘when you say festival in England, it sounds like a nice people who can afford a really expensive ticket.’<sup>54</sup> The coordination labour is done through the *Digital Fun Palace*, a website affording open access to information gathered through the initiative for the community, such as the films produced on yearly basis. In order to make contents accessible, writing for the web is carefully curated, argues Duffy.<sup>55</sup> [FIGURE 7.8]. Additionally, the Ambassadors Programme, funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation and Wellcome Trust in 2016, builds up a supporting network for local communities development. In addition, *Culture Counts* facilitates consultancy and evaluation tools. Yearly evaluation reports on the project’s performance, which are available online, gather summary demographic profiles from its contributors and register the project’s media impact. Data consistently reveals the female leadership among Fun Palace Makers – which adds up to the women-led *Fun Palaces*, the project’s inclusive participation, and the significant engagement of local libraries over other kinds of institutions to point at the main role they can play in community building.<sup>56</sup> From the 138 Fun Palaces constituted in 2014 to the 433 of 2018, media reveals itself as instrumental to the development of *Fun Palaces Campaign*. The ambitious publicity strategy disseminates the initiative both in traditional media such as press and radio, as well as in social media such as Twitter, Facebook and Instagram, which in turn reveals the relevance on digital participation, with 17,677 tweets between 31 July to 10 Oct over the 107 press news recorded in 2014 – as the year’s evaluation report records. Reflecting upon the impact of the initiative, Duffy notes the remarkable change in the language of major cultural agencies, such as reflected in *Let’s*

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<sup>52</sup> Stella Duffy, authorised interview with the author, 20 August 2020.

<sup>53</sup> Evaluation Reports define 4 part-time staff in 2015, 5 in 2017.

<sup>54</sup> Stella Duffy, authorised interview with the author, 20 August 2020.

<sup>55</sup> Stella Duffy, authorised interview with the author, 20 August 2020.

<sup>56</sup> Demographic profiles oscillate between the 72% of female leaders in 2014 to the 90% of 2017, a year in which the proportion of ethnic minorities, people with disability, youth and elderly made up close to half of the Maker’s teams. Libraries make over the 50% of the participant institutions, over a granulated engagement from community centres (12%), museums and art centres (with less than 10 % each).

*Create*, the Arts Council England's Strategy for 2020-2030 (April 2020),<sup>57</sup> an achievement that Duffy contextualizes in the activism of an array of voluntary arts organizations and cultural studies academics: 'I think a sea change has come about where there has become a much stronger interest and belief in the possibility that we not only will have better cultural access and more diversity and more inclusion, if we let everybody in, we might actually get better arts. That's the big argument for the people who care about the art form with a capital A; I really don't. I care about community and I care about inclusion.'<sup>58</sup> Duffy's concerns are now precisely over the uncertain future of the arts, in plural, and how to grant people access to them in the context of the closure of cultural infrastructures that has been enforced by the current COVID-19 pandemic.

Condensed into a poem carved within the spectacular Olympic Park by Bird, retrieved from living memories of Littlewood's collaborators and friends and disseminated in documentary form by Richardson, staged in Stratford underground station and projected further into an imaginary archive by Brimfield and Herbert, and turned into a yearly campaign of community-led activities across Britain by Duffy and Rawlings, all these initiatives celebrate Littlewood's legacy in the Fun Palace project. So does the project's media activism resonate with the King Mob's handbills back in the late 1960s. However, it doesn't in COMPEIT, and seems feeble to me in Albarn's attempt to neutralize media overstimulation. Different to these two images of the Fun Palace, the former initiatives – poem, memory bank, production and campaign - revitalise the Fun Palace's activist ethos by reappropriating it from scholarly domains to reconnect it with wider public and the material social processes in which they live – corporate redevelopment and cultural hegemony among others. The cultural form of the carnival, so central to understand Littlewood's legacy, mediates each of these images of the Fun Palace; the carnivalesque constitutes the distinctive quality of this activist mode of reception of the Fun Palace. As a cultural idiom, the carnival is ambivalent and universal, for it affords the renewal of culture as a whole through the critical inversion of all institutional codes. The popular and grotesque face of the world, in which all participate equally, is merrily celebrated amidst temporary suspended hierarchies. In exposing and relativizing the dominant code in this way, the carnival holds open the potential of culture to renew itself. In his seminal study *Rabelais and his World* in 1968, Mikhail Bakhtin formulated the principles of the carnivalesque laughter, which he understood as an analytical category for the study of cultural situations: 'Let us say a few initial words about the complex nature of carnivalesque

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<sup>57</sup> [https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Strategy%202020\\_2030%20Arts%20Council%20England.pdf](https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Strategy%202020_2030%20Arts%20Council%20England.pdf)

<sup>58</sup> Stella Duffy, authorised interview with the author, 20 August 2020.

laughter. It is first of all, a festive laughter. Therefore it is not an individual reaction to some isolated “comic” event. Carnival laughter is the laughter of all the people. Second, it is universal in scope; it is directed at all and everyone, including the carnival’s participants. The entire world is seen in its droll aspect, in its gay relativity. Third, this laughter is ambivalent: it is gay, triumphant, and at the same time mocking, deriding. It asserts and denies, buries and revives. Such is the laughter of the carnival’.<sup>59</sup> If the agency of the carnival is regenerative ambivalence, it is in this form that main cultural actions that the Fun Palace once pursued such as the activation of both mass media audiences and Stratford youth, along with the critical role of Littlewood in the project – a role which she plays with her ‘Cli’ hat on, and is concerned with architectural affairs also – can be reencountered, and the complexity of the Fun Palace’s unfinished project enhanced.

## Conclusion

As we have seen in the second part of this thesis, the fifty-year long history of reception of the Fun Palace yields three kinds of mediation of the project. First, there is the appearance of the Fun Palace in newspapers, an image register constituted through the British press in the 1960s and early 1970s and an outcome of the publicity strategy for the Fun Palace under the control of Littlewood, Price and Driberg. It takes the form of headlines and journalist’s reports of interviews with Littlewood and Price, which incorporate the immediacy of quotes, anecdotes and detail about the contexts in which the conversations took place. In refraining from publicly sharing any drawings, press reports on the Fun Palace are often illustrated with Littlewood’s portrait. The outcome of a practice of active collection, editing and contestation when necessary by Price and Littlewood, the index of press cuttings conveys well the constructed nature of this image register. The Fun Palace news interrupt the flow of advertising that saturated and financially underpinned the commercial press. Furthermore, this image register actively challenges the discourse of publicity seizing the British press by becoming news itself. It is therefore an active image *of* the Fun Palace project rather than one *about* it, and thus, it belongs to the production rather than the reception of the project. The explicit responses that the Fun Palace elicited in letters sections conveys the success of the initiative. But so too does the bulk of Fun Palace news produced, for it attests to the interest that the project accrued and the transformation of the expectations of press readership it achieved – which the news headlines inscribe. For what these headlines mark

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<sup>59</sup> Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, 11–12.

as exceptional by the end of the 1960s – and thus deserving the new status – is the non-realization of the project. The way the project took hold of the public imagination of 1960s Britain best conveys its cultural ambition.

Differently to the press, scholarship does not actively produce the Fun Palace project through the range of affects it disseminates, but constantly reproduces its images. Scholarly practice produces instead the field of the Fun Palace's scholarly reception, whereas the Fun Palace aimed to exhaust itself in action. A distinctive network of discourses, their referent institutions and groups, all these form a joint agency producing and disseminating scholarly images for the Fun Palace aimed at scholars, most prominently architectural. Its discourse is not that of publicity but of the academy. Nurtured by Price's legacy, the scholarly mediation of the project brings to focus the alterity that the project's indeterminate form and programme builds within modern architecture's disciplinary regime. Developing slightly later than the press news, the Fun Palace's scholarly image lives much longer, sedimented in exhibitions, monographs, symposiums and even course syllabus. Crucially, its distinctive quality and periodization is directly informed by the nature and pace at which the Fun Palace archive becomes constituted. Following a marked dip in interest in the project after the mid-1970s, an animated scholarly uptake of the project after 1999 is a symptom of the constitution of the Cedric Price fonds at the CCA in 1995. Meanwhile the relative disinterest in Littlewood amongst scholars seems to be associated with the lack of a similar hegemonic archive for her work, and ultimately, the effects of the asymmetrical nature of the Fun Palace archive. For Price's section is systematic, finite and assertive; Littlewoods' is ephemeral, indeterminate and displaced. Her legacy is fugitive. It punches a question mark into the thickness of the Fun Palace Project folder in the Cedric Price fonds. For what may have escaped the gaze of Price-the-collector? Littlewood's archive decants as 'other' in the uneven archive of the Fun Palace project.

While architectural scholarship digs within the material richness of Cedric Price fonds, Littlewood's sparse papers hold open the regenerative potential of the Fun Palace project. Carnival images emerge to image it. Initiated by self-organised agencies – in some cases having secured temporary institutional support – the discourse of this third mode of reception is universal and mimetic. For it embraces public from all ages and backgrounds on the one hand, and on the other, it derides and renews simultaneously. If true to their carnivalesque cultural form, they raise a critique of institutional order – be it with regards to the rule of the archive and of the academy as Brimfield's and Herbert's, as well as Richardson's memory banks do; to the imperatives of capitalist urban development as Bird's installation for the Olympic Park offers; or to the spectacular mediatization of culture as King Mob's situationist handbills did back in the 1960s, while at the same time they regenerate the Fun Palace idea

with a festive alternative. Following the community-driven agenda of Stratford Fair, they dispense with design to regenerate the cultural democracy investing the Fun Palace idea. Ultimately, it is the act of imagining one what counts. For in so doing, you become participant.

## **CONCLUSIONS: MEDIA AS CULTURAL PRODUCTION**

***Joan Littlewood, Fun Palace and Theatre Workshop: In Conversation with Murray Melvin.*** Transcript of interview excerpt III, Theatre Royal Stratford East, London, 3 February 2015

*[We look into a map of the Stratford area from 1960s and some archival photographs from the Theatre Royal Stratford East Archive Collection]*

MM: [Murray Melvin points at some photographs] The Theatre Royal was not supposed to be here. They were furious with Joan. There is the office block. That is how it looks now [He looks through the window]. Because they put balconies and added the three floors, poor little theatre looks even tinier. Monstrous.

That is 1963 when we did our *Oh What a Lovely War!* You see there the little houses, that is where the bar is, and all the houses here on the other side of the road. Then, of course, they pulled them down.

This photograph is from the fruit market. That was in front of this angle here. This was Angel Lane, and it went straight across the road that leads to the bridge. This is Salway Road. There were houses in the square that is in front of the theatre - then it became the site for the Fair. Where this woman is walking from, there were all little houses that led to the underground station. It was just a little street.

It was community. Therefore, when they pulled everything down, they destroyed the community (...) I mean they really did destroy the whole area. That is why at that time, Gerry got the bar. You know, in England, unlike in the continent, we had licencing hours where you could only open from 11:00 in the morning until 14:00. Then you had to close and open again between 17:30 to 10:30. When they pulled all that down, Gerry got what was called an All-day Licence – because people used to come into the bar lost. They gathered there, and looked out, looked across at that side. And I remember one old chap, Jim, saying to me: ‘I can't quite get my head around it. You see, just there that used to be my whole grandparents’

house. When I came out of school, I used to go there and she would give me my tea and wait until my mum and dad came back home from work. It is just an empty space'. By coming to the bar – Gerry was very clever– it sort of anchored them to where they were. People were lost; they knew where they were once they came into the Royal. Buildings were taken down and put up so quickly that people didn't know where they were in their space. It can be frightening for older people, even for me. I wasn't born here, but you know, I came in 1957 (...) The plans were to pull the theatre down. Only Gerry saved it - he rushed out and got the Grade II.

An intriguing record labelled 'Wigley. "History" by Joan Littlewood' is held in the Fun Palace Folder in the Cedric Price fonds [FIGURE III.1]. It consists of a photocopy of a two-page note handwritten by Littlewood,<sup>1</sup> which could possibly have been sent to Mark Wigley in preparation of Price's section in 'Out of the Box', held at the CCA, 2004. In this, Littlewood situates the Fun Palace's origins within the Theatre Workshop's philosophy of extending the potential of any individual by means of specific drama techniques that the company had evolved since the 1940s. These were, Littlewood claims, 'PIONEERING TECHNIQUES OF DESIGN, TRAINING, PRODUCTION AND AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION IN GERMANY, NORWAY, SWEDEN AS WELL AS INDUSTRIAL REGIONS OF GREAT BRITAIN'. An ambitious programme followed after 1955, including 'WORK-TRAINING FOR AUDIENCE MEMBERS, CHILDREN'S THEATRE, CONCERTS, EXHIBITIONS, PLAYS INVENTED, DEBATES', at a time when the company was – while widely acclaimed abroad – experiencing active opposition from the Arts Council of Great Britain and having to make-do with £100-a-year funding from Newham Borough Council. Littlewood recalls how the Fun Palace idea crystalized during the crisis of 1958, when training became mercantiled due to soaring debts:

*WT [WORKSHOP THEATRE] FORCED TO SELL "SHOWS TO COMMERCIAL SET-UP. CO [COMPANY] MAKES MONEY, INDIVIDUAL CLOWNS SELL THEMSELVES FOR HIGH PRICES. ALTERNATIVE: EXPANSION OF BUILDING. EXTENSION OF THE IDEA. NEW FIELDS (...). J.L. [JOAN LITTLEWOOD] '58 THOUGHT: IF TRAINING CAN EXTEND POTENTIAL OF INDIVIDUALS, CHOSEN AT RANDOM FASHION, WHY NOT OFFER TECHNIQUE TO ANYONE WHO FANCIES IT? IT HAD LONG BEEN OBVIOUS THAT "ART" + "THEATRE" AMONG OTHER DISCIPLINES, WAS QUITE PLAYED OUT.*

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<sup>1</sup> Folder DR1995:0188:525:004, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

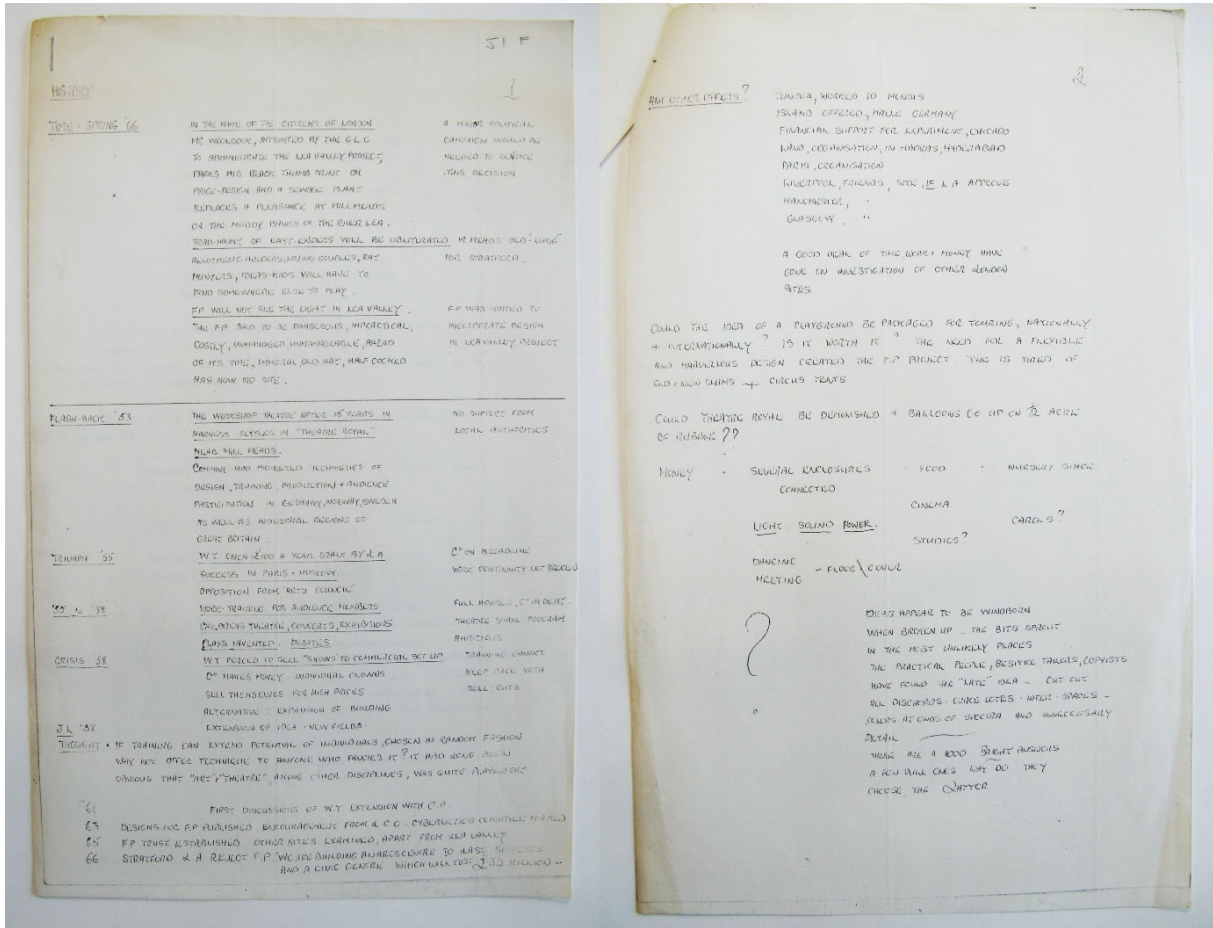


FIGURE III.1: 'Wigley "History" by Joan Littlewood'. Folder DR1995:0188:525:004, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.

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A big question mark floats next to the closing paragraphs of this memo - Littlewood's last pun dedicated to whoever is still her Fun Palace audience:

*COULD THE IDEA OF A PLAYGROUND BE PACKAGED FOR  
TOURING, NATIONALLY + INTERNATIONALLY? IS IT WORTH IT? THE  
NEED FOR A FLEXIBLE AND MARVELLOUS DESIGN CREATED THE  
F.P [FUN PALACE] PROJECT. ONE IS TIRED OF OLD + NEW SLUMS +  
CIRCUS TENTS.*

*COULD THEATRE ROYAL BE DEMOLISHED + BALLOONS GO UP ON  
½ ACRE OF RUBBLE??*

*MONEY. SEVERAL ENCLOSURES CONNECTED. FOOD. NURSERY  
SPACE. CINEMA. STUDIOS? (...) LIGHT. SOUND. POWER. DANCING -  
MEETING – FLOOR/ COVER.*

*?*

*IDEAS APPEAR TO BE WINDBORN WHEN BROKEN UP – THE BITS  
SPROUT IN THE MOST UNLIKELY PLACES. THE PRACTICAL  
PEOPLE, BESPOKE TAILORS, COPYISTS HAVE FOUND THE “LATE”  
IDEA – CUT CUT ALL DISCHORDS – GRACE NOTES – INTER-SPACES  
– COLORS AT ENDS OF SPECTRA AND UNNECESSARY DETAIL.  
THERE ARE A 1000 BRIGHT ANSWERS. A FEW DULL ONES. WHY DO  
THEY CHOOSE THE LATTER*

In what appears to be a concise forward-minded retrospective for the Fun Palace project by Joan Littlewood, this document shows the project's attachment to her vision for theatre. The Fun Palace was for Littlewood an alternative framework in which to instantiate anew the cultural ambition of her Theatre Workshop – namely, her belief in the genius of every person and the capacity of theatre to nurture. Its ultimate aim was to bring the maximum pleasure and happiness to the largest number. Such ends resonate with the hedonistic orientation of British utilitarian philosophy, since the turn of nineteenth century.<sup>2</sup> For – as Raymond Williams refers to the critical principle first elaborated by Jeremy Bentham and developed

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<sup>2</sup> I am in debt to Mark Dorrian for this observation.

further by John Stuart Mill – utility guides those actions that tend to augment rather than diminish the happiness of the community.<sup>3</sup> British institutionalized culture was far from being up to such challenge, for it systematically failed Littlewood's Theatre Workshop in the 1950s, and the comprehensive Fun Palace project in the 1960s and 1970s.

Under the auspices of the Fun Palace organization, the project's agenda grew into a formidable complex of activities in order to realize the cultural revolution that Littlewood's memo intimates. Plural and open-ended, the activist agenda was driven by sheer interactivity within the collective of which Littlewood and Price were only a part and organically developing within the live struggles of the British society of 1960s and 1970s.

The way to bring some of the complexity of the Fun Palace into focus is through the interrogation of its practices. What did the Fun Palace do? How did it operate? The chapters in this study unpack the kind of cultural activity that the organization pursued by asking precisely those questions. The Fun Palace project invested in specific media strategies, but not only to gather support from British institutions and public. Crucially, the Fun Palace realized its cultural agenda in the first instance as a media event, by inscribing its news within British institutionalized culture, from communication corporations, press or broadcasting, to planning authorities and funding bodies. News about the Fun Palace inserted a critique of each of these hosting institutions and mobilized their audiences. Thus, the collection of cuttings demonstrates the positive outcome of the Fun Palace's early activism within the British press, for in becoming news the project reached out to a mass readership in an ever-increasingly consumerist society. The film, only fragments of which remain, was designed as a critical advertisement intended, in a similar way to the press news, to shock broadcasting's mass audiences. For its part, the Fun Palace broadsheet negotiated the project's plural dissemination through its ludic, mimetic design, for it circulated simultaneously within institutional contexts such as the Civic Trust's Lea Valley Development Plan in search of official support, as well as through radical agencies such as the British situationist publication *Sigma Portfolio*, and the network it constructed, coordinated by Alexander Trocchi. Similarly ludic, Littlewood's *Bubble City* pamphlet was the first of the activist pamphlets about the Fun Palace-repurposed community playgrounds and fair events nearby Theatre Royal in Stratford aimed at engaging local youth, as well as stimulating funds from official authorities. Related to the ongoing local events – now called Stratford Fair – a series of monthly journals took on the role of registering the ephemeral activities on site and promptly inscribing their living memories within institutional archives, relaying them to funding bodies, and disseminating them to potential contributors.

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<sup>3</sup> 'Utilitarian' in Williams, *Keywords*, 323.

Alongside these critical practices of publicity, Price's office was immersed in the design of a range of spatial servicing networks, crib sheets, and operational charts, as well as a punched card index for the Fun Palace, borrowing from operational research methods and in close collaboration with Fun Palace's Cybernetics Committee convener Gordon Pask. The figure of the grid animating this radical design practice emblematises the Fun Palace's ambivalent encounter with technology, and more specifically with the idea of self-organisation that undergirds the Sixties' culture of emancipation. Rubric for each of the diagrams that draw the Fun Palace project, the figure of the grid registers the alterity that the under-specification of the Fun Palace brief and the heuristic capacity of its method (both constituent principles of a self-organising system) posed to the formal and programmatic determinism of modern architecture's disciplinary and representational regimes, as Fun Palace scholarship often acknowledges. But at the same time, the Fun Palace's gridded diagrams challenged scholarly practice itself, for these media have been systematically edited out from an otherwise enthusiastic reception of the Fun Palace's 'calculated uncertainty' rhetoric – to borrow from Price's vocabulary – since the late 1960s and early 1970s. Even scholars devoted to the project such as Royston Landau or Reyner Banham surrendered to the irresistible spell of the Fun Palace's photomontages and disseminated without hesitation the public image of the project-as-building at the expense of its grids. Deeply permeated by the giddy experience of Britain's Sixties, the Fun Palace's grids enact the illusion of control of such social experience through the ideal of self-organisation. They form the mirror in which the anxieties unleashed by concurrent social conditions such as the struggle for participatory democracy within the expanding capitalist organization of the economy, the rise of consumerism and the impact of such organization on communication practices, on the growth of communities and on subjectivity itself, as Raymond Williams has studied, are relieved by the fantastic play of the Fun Palace's mechanism,<sup>4</sup>.

Ultimately, in leading the whole production, the principle of self-organisation became realized within the mobile corpus of the Fun Palace at work. The extent of the media filed in the Cedric Price fonds's 'Fun Palace Project' folder testifies to the operational delirium that caused the Fun Palace to exist. Augmenting Price's gridded design and the publicity material that I have already discussed, a flow of minutes, memos and notes crowd the 'textual records' folders of this section of the Fun Palace archive. This exuberant collection of media – within which only invoices seem to be missing – indexes the inconclusive, polymorphous, contested and egalitarian conversation that made up the Fun Palace project between 1961 and 1975, fuelled by a seemingly inexhaustible energy. Set against the deterministic and

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<sup>4</sup> A thorough examination of the way Williams appreciates the challenges of British society in the 1960s unfolds in 'Britain in the 1960s'. Williams, *The Long Revolution*, 319-367.

commodified performativity governing cultural production at the time, these media materialized the radical freedom animating the Fun Palace's cultural agenda, and its consummation.

What is then the agency of media? For the Fun Palace it is one of collective forming, and the way they do so resonates with the metaphor of the ball in a game that the philosopher of science and polymath Michel Serres develops as a way of explaining the agency of objects – or, more explicitly, what he calls 'quasi-subjects'.

*Objects know in a different way to us. Look at those children out there, playing ball. The clumsy ones are playing with the ball as if it was an object, while the more skillful ones handle the ball as if it were playing with them: they move and change position according to how the ball moves and bounces (...) the ball is creating the relationships between them. It is in following its trajectory that their team is created, knows itself and represents itself. Yes, the ball is active. It is the ball that is playing.<sup>5</sup>*

In the same way as the ball plays and designates the collective by its movement, media objects are agents that mark a collective in their passing on. Serres adds:

*Do you really think that machines and technologies would be able to construct groups and change history if they were merely passive objects? (...) These biros, writing desks, tables, books, diskettes, consoles, memories ... produce the group that thinks, that remembers, that expresses itself and, sometimes, invents (...) maybe we could call them technical quasi-subjects ....<sup>6</sup>*

Part of Serres' philosophy of relations, itself nurtured by its transdisciplinary sensibility and formation, the 'theory of the quasi-object' pleads for the mobility of subjectivity as the necessary condition for intersubjectivity.<sup>7</sup> Collective forming is, for Serres, the giving away of the 'I' in favour of an emergent 'we', one that comes into being on the spot excited by the quasi-object's trajectory. Participation, claims Serres,

*has nothing to do with sharing, at least when it is thought of as a division of parts. Participation is the passing of the "I" by passing. It is the abandon of my individuality or my being in a quasi-object that is there only to be circulated. It is rigorously the transubstantiation of being into relation [...]*

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<sup>5</sup> Michel Serres, *Angels, a Modern Myth* (Paris: Flammarion, 1995), 47–48.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>7</sup> Michel Serres, *The Parasite* (Baltimore ; London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), 224.

*Collective ecstasy is the abandon of the "I"'s on the tissue of relations [...] Everyone is on the edge of his or her inexistence. But the "I" as such is not suppressed. It still circulates, in and by the quasi-object. This thing can be forgotten. It is on the ground, and the one who picks it up and keeps it becomes the only subject, the master, the despot, the god.<sup>8</sup>*

Following Serres, the Fun Palace project is, in this study, the collective being woven together. It is an inter-subjectivity constituted by each of the trajectories of a joint society of media quasi-objects. The prefix 'quasi' qualifies the ontology of the 'object' and indicates the significance of media as an active social practice. Since media actively marks the collective, its selection entails a risk for scholarly practice, for overlooking any of its movements devolves into a loss of its original complexity. The question then arises why the selection of media entertained in this study and no other. The analysis of the over fifty-year long reception of the Fun Palace provides an answer. My focus has been on those media practices that remove the Fun Palace from the familiar stability it finds within architectural scholarship. The media practices analysed here bring into sharp focus the different but complementary agencies of both Joan Littlewood and Cedric Price, and their encounter with other participants. The range of situations studied here conveys the way in which architectural practice radically transformed itself, at least temporarily, by *participating* – that is, by giving away its 'I', as Serres puts it – in the realization of a more ambitious cultural project,

Such a cultural project progressively unfolds through close analysis of the trajectories described by a range of Fun Palace media as they participate in some of the pressing living social struggles of Britain 1960s and 1970s as live experience becomes increasingly permeated by consumerism. The analysis conducted in this thesis encompasses Raymond Williams' understanding of the historical specificity of media, a social practice of production and reception, organically connected to the whole way of life of the particular society in which it directly participates.<sup>9</sup> Because of the direct nature of such relation, the live experience of the period becomes accessible, at least partially, by means of cultural

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 228.

<sup>9</sup> Crisis of technique, Williams argues in reference to the modern history of artworks, are directly informed by changing relationships between art and society. He situates artworks within the material productive forces of a particular society. In Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 158-164. Similarly, in his close analysis of television, he relates the emergence of a range of communication technologies with the developing social reality of 'mobile privatization'. Williams' Marxist approach to cultural analysis challenges abstract conceptualizations of media such as Marshall McLuhan's, which he sanctions as technological determinism, In Williams, *Television. Technology and Cultural Form*, 6.

analysis. Williams refers to this actual and emergent life, central to historical development, as 'structure of feeling'. The paradoxical term apprehends the inchoate and ineffable quality of the experience, a feeling, yet endowed with organizational potential in culture and society. It is an emergent life, 'a kind of feeling and thinking which is indeed social and material, but each in embryonic phase before it can become fully articulate and defined exchange'.<sup>10</sup> Yet it lives as 'other' within the stability of a dominant system of values and its corresponding selective tradition: 'This practical consciousness is always more than a handling of fixed forms and units. There is frequent tension between the received interpretation and practical experience (...) an unease, a stress, a displacement, a latency (...) There are the experiences to which the fixed forms do not speak at all, which indeed they not recognize.'<sup>11</sup> Beyond the fixed forms of the selective tradition, this life pregnant with tensions inscribes itself in the range of media forms of cultural artefacts and set, for Williams, the 'cultural hypothesis' of his analytical efforts.<sup>12</sup> Media forms thus, offer the material ground in which 'structures of feeling' of a given period are stored. The agency of media is then multiply oriented. Not only media is constitutive of an inter-subjectivity at the time of its production and circulation. In addition, media is a register for emergent culture in its lived form, and thus, projects the transformative capacity of such live towards the future. Playing now in the field of reception, media holds open the possibility of plural interpretation for active readings to dive deep in the cracks of the dominant culture.

How has the Fun Palace's active and complex production been received since its inception? The second part of the thesis studies the cultural politics investing two modes of reception practice: scholarship and activism. Regarding the first of these, scholarship tends to mark only some positions, and offers a mirror in which the expectations of architectural discourse become exposed. During the 1960s and early 1970s scholarship on the Fun Palace tends to hail the alterity that its formal and programmatic indeterminacy brought to architectural design, yet remained – to Price's disdain – attached to the architectural gloss of the Fun Palace's photomontages. The international travels of this architecturally bounded image met other visionary megastructures in Reyner Banham's history of the movement in 1976. Meanwhile Littlewood's undemonstrative work for Stratford Fair proceeded with minimal architectural contribution and went unnoticed by stiff or distracted scholarly practice, for which the fair was a blind spot. It yielded a few press cuttings in the local press – and a

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<sup>10</sup> Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 131

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, 130.

<sup>12</sup> Referring to literary works, and in particular to felt rhythms, semantic figures, elements of 'impulse, restraint and tone' within these, Williams claims: 'methodologically, then, a structure of feeling is a cultural hypothesis, derived from attempts to understand such elements and their connections in a general period (...)'. In Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 132-133.

mention by a theatre scholar. As a consequence, during the 1960s and early 1970s the Fun Palace reception laminates the complex unity of the Fun Palace cultural agenda by discarding this activist iteration of the project.

During 1970s and 1980s theory and historiography were instead what seized scholars' interest amidst thin opportunities for practice at a time of economic decline in Britain. A two-decade hiatus in the dissemination of the Fun Palace followed. Littlewood's work halted for personal reasons. The archive enters the game, a game shaped by its distinctively asymmetrical form. A key producer in the Fun Palace project, Cedric Price was also its main collector. Fun Palace materials were systematically indexed and stored in Price's office, since 1965 in Alfred Place, London. And there they stayed until 1995, when the Cedric Price fonds became constituted at the CCA in Montreal. Radically fugitive and fragmented, Littlewood's papers are, in contrast, distributed in institutional and personal collections across the globe, constituted in dribs and drabs.<sup>13</sup> The complex nature of the archive of the Fun Palace marks the horizon of the project's enunciability. Price's section is systematic, finite and authoritative. Littlewood's is ephemeral, indeterminate and displaced; it punches the density of Price's archive with a question mark, and decants as 'other' in the uneven Fun Palace archive.

Since 1999, a renewed historical interest in the revision of architectural modernist principles during the post-war period in Europe has seen the Fun Palace reanimated in scholarship – and, since the mid-2000s, so does the soaring attention paid to Cedric Price's work by digital cultures. Underlying these external conditions, the scholarly excitement for the Fun Palace is directly informed by the cultural hegemony of the archive of Cedric Price at the CCA. Not only does the Cedric Price fonds facilitate access to an invaluable and unique collection of records of the project; it is the object of the active patronage of its host institution, which funds and promotes significant scholarship on its collection through a range of research programmes and scholarly events. These in turn have yielded key scholarship on the Fun Palace, yet one which calibrates the project's architectural valence.<sup>14</sup> A key Marxist concept in Raymond Williams' cultural theory, hegemony refers to that condition whereby the dominant system of values – a 'selective tradition' – is actively practised in lived experience

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<sup>13</sup> Alongside the depleted Theatre Royal Stratford East Archive Collection, these include Michael Barker Collection of Joan Littlewood and the Theatre Workshop at the Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin, 1980; Arts Council of Great Britain Archive at Victoria & Albert Museum Collection, 1996; Cedric Price fonds at Canadian Centre for Architecture, 1995; and Joan Littlewood's film collection at the British Film Institute National Archive, 2008; Cedric Price Estate at St John's College Personal Collections, Cambridge, 2012.

<sup>14</sup> For instance, the contribution of Mary Louise Lobsinger, 'Cybernetic Theory and the Architecture of Performance: Cedric Price's Fun Palace' for the conference 'Anxious Modernisms: Postwar Architectural Culture, 1943–1968', 1999, the exhibitions 'Out of the Box: Price Rossi Stirling + Matta-Clark', curated by Mark Wigley, 2004 and 'Lucius Burckhardt and Cedric Price - A stroll through a fun palace', by Hans U. Obrist and Lorenza Baroncelli, 2014; the multidisciplinary research programme 'British Architecture for Society', also in 2014, and Hardingham's *Cedric Price Works 1952–2003*.

rather than imposed. Hegemony, explains Williams, 'is the central, effective and dominant system of meanings and values, which are not merely abstract but which are organized and lived (...). It is a whole body of practices and expectations (...). It is a set of meanings and values which as they are experienced as practices appear as reciprocally confirming.'<sup>15</sup> Under the auspices of CCA, the increasing interest in the figure of Cedric Price and in his work has woven a network of architectural scholars and related institutions within which the Fun Palace has circulated intensely. Although diverse in format and focus, overall architectural scholarship has sought to map the Fun Palace and its effects within Cedric Price's practice. For this, the Cedric Price fonds is the main source. However, while this holds a significant part of the Fun Palace archive, it is in the latter's nuanced displacements, interruptions and dispersion – the agency of which architectural scholarship rarely investigates – where the complexity of the Fun Palace archive rests. For it is in these gaps and folds that Littlewood is encountered. The condition in which the Fun Palace film scholarship stands today conveys well the complex nature of the archive and its agency. Incomplete and dispersed across institutions, mainly the Cedric Price fonds and British Film Institute, it has significantly been missed by scholarship. Similarly, Stratford Fair's sparse and displaced records keep challenging scholarly practice.

While architectural scholarship digs within the rich material of the Cedric Price fonds, Littlewood-in-exile holds open the regenerative potential of the Fun Palace's cultural project through the inaccessibility of her non-archive. An activist practice sutures the gap. Carnival images emerge to image it. Their discourse is mimetic, regenerative and universal. In the best spirit of the fair, the activism of Duffy's and Rawlinson's *Fun Palaces* since 2014, Brimfield's and Herbert's musical-documentary-street theatre hybrid 'The Palace that Joan Built', Richardson's memory bank 'In the Company of Joan' and Bird's poem-installation 'The Fun Palace' in East London's Olympic site, all provoke reflection upon scholarly practice and its selective look into the archive. Driven by self-organised agencies – now with institutional funding in some cases – this alternative mode of reception regenerates the Fun Palace's cultural democracy, for it is lived and shared amidst public of all ages. It drags all sorts of grotesque naturalizations of the Fun Palace into the gaiety of the carnival. It is the act of imagining one that counts, for in so doing, you become a participant – just as Joan wanted.

'The Fun Palace of Joan Littlewood and Cedric Price as a Cultural Project' stands itself as a cultural study. The study of a cultural situation requires a definite subject as a focus from which to explore its complexity. The Fun Palace project provides an excellent case both in its demarcation and in its intricacy. The questions posed to the material go beyond the things

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<sup>15</sup> Williams, *Culture and Materialism*, 38.

done and said. They investigate the conditions surrounding these things as lived practices, imbued in dynamic social processes – a materialist approach learned from Raymond Williams. Furthermore, from production to reception, the agency of Joan Littlewood most clearly inscribes the cultural realization of the Fun Palace project over its more restricted understanding as an architectural proposition, and reveals the frictions within the productive forces at play in the process. Littlewood is a most particular kind of client – ‘Cli’ or ‘Hell’, depending on the utilitarian valence of the proposition under discussion. She is crucially the most constantly alert and critical voice in the Fun Palace cultural project. Thus, this study travels by her side, enjoying and learning throughout from her precision, charisma and generosity. In the journey, it encounters a more complex Cedric Price than the one scholarship has yielded. For he also runs by her side in the Fun Palace project. The complexity that holds together the Fun Palace project exceeds the scope of this study. Its selective look into certain material needs to be appreciated in relation to scholarship already in circulation, on the Fun Palace, Littlewood and Price. The journey with Joan Littlewood continues beyond the Fun Palace, Cedric Price, and architecture.

## List of Figures

- FIGURE I.1:** 'REF.OL.CON.COME.HERE' memo, Joan Littlewood and Cedric Price, Oxford Corner House Feasibility Study, c.1965. Folder DR1995:0224:342:002, Cedric Price fonds, Canadian Centre for Architecture (CCA). 8
- FIGURE I.2:** 'Stanley Tiegerman & Richard Haas' memo. Folder DR2004:1430, Cedric Price fonds, CCA. 10
- FIGURE I.3:** 'Joan Littlewood Compilation', 27 August 2008, British Film Institute National Archive. 10
- FIGURE 1.1:** Alexander Trocchi, "The Moving Times" broadsheet, p. 1, Sigma Portfolio: A New Dimension in the Dissemination of Informations, no. 1, 1964. Special Collections, National Library of Scotland. 37
- FIGURE 1.2:** Cedric Price and Joan Littlewood, Fun Palace Promotional Brochure, 1964. Black and red ink on reprographic copy paper, 36.2 × 59.8 cm. DR1995:0188:001:023. Cedric Price fonds, CCA. 39
- FIGURE 1.3:** Theatre Royal Stratford East in the 1970s. Theatre Royal Stratford East Archives Collection. 45
- FIGURE 1.4:** Joan Littlewood, Bubble City pamphlet, cover page, 1968. Theatre Royal Stratford East Archives Collection. 47
- FIGURE 1.5:** Joan Littlewood, Bubble City pamphlet, p. 4, 1968. Theatre Royal Stratford East Archives Collection. 49
- FIGURE 1.6:** Joan Littlewood, Bubble City pamphlet, p. 19, 1968. Theatre Royal Stratford East Archives Collection. 51
- FIGURE 2.1:** Joan Littlewood and Cedric Price, 'A Laboratory of Fun', New Scientist, 14 May 1964. 57
- FIGURE 2.2:** Cedric Price, mock-up of article 'Fun Palace', ARK no 36 (Royal College of Art), folder DR:1995:0188:525:003, Cedric Price fonds, CCA. 59
- FIGURE 2.3:** Fun Palace: pleasure film assembly, 1960-1964, typescript on paper 33 x 21 cm. DR1995:0188:525:003:003, Cedric Price fonds, CCA. 61
- FIGURE 2.4:** Robot doll shot, min 2:16, 'London from the Air 1' (Fun Palace outtakes), 1963; Joan Littlewood, 3 min, British Film Institute National Archive. 65

- FIGURE 2.5:** Still from Fun Palace film ca. 1964, digital image from 16mm negative. DR2003:0006, Cedric Price fonds, CCA. 69
- FIGURE 3.1:** Fun Palace Project, *Architectural Review*, January 1965. Folder DR1995:188:505-519, Cedric Price fonds, CCA. 76
- FIGURE 3.2:** Diagrammatic Section of the Fun Palace. Undated. DR1995:0188:109, Cedric Price fonds, CCA. 81
- FIGURE 3.3:** Fun Palace drawing 51/18. 'Diagrammatic Section'. DR1995:0188:121, Cedric Price fonds, CCA. 81
- FIGURE 3.4:** Cedric Price, '51/30. Comparative Theatre Seating Analysis', DR1995:0188:165, Cedric Price fonds, CCA. 83
- FIGURE 3.5:** Fun Palace's edge notched punched card, DR1995:0188:525:004:001, Cedric Price fonds, CCA. 86
- FIGURE 3.6:** Fun Palace Bibliography, Series: Library, Cedric Price fonds, CCA. 88
- FIGURE 3.7:** Gordon Pask, 'Organisational Plan as Programme' [left] and 'The same Organisational Plan when it is alternatively represented as a Hierarchical Organised Adaptive Control Mechanism' [right], Fun Palace Cybernetics Committee. Minutes of the Meeting held at the Building Centre, Store Street, London, W.C.1, 27<sup>th</sup> January, 1965', 3-4, Cedric Price Papers, Royal Institute of British Architects Archive. 90
- FIGURE 3.8:** 'Ref. How to Live With 7"3/6'. Memo by Joan Littlewood, n..d. Folder DR1995:0188:525:003, Cedric Price fonds, CCA. 94
- FIGURE 3.9:** Telegram, 19 January 1965. Folder DR1995:0188:525:003, Cedric Price fonds, CCA. 95
- FIGURE 3.10:** Cedric Price, '51/19. Grid for Fun Palace. Scale 1/16": 1'0"', folder DR1995:0188:140-160, Cedric Price fonds, CCA. 99
- FIGURE 4.1:** Stratford Fair Agenda. DR1995:0188:525:003:012, Cedric Price fonds, CCA. 104
- FIGURE 4.2:** Cedric Price. Axonometric Showing Empty Lot and Adjoining Building for Open Space Utilisation Programme, 1972. Ink on translucent paper 38cm .72 cm. DR1995:0257:001, Cedric Price fonds, CCA. 107

- FIGURE 4.3:** Poster for Diploma in Environmental Design Easter Event from Barnet College Faculty of Art, 1961–1974. Poster 38.2cm.56 cm. DR1995:0188:525:004:016, Cedric Price fonds, CCA. 110
- FIGURE 4.4:** Stratford Fair, 'Easter Fair '74' report, 11 March 1974. Folder DR1995:0188:525:004, Cedric Price fonds, CCA. 112
- FIGURE II.1:** Fun Palace Reception Chart. 124
- FIGURE 5.1:** Ian Finch, 'Fun Palace Architect'. *The Guardian*, 4 July 1964. 126
- FIGURE 5.2:** Harold Atkins, 'Something new – just for fun', *The Daily Telegraph*, 6 June 1963. Press cutting, folder DR1995:0188:525:003, Cedric Price fonds, CCA. 128
- FIGURE 5.3:** Portrait Gallery: Joan Littlewood by Frank Norman, *The Sunday Times Magazine*, 16 August, 1964, 4-5; 8-9. 133
- FIGURE 5.4:** Priscilla Chapman, Sin Centres & Fun Palaces, *The Sunday Times Magazine*, 6 September, 1964, 50. 135
- FIGURE 5.5:** Joan Littlewood by Alan Brien, *Vogue*, Vol. 144, Issue. 5, 15 September, 1964, 160-161; 190-191. 137
- FIGURE 5.6:** Reyner Banham, People's Palaces, *New Statesman*, 7 August 1964. 139
- FIGURE 5.7:** *New Society*, April 15, 1965, cover. 146
- FIGURE 5.8:** Jane McKerron, 'Who will support the Fun Palace', *Tribune*, 29 April 1966, 9. 148
- FIGURE 5.9:** 'Joan has her eye on a fun palace', *East London Advertiser*, Durrant's Press Cuttings, 14 Jun 1963, folder DR1995:0188:525:003, Cedric Price fonds, CCA. 152
- FIGURE 5.10:** DR1995:0188:497 [left]; Folder DR1995:0188:525:003 [right], Cedric Price fonds, CCA. 154
- FIGURE 6.1:** Reyner Banham, Clip-On Architecture, *Design Quarterly*, June 1965, 14-15. 160
- FIGURE 6.2:** Royston Landau, 1968, *New Directions in British Architecture*, 74-75. 163
- FIGURE 6.3:** Royston Landau, 'Despite Popular Demand... AD is Thinking About Architecture & Planning', *Architectural Design*, September 1969, cover. 163
- FIGURE 6.4:** Reyner Banham, 1976, *Megastructure: Urban Futures of the Recent Past*, 86-87. 169

- FIGURE 6.5:** Cedric Price, Fun Palace Auditorium Chart. Cedric Price Supplement, *Architectural Design*, January 1971, 26. 172
- FIGURE 6.6:** ‘Where is Joan Littlewood?’ asks Daniel Farson in *The Sunday Telegraph*, May, 24, 1981. 175
- FIGURE 6.7:** Cedric Price, *Cedric Price Works II*, Architectural Association, 1984. 175
- FIGURE 6.8:** Research on Cedric Price fonds, Study Room, CCA, Montreal, 2015. Photography by the author. 179
- FIGURE 6.9:** ‘Out of the Box: Price Rossi Stirling + Matta-Clark’, CCA, 2004. Price’s section curated by Mark Wigley, Columbia University; Hubertus von Amelnunxen, CCA. Exhibition design and graphic design: Louis-Charles Lasnier, Montreal. Photography: CCA. 188
- FIGURE 6.10:** ‘An Afternoon with Cedric Price#2: Mark Wigley’, CCA, Montreal, February 2017, CCAchannel, YouTube. Produced on the occasion of the launch of Cedric Price Works 1952-2003: A Forward-Minded Retrospective. <https://www.cca.qc.ca/en/events/41605/an-afternoon-with-cedric-price-no-2>. 193
- FIGURE 6.11:** Hans Ulrich Obrist and Lorenza Baroncelli, ‘Lucius Burckhardt and Cedric Price - A stroll through a fun palace’, Swiss Pavilion, 14<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale, 2014. Photography by the author. 195
- FIGURE 6.12:** Hans Ulrich Obrist and Dorothea von Hantelmann, A Stroll through the Fun Palace at A Prelude to The Shed, Manhattan, May 2018. Photography: Stephanie Berger. © Stephanie Berger/The Shed. 198
- FIGURE 6.13:** Elisabeth Diller, ‘Soft Homage’ in H.U. Obrist and L. Baroncelli, ‘Lucius Burckhardt and Cedric Price – A stroll through a fun palace’, 2014. 201
- FIGURE 6.14:** Diller Scofidio + Renfro, The Shed, Hudson Yards, Manhattan, 2019. 201
- FIGURE 6.15:** Adrian Forty, *Words And Buildings. A Vocabulary of Modern Architecture*, paperback edition (2004), 146. 204
- FIGURE 6.16:** King Mob leaflets by David and Stuart Wise, 1968. ‘Xmas leaflet which accompanied the invasion of Selfridges in 1968. Many were handed out to shoppers and many scattered across Oxford St.’ [left]; ‘A piss take on the technocratic and future ultra capitalised city centre of Newcastle as conceived by the planners in 1968. Reproduced in a local gestetnered mag.’ [right]. <http://revoltagainstplenty.com/index.php/archive-local/128-a-hidden-history-of-king-mob-posterscartoons.html>. Accessed 3 August 2020. 209

**FIGURE 6.17:** Charlie Gullström, COMPEIT [COnnected Media and Presence from European Institute of Technology] Fun Palace, 2014, KTH Smart Spaces: Architecture and Interactive Media, KTH Department of Architecture, Stockholm. 211

**FIGURE 7.1:** Press Cuttings from Stratford Fair, folder DR1995:0188:525:003, Cedric Price fonds, CCA. 216

**FIGURE 7.2:** Keith Albarn's Spectrum, Dreamland, Margate, Kent, April 1968. 'Out Takes/ Cuts From Cp719 – Fun Palace, Air Cushion And Balloon Race 1968', min. 0:03/4:25 [left], min. 0:30/4:25 [right] British Pathe. 221

**FIGURE 7.3:** Bubble City, City of London Festival, summer 1968. Setting up the event. 'Out Takes/ Cuts From Cp719 – Fun Palace, Air Cushion And Balloon Race 1968', min. 3:00/4:25, British Pathe. 221

**FIGURE 7.4:** Charles Platt, 'Fun Palace - Not a Freakout', *New Worlds*, 180, 31, 37. 223

**FIGURE 7.5:** "The Fun Palace" by Caroline Bird. Poem etched into wood', in 'London 2012: Poetry in the Olympic Park – in pictures', *The Guardian*, 27 July 2012. Photograph: Olympic Delivery Authority. 227

**FIGURE 7.6:** 'The Palace that Joan Built', Mel Brimfield and Gwyneth Herbert, Stratford Station, October 2014. Photograph: Benedict Johnson [right]. <http://art.tfl.gov.uk/projects/the-palace-that-joan-built/>. Accessed 3 August 2020. 230

**FIGURE 7.7:** Wendy Richardson, 'In the company of Joan', 2016. <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt7573474>. Accessed 20 August 2020. 233

**FIGURE 7.8:** Stella Duffy and Sarah-Jane Rawlings, Fun Palaces Campaign, Evaluation Report 2014. <https://funpalaces.co.uk/about-fun-palaces/evaluations-2014-2019>. Accessed 03 August 2020. 235

**FIGURE III.1:** 'Wigley "History" by Joan Littlewood'. Folder DR1995:0188:525:004, Cedric Price fonds, CCA. 245

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### Joan Littlewood: In Conversation with Murray Melvin.

*Theatre Royal, Stratford East, 9 December 2014.*

#### The Beginnings of the Fun Palace Idea.

Murray Melvin: Its basis was science. Although it was fun. She used lots of scientific things to educate, especially for mathematics – she was cybernetic-mad. [...] The Fun Palace came out of the children in this area, the poor children, you know, fifty or more years ago. She started organising the children; she was doing street things with the children. An out of that came the Fun Palace, as a bigger, a vast ... [initiative?]. The Fun Palace has always been there in the back of her brain, but it started with these kids.

*Ana Bonet: Was it in the 1950s?*

MM: Oh, yes, early 1950s. I came in 1957

*AB: Was she already working children?*

MM: The company right from the beginning always did. Joan is – in England we call – the mother of theatre in education. It started here. Whereas every theatre now has a theatre-in-education section, it is Joan's. It started here with the kids out there. Moreover, whenever they toured, they did things with children, always. She was children mad. She thought that was more important because it was passing back one's knowledge to the younger generation. She would not care about us old ones; she was more interested in the young ones. Therefore, the Fun Palace was a means of fun because in the 1950s, after the war, there was not much fun in this country or in any European country. However, whenever you played with Joan, there had to be a reason. It was usually knowledge based. She wanted those big pinball machines that you see in arcades. She was going to have those big buttons designed, cybernetic boys were designing them for her. They were scientific. They may have a ball game – ba ba ba ba ba

ba – but it was very often around the heavens. There was a scientific reason for this game – that is very important.

*Theatre Royal Stratford East, 3 February 2015.*

On the Fun Palace Idea and Theatre Workshop

*AB. Which was the relationship between Theatre Workshop productions and the Fun Palace? I mean, because the Fun Palace must have taken a lot of energy from her, but at the same time, she could produce Oh What a Lovely War!*

MM: [Laughs] The brain was working. It [The Fun Palace] continued her education. I mean, the Fun Palace was to have fun. Because it wasn't much fun after the war. It had to be fun, but it had to be educational as well – education in the sense of learning. Whether learning was listening to music, learning music, listening to a play, seeing a play, making pottery, painting, total involvement in stretching your imagination, whichever way you wanted to go. Alternatively, she said, just sitting back looking at the sky, letting your imagination go. Because there isn't much time for doing that sort of things. She thought sometimes it was simple, but it was important. Involvement in the fullest sense, I think, of creativity. Because you know, she stated 'everyone's a genius, everyone's a scientist'. But not everyone is given the opportunity to expand it. We could all do it if we were given the opportunity. But the majority of people are not given the opportunity to expand it. So that's what she wanted, to expand people's brain and imagination. She never quoted that word poetry, she wasn't interested in it. And there was poetry, of course, but not in a poetical sense.

*AB: Do you find that the ideas behind the Fun Palace, and in particular cybernetics, were informing her production, for example, Oh What a Lovely War! Do you see any connections?*

MM: Well, look at the elements she brought into Lovely War, the slides, the ticket-type and that going on. They are very different elements, but all moulded together. So in a way that was sort of interactive, moving space.

The current production [*Oh What a Lovely War!* Theatre Royal Stratford East, 2015] has got some sets, which I think just get in the way. We didn't have any set. We had Shakespeare's round O. It was a bare space that you filled with imagination. And so in a way it was all there. She always had that in her productions. Her productions were always movement, even the movement of keeping still. She was very filmic. People coming to do *Oh, What a Lovely War* [2015] asked me – 'How did the scene start? And how did it end?' 'They didn't' – I replied. They faded in and out like a film, because theatre had to keep up with film. People went to film and they got used to film and the quickness of film. She thought she had to keep up with that. Therefore, you didn't stop one scene and then started another. You kept the attention of people there – this again, continual movement. You kept their interest, just as you would in the film. That came from Eisenstein, she was a she was a great fan of Eisenstein, of all those early films. She had seen them, knew how they worked. Eisenstein's lighting, that European lighting, you know, John Barry used that lighting. That was innovative in England – it wasn't well known. On the continent, Piscator was using it, Stanislavsky was using it. But they [Theatre Workshop] were the only ones using it in England. Professor Derek Paget, once said that Theatre Workshop was the Trojan horse that brought European theatre into England. Until then, nobody wanted it. Part of the time, they ignored them. It wasn't until Peter Daubeny did his World Theatre Seasons and brought Brecht over [Aldwych Theatre, 1964-1973]. Everybody went mad. But just down the road this company [Theatre Workshop] was doing that for 30 years.

*AB: Brecht's theatre was educational – instructional – for it aimed to raise critical awareness in audiences as a way to make them participate and think. Was it the same for Littlewood?*

MM: Of course, it had to be educational, even though it was fun. In the early days, she did political theatre, with a small 'p'. You know, the Greeks would say that politics were the affairs of the people – that was Theatre Workshop. In that sense they were political. They had to be pertinent in order to interest their audience, rather than just merely having that middle class entertainment. She wasn't interested in comfortable theatre. She preferred you to be uncomfortable, to make you think. That was a learning process, politically. It is there in all her productions.

*AB: It's really fascinating the contrast between this dry attitude to make people think and at the same time, the illusion, the ability to undertake an imaginative leap to the stars.*

MM: The opposites are the same, the magnets, you know, yes, she used that all the time.

*AB: She cut-out empathy, poetry or romanticism.*

MM: The emotion, it was for the audience to feel, but not part of the performance you had to do. When you worked with that concept, you never knew what the effect would be. If you felt the effect, she would soon wipe that from you. It was not up to you to feel the emotion, to feel the effect; that was for the audience. You had to be in the situation, get on with what was happening. She would say – 'Just tell the story, truthfully. Don't colour. You are colouring that word, stop colouring it. Just say the word.'

*On Joan Littlewood's theatre.*

*AB: When did street theatre started?*

MM: She did agit-prop street theatre in the 1930s. Then she returned to it. Joan liked many people, working with lots of people; she could work with lots of people. She went back to the streets from whence she came from. Stratford Fair was part of that. You see, look at this theatre [Theatre Royal Stratford East] now. What do we hold, 400 people? Then look at the explosion of the population. She knew that there was a movement out there that she had to [engage with] We have this big arena called the O2 [Millennium Dome in London] and you see pop-corns within 6000, 10,000 people screaming insanity. Yes, but Joan knew, that is what she was working toward: entertainment for a vast number of people. Then she went to Hammamet, in Tunisia, to do the big street theatre, the whole town, things for everybody. She was a magician. Everybody followed Joan. She was pipe-piper.

*AB: All these events are so ephemeral and left so few traces in the archive.*

MM: She would hate it anyway. Although she wrote her book [*Joan's Book. Joan Littlewood's Peculiar History as She Tells It*, 1994]. She would say – 'Oh, never mind about that, that was yesterday, get on and do it today!' I can hear her say – 'Just do it!' If you were to tell her a story, she would say- 'Stop telling this, get up and do it!' And you assumed you would soon know whether the story was good or not because you would come to a halt – 'Get off loads of rubbish! Somebody else get up and tell that' [Laughs]. If I would say – 'I don't know how but I'll have a go'. She would point a finger at me and said – 'That's all I ever asked for any member of my company'. If you got to make a fool of yourself, and it was totally wrong, it didn't matter. You actually got up and did something. Out of that, somebody else may pick up a germ within what you had done, take that and reuse it. Thus, there was a benefit for the whole. She worked that way. If you couldn't do it as a character, she'd get someone else to do it. We all performed everybody else's characters. Men played women and women played men more than they often played their own part. Because of that, you knew what the collective piece was about, not just interest in your own particular – she would say- 'selfish reasons'. You were there as a part of a whole, and you had to know what the whole was. That's why if somebody was ill, everybody could take the parts on themselves. I don't know if this is even done anymore like that. She was unique at the time. Someone will do it some other time. She used to say the Renaissance will come from somewhere, maybe not England. She would not write down us. If people would ask her – 'how do you do it?' She would say – 'well, we do it differently every day.' That's what she hated about India; that's what she hated about the great ensembles. 'Don't ever let me become a museum. Don't you turn me into a museum' – she would say.

*AB: Actually, she is not. Her archives are minimal.*

MM: [Laughs]. She is as big a museum as any of them. But how did she do it? That was her; it was just Joan. That came out of a life, of a living, of her perceptions, from her very depth.

*AB: Which were her connections with other groups at the time?*

MM: You do have to remember that in the 1930s, there were agit-prop companies all over the world, Germany, Russia, and America. They all communicated with each other. Agit-prop came from the French, and the

French Revolution, when they didn't have newspapers. They actors from Le Odeon got up every evening and acted the news. They were Living Newspapers. They all kept in touch. If they had a good sketch, they would send it to each other. Therefore, there was this enormous network of like-minded people across the world that kept in touch.

When you look at the Fun Palace, the people that supported her, Buckminster Fuller from America, Yehudi Menuhin, the Archbishop [laughter]. She was surrounded by incredible people. They all flock to Joan – the pipe-piper– whose arguments were so succinct and so clear, yet so forward thinking. On her birthday in Betty's flat – Betty was her sister – she had a little council flat in a little block, a tiny little flat – you would go for Joan's birthday, and hundreds of people, lords, ladies, bishops, scientists, all in this little working class flat. It was incredible the people that was around her. She could call on anybody, and they all would come to Joan. Cedric Price and all the architects, I mean, she got all those as well. Look at him. They were blood-kins – the architect that has got very few buildings but he's responsible because of his ideas on any modern building. Even the Pompidou, they acknowledged, it was all Cedric's. He was pure in his thinking, pure in that conception. And that was Joan as well, of course. That analytical purity that she had all the way through and she never lost, which applied to anything, the productions, etc. She never gave in, she never compromised.

*AB: Was there any link with Alexander Trocchi, and his Sigma project, for example, because he was talking at the time of a spontaneous university?*

MM: I don't remember a connection. There might have been, but it never came down to us.

*AB: And with Arnold Wesker?*

MM: A good socialist, but again, emotional. Joan would not want to know about it. He started Centre 42. Now what? This is Joan – 'Yes, working class, it has all got to be for the workers and they've got to live (...) And Joan would yawn. What was his first production? Stravinsky's Soldiers Tale. Come on, I have done that.

*AB: He managed to get funding though.*

MM: Because it was going to be Stravinsky's Soldiers Tale. However, if it had been a piece that nobody knew (...). Nevertheless, Arnold is lovely, he means well.

*AB: And what about the Open University?*

MM: It was her idea that of getting away from any formalized education that kept everybody into a straitjacket. An open university, open to anybody, open to when you want to learn or how you want to do it. And it is still going – but nobody knows it was her idea, except those of us who knew her. She didn't care. It was being done.

### *A Day in Theatre Workshop.*

*AB: I would like to ask you about a day at Theatre Royal, an ordinary day, and particularly focusing on how the activities relate to the theatre spaces. How was the theatre used and organised?*

MM: In Joan's day, there were very few people organising the place. There was the company...

*AB: How many?*

MM: If it was a classical piece, there were 16, for a small piece, 5. There were very few people organising the place. There was Gerry and his secretary - very few because everybody else, we, did all the work. If you weren't actually rehearsing, you went up and helped make your costume or you helped John Barry with the set or you painted some of the theatre or you did the drains, or you did some electrical work, everybody did everything. And so in those early days – my early days as a student – I got here at nine o'clock and put the kettle on, as there was no hot water in the building then. Can you imagine in the middle of the winter without hot water? Everything had to be on a kettle, on a gas ring. Switch to stage; get the things ready for rehearsal. Joan might just have arrived. You make tea for everybody; stop rehearsing. Those that weren't rehearsing were up into the wardrobe or helping John build the set. You rehearsed the whole day. And then there was the evening show. So it was a full day. Then when a show ended, that weekend you helped take down the set. You helped build the new set for the next production. Yes, you never, never stopped.

You had no money. They divided what came in in the box office. But then they didn't have enough money. So you spent 24 hours a day here. And then later on if you were put taking the set down, the last train would be gone. There would be no trains to get you home, because it would go past midnight, and the trains stopped earlier then. So you just got lots of costumes from the wardrobe and you'd put it over yourself, because there was only heating one hour before the performance. So during the day it was absolutely freezing. Sometimes you would start rehearsal because you were so cold. So you would stop, you would do a movement class to warm you up, then back to rehearsal. We would bring in the iron to stop the draught coming through. And then you'd have one single light to save electricity. It was so dreary. Out of it came that magic. The day was full, not just of acting, but of doing everything else, with cleaning, sweeping, painting, costumes, set, writing letters. I mean, a full engagement.

### *On Stratford and the Fair*

*AB: The audience for her theatre-in-education was Stratford youth, the kids that were at risk, close to violence. That is extraordinary.*

MM: Joan was always with children. She felt that it was so important to get them involved and get their imaginations going at a young age. Joan is the mother of theatre-in-education. Every theatre in England has now a theatre in education. It's all Joan's, it bounces down to Joan.

I met once one of her young kids, one of 'The Nutters', now a grown man on his fifties. He was talking about how wonderful it was when Joan was here and they were all young kids, because she took her out of the street. I asked – 'What is it about her that you always liked?' 'It is quite simple' – he replied – 'She was the first person that ever asked me what I thought; or what I wanted to do. Up until then, nobody else had done that. We were told what to do, when to do it and how to do it. She was the first one to say – "What would you like? What do you think should we have here?" We came up with some fantastical things, and she would say – "ow do we get that?"' [laughs]. When she started the Fair out there, she did not organise it. She said to the kids – 'What would you like?' And one boy said – 'Joan, could we have a donkey?' 'What do you want a donkey for?' – she said?

'We could have donkey rides, couldn't we?' – replied the kid. 'Yes, that is a good idea. Where are we gonna get a donkey from?. Mr Waltser, he's got a donkey (....) Let's go and see him.' – Joan would propose. She got the boys to ask him if they could borrow the donkey to have the donkey ride. And of course the fair became *their* inspiration, *their* idea. It was *their* donkey ride. 'We used to bank off school, but we never missed one of her classes. We were never late – The Nutter explained – because if we were, Joan would not let us in. Therefore, we were always there on time because we wanted to get in'. She set their imagination and she did the same with us. That is what she did in rehearsals because we were all her kids, of course.

*AB: Her educational ideas seemed to be about action, ambience – about creating the appropriate environment.*

MM: Yes, atmosphere, very important – and the *accessibility* of the people to know what you were doing. Especially if you were doing a classical piece, it had to be accessible to people that didn't know classical pieces. It had to be relevant to them. When I did *Every Man in His Humour* by Ben Johnson, if you would play it as written, it would take three and a half hours; Littlewood's, two hours and twenty, with one interval. That is because you discarded poetry. You just did the story, what was the through line, what was it about politically.

*[We look into a map of the Stratford area from 1960s and some archival photographs from the Theatre Royal Stratford East Archive Collection]*

MM: [Murray Melvin points at some photographs] The Theatre Royal was not supposed to be here. They were furious with Joan. There is the office block. That is how it looks now [He looks through the window]. Because they put balconies and added the three floors, poor little theatre looks even tinier. Monstrous.

That is 1963 when we did our *Oh What a Lovely War!* You see there the little houses, that is where the bar is, and all the houses here on the other side of the road. Then, of course, they pulled them down.

This photograph is from the fruit market. That was in front of this angle here. This was Angel Lane, and it went straight across the road that leads to the bridge. This is Salway Road. There were houses in the square that is in front of the theatre - then it became the site for the Fair. Where this woman is walking from, there were all little houses that led to the underground station. It was just a little street.

In the shopping centre here, you've got all the stalls. Look this is the back of the theatre. At the end of the bar there are two offices. This is Gerry's office, which is still there. Here is Angel Lane, on the level with the theatre that was all being taken away to rebuild it underground.

It was community. Therefore, when they pulled everything down, they destroyed the community (...) I mean they really did destroy the whole area. That is why at that time, Gerry got the bar. You know, in England, unlike in the continent, we had licencing hours where you could only open from 11:00 in the morning until 14:00. Then you had to close and open again between 17:30 to 10:30. When they pulled all that down, Gerry got what was called an All-day Licence – because people used to come into the bar lost. They gathered there, and looked out, looked across at that side. And I remember one old chap, Jim, saying to me: 'I can't quite get my head around it. You see, just there that used to be my whole grandparents' house. When I came out of school, I used to go there and she would give me my tea and wait until my mum and dad came back home from work. It is just an empty space'. By coming to the bar – Gerry was very clever– it sort of anchored them to where they were. People were lost; they knew where they were once they came into the Royal. Buildings were taken down and put up so quickly that people didn't know where they were in their space. It can be frightening for older people, even for me. I wasn't born here, but you know, I came in 1957 (...). The plans were to pull the theatre down. Only Gerry saved it - he rushed out and got the Grade II.

#### On Joan Littlewood's Library.

MM: [Murray Melvin points at the library that exists in the Green Room of Theatre Royal Stratford East]. This is what was left of our library when she gave in her keys. *We have it into sections.* It was enormous job because

Joan's reading was so ... she covered everything. Whether she read them, all or not I don't know. There is two or three lifetimes reading here if you would get through them all. But she would always convince us she had done. And that's vital. She would always say to go and look at this or that book - "it's written all about it in there". Sure enough, she had.

*AB: So it was for you collaborators actually.*

MM: Yes. We were putting it into sections: plays, history, psychology, theology [...]. Mary [Mary Ling] one day was looking at a book. 'What's the matter?'— I said. 'I don't know what section we should put this under. It is the Kama Sutra'. 'We will start a new section'— I said — 'We will call it Health'. Therefore, it is under Health [laughs]. It is all there. It is incredible.

*AB: I was interested in Littlewood's library because she was so forward thinking in terms of education, and the importance of engagement, participation in it. Which were her references for that?*

MM: There are the manifestos that they issued. [He opens the booklet Theatre Workshop. A British People's Theatre and we read the introduction]: 'we have known success — an evening in a Welsh miners' hall'. If they liked it, that was success, to her that was enough. Just a small gathering of people, of workers, of miners. If it was *accessible* to them, [the play] did it all.

*AB: When was this edited?*

MM: That was 1950s. It was done here [Theatre Royal Stratford East] so it was after 1953. It is from 1957.

[We peruse the Theatre Workshop booklet] Edward II — Oh, I saw that! The first thing I saw was Richard II. Then I was brought back to see Edward II. For me these are still the two best classical productions I've ever seen. They were incredible.

*AB: Always engaged in action, she seemed to have little time to publish, so there are only little publishing events like Bubble City. Instead, she filmed, gave interviews, etc.*

MM: 'I haven't got time' - she used to say to me. If I would say – 'why don't you let them write a book?' – she would reply – 'I don't have time, I've got to get the next show on'.

### On Littlewood's laughter

*AB: How would you describe Littlewood's humour?*

MM: My binding memory of this place, for all the cold, for all the hard work, for all the telling off that she gave you, I remember her laughter. Her hysterical laughter in this place. Because her humour was wonderful, you see. She just laughed, we all laughed an awful lot. Her attitude to life was so serious, to what happened to people [...] I think Joan thought everybody was put into a lump, and that was such a waste. That is why her statement about 'everyone is a genius' - only they were not be given the chance to open people's imagination. That is why she started [working] with the young kids, the older lot were lost [...] Education stopped imagination, because it's all channelled. Nobody says 'what if' [...]

How can you describe her, that genius? She was a genius, and underneath there was this simple lady with great humour, great laughter, like nice fruit and a glass of wine – back to basics. All the books now written about her, they are trying to rather pin her down. People ask about what Joan would have done. 'Well' – I would say – 'it depends on what day of the week. What I think she may have done I can tell you. But that was 20 years ago and she changed her mind every day!' You do something and the next day she would say- 'Come on, let's do something new'. She always changed, as did her productions, you see. You get the first night over and she said – 'Thanks we got that over. Now we can start work'. People used to come two months later and would say – 'It's a different show!' 'Yes, Joan doesn't like the same one we did that last night' – I would reply. Sometimes her notes read – 'You know, I watched you over two nights and you've given the exactly the same performance as you did two nights ago. You and your character are 48-hour old. What happened?' And that goes back to Stanislavsky. Stanislavsky was the Bible – and Meyerhold, the Commedia dell Arte, very important, music hall and Charlie Chaplin. We did Charlie all the time. We always 'double-da' [Murray Melvin

taps on the table]. Anything really serious, [?] was on the piano playing sonnet music and doing everything in 'double-da'. Take the pressure off; find the real reason behind the scene.

*AB: Was she able to laugh at herself?*

MM: Oh, yes. I mean, look at that face! [Murray Melvin points to a portrait of Littlewood that hangs on the wall]. Look at the humour in that face. At her interviews, she would tell someone off and then force them all laughing. She laughs at her own seriousness, because it is sort of a performance half of the time.

*AB. And the other half, what did she do?*

MM: Think the reason for the performance very seriously. There was always a reason for her performances. When people tell me about her swearing, and her foul mouth, I say – 'Yes, but she did not normally swear. She only did when there was a reason. She would destroy somebody with her mouth. Then she would turn round and start laughing, and sorted him out'.

*AB: Which were her reasons?*

MM: Well, you can imagine what she went through as a woman, you know, that young girl who told everyone that she was going to be a director. You are talking about 1930s. Can you imagine what she went through of the condescension from that male-oriented system – 'Oh well done dear, yes lovely'. 'Grrrr', she would 'srrrch!' Then she turned and sorted him out; it was a performance.

## Appendix 2

### Fun Palace Reception Index and Chart.

## Fun Palace Reception Index

Year	Author: Title	Media	Publication
1953	London County Council Collection, London Metropolitan Archives		LCC/CL/PK/01/103, 'Proposed Fun Palace for London'
1963	Littlewood: Monitor	Broadcast	BBC Monitor April 28,
1963	Astragal: Notes & topics	Article	Architects' Journal, June 26, p. 1318-19
1964	Price, Littlewood: A Laboratory of Fun	Article	New Scientist, May 14, 432-433
1964	Price, Littlewood: Fun Palace	Article	ARK (Spring)
1964	Civic Trust, Lea Valley Regional Park :A Lea Valley regional park : an essay in the use of neglected land for recreation and leisure	Report	
1964	Civic Trust Conference	Conference	
1964	Pilot Project - August 1964 (report)	Report	
1964	Tietz, S: Buildings for Pleasure and Leisure	Article	AA Journal, Sept-Oct, p. 63
1964	Bendixon: Palaces are for fun	Article	Architectural Design, Nov.
1964	NEWS: CIVIC TRUST: Lea Valley regional park	Article	Architects' Journal, 29 July, 253-254.
1964	Browne: LEA VALLEY: Proposals for a linear park for East London	Article	Architectural Review, Jun, p. 413-421
1964	Archigram n.4 (1964, spring-summer)/ n.6 (autumn 1965)	Little Magazine	Archigram
1964	Banham: People's Palaces	Article	New Statesman, 7 Nov, 191-192
1964	Trocchi: <i>Sigma Portfolio</i>	Sigma programme	Sigma Portfolio
1965	Price, Littlewood: Fun Palace Project	Article	Architectural Review (Jan)
1965	Littlewood: Theatre or Fun Palace?	Article	Playbill, Vol 2, n. 4, April
1965	Price: Public Space Program	Book	Hillman (Ed) Essays in Local Government Enterprise, vol 2. New Towns New Cities, p.157-160
1965	Banham: A Clip-on Architecture	Article	Design Quarterly 63, p-1-30/ Architectural Design Nov.
1965	Manifold leisure at metropolitan scale	Article	Architects' Journal, 20 Jan 1965, p. 147
1965	1964. ASTRAGAL'S REVIEW OF THE YEAR: January	Article	Architects' Journal, Jan 1965, 118-120
1966	Archigram: IDEA Folkstone	Broadsheet & Symposium	
1966	Banham: Zoom Waves Hits Architecture	Article	New Society (3 Mar)
1966	Inglis: Architecture: The Fun Palace	Article	Art in America, vol 54, Jan-Feb, p. 69-72
1966	Chadwick: The Park and the Town	Book	p. 369
1966	Sheffield Festival 1966: 'Price-Topolski Expo-Folly'	Pavillion	CCA archive
1967	Price, Littlewood: Fun Palace Camden London	Article	Architectural Design,, v.37, Nov 522-525
1967	World Fair Osaka 1970	Article	ICA Bulletin n 171, July
1967	Comment. Pavillon at Osaka	Article	RIBA Journal, November
1967	World: Fun Palace	Article	Architects' Journal, Jan 1967, a2
1968	Price, Littlewood: The Fun Palace	Article	The Drama Review: TDR, Vol. 12, No. 3, Architecture/Environment (Spring, 1968), pp.127-134
1968	Self-Pace Public Skill and Information Hive	Article	Architectural Design, 1968 May, v. 38, no. 5, p.237-239
1968	Joan Littlewood's fun palace, Camden, London; Architect: C. Price	Article	Bauen & Wohnen, v 4, 149-152
1968	Charney: Environmental Conjecture: In the Jungle of Grand Prediction	Article	Planning For Diversity and Choice
1968	Project for an information centre, Oxford Circus, London	Article	Werk, 1968, no. 9, p. 609-612.
1968	Scott Brown: Little Magazines in Architecture and Urbanism	Article	Journal of the American Institute of Planners, 34:4, 223-233,
1968	Landau: New Directions in British Architecture	Book	
1968	Albarn: The Spectrum	Fair pavillion	Dreamland, Margate, Kent, April.
1968	Fun Palace	Film	British Pathe
1968	King Mob: "It was meant to be grat but it's horrible". Confessions:S. Claus 1968'	Handbill	King Mob handbill
1968	Barney Platts-Mills: Everybody's an Actor, Shakespeare Said.	Documentary	
1969	Pask: The Architectural Relevance of Cybernetics	Article	Architectural Design (Sept)
1969	Utopia e/o Rivoluzione'	Conference	Turin
1969	Baird: 'La dimension amoureuse' in Architecture	Article	Jencks, Baird, Meaning in Architecture
1969	Barney Platts-Mills: Bronco Bullfrog	Film	BFI
1969	Albarn: Fifth Dimension	Fair Pavillion	Girvan, Scotland
1970	Cedric Price Supplement	Article	Architectural Design
1970	Cooke: Buildings for Pleasure	Article	Building Design, June 26
1970	Toffler: Future Shock	Book	
1970	Nuttall: Bomb Culture	Book	
1970	Cook: Experimental Architecture	Book	
1971	Price	Article	Architecture Canada, Feb 15
1971	Bahnam: Los Angeles: the architecture of four ecologies	Book	
1972	TRSE: Listed Building		
1973	Fisher: Playnet, Unit 3, Fisrt Year, AA, 73-74	Design Studio	AA
1974	Brown: The week: Fun Palace of the future?	Article	The Architects' Journal, Mar 13.
1975	Price: The Evolving Image	Exhibition	RIBA Heinz Gallery, Oct 8-Nov 29
1975	Goodman: Joan Littlewood and her Theatre Workshop	PhD	New York University, Theater
1975	Isozaki: Erasing Architecture into the System	Article	[Kenchiku no Kaitai [Dismantling Architecture]
1976	Mullin: Cedric Price or still keeps going when everything else has stopped	Article	Architectural Design
1976	Banham: Megastructures	Book & Lecture	
1976	Lyall: Fun palace mark II - a new centre to serve the community in diverse ways;		
1977	Architect: Cedric Pricel	Article	Building Design 343, April
1977	Baudrillard: 'The Beaubourgh Effect'	Article	
1978	Memoir of the Century	Exhibition	Topolski's Chronicle vol XV, no.23
1979	Price: Technology is the Answer but What Was the Question?	Lecture/ Audio recording	Monica Pigeon
1980	The Howard Gilman Collection of Visionary Architectural Drawings		Private Archive

1980	Michael Barker Collection of Joan Littlewood and the Theatre Workshop		Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin
1981	Fun and games for new Alexandra Palace	Article	Architects' Journal
1981	Goorney: The Theatre Workshop Story	Book	
1984	Cedric Price	Exhibition + Catalogue	AA, London
1984	Topolski: The Memoir of the Century.	Exhibition / Festival	South Bank, London
1986	Cedric Price: Time +Timing. Projekte 1981-1984	Exhibition + Catalogue	Galerie Aedes Grolmanstrasse 51, Berlin.
1989	Price: Autumn Always Gets Me Badly	Lecture/ Video recording	AA, London
1991	Price: Osaka Folies	Book chapter	
1993	Price: The Generosity of Change [ in Powell, K., London]	Book chapter	Academy Editions, p. 26-27
1994	Littlewood: Joan's book : Joan Littlewood's peculiar history as she tells it	Book	Methuen
1995	Cedric Price Archive CCA		Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montreal, Canada
1996	Arts Council of Great Britain, V&A Collection,		Institutional Archive
1998	Reconceptualizing the Modern: Architectural Culture, 1943-1968	Conference	Harvard GSD
1998	Hays: 'Architecture Theory since 1968'	Book	Columbia
1999	Price: 'Cedric Price: Mean Time'	Exhibition	CCA, Octagonal Gallery, 19 Oct-27 Feb
1999	"Anxious Modernisms: Postwar Architectural Culture, 1943-1968,"	Conference	CCA
1999	Sadler: The Situationist City	Book	
1999	Holdsworth: 'They'd Have Pissed on My Grave': the Arts Council and Theatre Workshop	Article	New Theatre Quarterly, Feb
2000	Price: Cedric Price's Non-Plan Diary	Book chapter	Hugh, Sadler: Non-Plan. Essays on Freedom, Participation and Change in Modern Architecture and Urbanism
2000	Lobsinger: Cedric Price: An Architecture of the Performance	Article	Daidalos, issue 74, Apr. , p. 22-29
2000	Kelly: What the Dome could have been like	Article	New Statesman, Jan 17, p.13
2000	Lobsinger: Cybernetic Theory and the Architecture of Performance: Cedric Price's Fun Palace	Book chapter	Ksiazek, S., Legault, R., Anxious Modernisms, CCA
2000	Sadler: Open Ends. The Social Visions of 1960s Non-Planning	Book chapter	Hugh, Sadler: Non-Plan. Essays on Freedom, Participation and Change in Modern Architecture and Urbanism
2000	Hugh, Sadler: Non-Plan. Essays on Freedom, Participation and Change in Modern Architecture and Urbanism	Book	
2000	Forty: Words and Buildings. A Vocabulary for Modern Architecture	Book chapter	
2001	Obrist: Cedric Price Drawings. A 'Capsule'.	Exhibition	The Space, inIVA (Institute of International Visual Arts), London 17 Jan-23 Feb
2002	Howard Gilman collection transfer to MoMa		
2002	Riley: The changing of the avant-garde : visionary architectural drawings from the Howard Gilman collection	Exhibition	MoMa, NY, Oct 2002-Jan 2003
2002	Colquhoun: Modern Architecture	Book	p 241
2002	Whiteley: Reyner Banham: Historian of the Immediate Future	Book	p. 369
2002	RIBA: Cedric Price Papers		RIBA, London UK
2003	Aiming to Miss CP	Film	AA, London
2003	Mullin: Cedric Price 1934-2003 (Obituary)	Article	ARQ, vol. 7, no.2, p.113-117
2003	Isozaki: Erasing Architecture into the System	Book chapter	Obrist: RE:CP
2003	Koolhaas: Introduction	Book chapter	Obrist: RE:CP
2003	Muschamp: Cedric Price, Influential British Architect With Sense of Fun, Dies at 68	Obituary	The New York Times, Aug 23
2003	Barker: Closing Joan's Book: Some Personal Footnotes	Obituary/Article	New Theatre Quarterly
2003	Mathews: An architecture for the new Britain: the social vision of Cedric Price's Fun Palace and Potteries Thinkbelt	PhD	
2004	Fun Palace Berlin 200X	Conference	Palast der Republic, Berlin, 16-17 Oct
2004	Hobhouse et al: Cedric Price Disappears	Conference +article	AA
2004	Herreros: Palacios de al Diversion. San Miguel Island, Azores.	Course syllabus	Architectural Design Unit Q, ETSAM, 2003-04.
2004	Wigley, Vidler, de Michelis, Ursprung, von Amelunxen: Out of the Box: Price Rossi Stirling + Matta-Clark	Catalogue	EXIT, Mairia LMI
2004	Christou: Making fun of buildings	Exhibition	CCA
2004	Rattenbury: Fun palace Berlin 200X	Article	Building Design, Oct 29 (CCA library)
2004	Wigley: Il Fun palace di Cedric Price	Article	Icon, Dec (CCA library)
2004	Fun with a Palace	Article	Domus, no.806, Jan, p.14-23
2004	Fun with a Palace	Exhibition - School program	CCA, 19-30 May,
2005	Cedric Price Summit	Symposium + AV Recordings	Columbia University
2005	Fun Palace Berlin 200X. Der Berliner Schlossplatz. Abriss, Neubau oder grüne Wiese?	Symposium, exhibition and publication	
2005	Frazer: Computing without computers	Article	Architectural Design no 75, issue 2
2005	Sadler: Archigram. Architecture without architecture	Book	MIT Press
2005	Blundell Jones: Sixty-eight and after	Book chapter	Blundell Jones, Petrescu, Till, Architecture Participation
2006	Mathews: Cedric Price: from the 'brain drain' to the 'knowledge economy'	Article	Architectural Design, vol.76
2006	Mathews: The Fun Palace as virtual architecture: Cedric Price and the practices of indeterminacy	Article	JAE, Feb, vol 59
2006	Holdsworth: Joan Littlewood	Book	<a href="http://www.metamute.org/editorial/articles/bowels-fun-palace">http://www.metamute.org/editorial/articles/bowels-fun-palace</a>
2007	Crinson: 'In the Bowels of the Fun Palace'	Web	Transformations, Journal of Media&Culture, issue 14
2007	Wilen: Calculated Uncertainty: Computers, Chance Encounters, and "Community" in the Work of Cedric Price'	Article	'Accidental Environments'
2007	Holdsworth: Spaces to Play / Playing with spaces: young people, citizenship and Joan Littlewood	Article	Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance, 12:3, 293-304
2007	Rankin: Play is the Thing	Article	The Oldie, March (TRSE)
2007	Scott: Architecture or Techno-utopia. Politics after Modernism	Book	
2007	Mathews: From Agit-Prop to Free Space: the Architecture of Cedric Price	Book	Dog Publishing

2007	Hardingham and Rattenbury: Supercrit no.1. Cedric Price Potteries Thinkbelt	Book	Architecture and Authorship, p.18-29. Dog Publishing
2007	Anstey: Architecture and Rhetoric: Persuasion, Context, Action.	Book chapter	Architecture and Authorship, p.142-147. Dog Publishing
2007	Mathews: Cedric Price as Anti-Architect	Book chapter	
2007	Lopes, G.: Envisioning an evolving environment - The encounters of Gordon Pask, Cedric Price and John Frazer	PhD	
2007	Roe: Calculated Uncertainty: Computers, Chance Encounters, and "Community" in the Work of Cedric Price.		TRANSFORMATIONS Journal of Media & Culture, issue 14, 'Accidental Environments'
2008	British Film National Archive: Joan Littlewood compilation		27/08/2008
2008	Morel, P: Parliament/Park: Civic space for a multitudinous democracy	March	
2008	Cedric Price Archive catalogue, CCA		
2009	Iles: Legislating for Enthusiasm: From Fun Palace to Creative Prison	Web	http://www.arcade-project. Com
2010	AA Archive catalogue		AA catalogue
2010	Herreros: Forma y Organizacion: J. Hejduk y C. Price	Lecture	ETSAM
2010	Lacaton, Vassal: Palais du Tokyo, Paris	Web	
2010	Pickering: The Cybernetic Brain: sketches of another future	Book	Performance
2010	Picon: Digital Culture in Architecture	Book	
2010	Grafe: People's palaces: architecture, culture and democracy in two European post-war cultural centres	Book/PhD	Amsterdam Lighthouse, Glasgow, 31 Mar - 4 Sept. Architecture & Design Scotland + University of Strathclyde
2011	Calder: Cedric Price: Thinking the Unthinkable	Exhibition	AA
2011	Obrist & Hardingham: Wish We Were Here	Exhibition	
2011	Rufford: What Have We Got to Do with Fun?: Littlewood, Price, and the Policy Makers.	Article	New Theatre Quarterly
2011	Aureli: Labor and Architecture: Revisiting Cedric Price's Potteries Thinkbelt	Article	Log. No. 23 (Fall), pp. 97-118
2011	Holdsworth: Joan Littlewood's Theatre	Book	
2012	Cedric Price Collection, St John's College Personal Collections		
2012	Gadano: '9+1 Ways of Being Political: 50 Years of Political Stances in Architecture and Urban Design'	Exhibition + Catalogue	MoMa, NY, Oct 2002-Jan 2003
2012	Mellor: Bruce Lacey Experience: Paintings, Sculptures, Installations and Performances	Exhibition + Catalogue	Camden Arts Center London, Jul-Sep 2012
2012	Herd: The McAppy Project: How Cedric Price Brought Systems Thinking to Modern Architecture	Article	Candide: Journal of Architectural Knowledge n. 6, Oct, pp. 45-72 NOT INDEXED)
2012	Parnell: The Collision of Scarcity and Expendability in Architectural Culture of the 1960s and 1970s	Article	Architectural Design, vol 84, issue 4.
2012	Vidler: Cities of Tomorrow	Article	forum International, 2012, Vol.51 (1), p.484-492
2012	Fernandez: In The Fields: the Fun Palace, Co-creation, and the Digital City	PhD	Waterloo University
2012	Garcia German: Estrategias operativas en arquitectura: técnicas de proyecto de Price a Koolhaas	PhD / Book	ETSAM Madrid. Herreros
2012	Gadano: '9+1 Ways of Being Political: 50 Years of Political Stances in Architecture and Urban Design'	Exhibition	Museum of Modern Art New York, Sep 2012-Mar 2013
2012	Bird: The Fun Palace	Poem	London Olympics 2012, London
2013	Harrison: Introduction. Charting Posthuman Territory	book chapter	Harrison: Architectural Theories of the Environment. Posthuman Territory, p. 14
2014	Obrist, Baroncelli: 'Lucius Burckhardt and Cedric Price - A stroll through a fun palace'	Exhibition	Venice Biennale, Swiss Pavillion.
2014	Borja-Villel, M, et al: Playgrounds. Reinventing the Square	Exhibition	Reina Sofia, Madrid.
2014	Cedric Price: Outside the Box	Exhibition	St. Johns, Cambridge, Nov 05-Jan 15
2014	Gullstrom: Furnishing the Fun Palace with new digital design materials	Web platform & paper	
2014	Rankin: Joan Littlewood: Dreams and Realities	Book	
2014	Obrist, Baroncelli: 'Lucius Burckhardt and Cedric Price - A stroll through a fun palace'	Booklet	
2014	Bird: The Sparkled Fun Palace	Festival	TRSE
2014	Art on the Underground: The Palace that Joan Built e-book. Mel Brimfield and Gwyneth Herbert	Musical-documentary + Digital Pamphlet	October 2014, Stratford Station, London
2014	Duffy, Rawlings: Fun Palaces.co.uk	Festival	2014: 138 , 2015: 142, 2016: 292 , 2017: 362, 2018: 433, 2019:391
2014	'British Architecture for Society'	Research Program	CCA, May 2014-September 2015
2015	Cedric Price Memory Bank	Exhibition, Film, Web	Memory Bank by Jan Nauta and Victor Vroegindewij, AA Exhibition, Oct. 2016, commissioned by Bureau Europa.
2015	Cedric Price: The Dynamics of Time	Exhibition	Maastricht 13 Dec 2014 - March 2015
2015	Savov, David: The Architect as a Social Designer: The Fun Palace Case	Article	Enquiry: The ARCC Journal of Architectural Research, vol 12, issue 1
2015	Calder: The Limits of 1960s Radicalism: the Fun palace Versus the National Theatre	Book chapter	Ashgate, Surrey, UK
2015	Downing: To the Roundhouse: Returning London Psychogeography	Book chapter	Mulholland et al (ed), Spatial perspectives: essays on literature and architecture
2016	Polyark 4: Fun Palace Futures	Cultural Program + Web page	
2016	This Was Tomorrow: Pop Art in Great Britain 1947-1968	Exhibition	Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, 30 Oct- 19 Feb
2016	Herd: 'An Afternoon with Cedric Price no. no. 1' - 'The Architecture of Cedric Price: McAppy - a Laboratory of Social Interaction'	Seminar	no. 1' . CCA c/o Lisboa event. Lisbon Biennale
2016	Njoo: 'An Afternoon with Cedric Price no. no. 1' - 'Cedric' Price the Journalist'	Seminar	no. 1' . CCA c/o Lisboa event. Lisbon Biennale
2016	Sweeting: 'An Afternoon with Cedric Price no. no. 1' - 'The Role of Gordon Pask in the Fun Palace project'	Seminar	An Afternoon with Cedric Price no. 1' . CCA c/o Lisboa event. Lisbon Biennale
2016	Hessler, Uchill: Pattern Recognition. A Background for Carsten Holler's Smelling Dots (Portrait of Cedric Price), 2016	Article	Future Anterior, Vol. XIII, No.2, Winter
2016	Mathews: The Fun Palace at Fifty	Article	Art in America, vol 104, 114-121, October
2016	Hardingham, Price: Cedric Price Works 1952-2003: a forward-minded retrospective	Book	CCA, AA
2016	Bonet: Sigma Portfolio and Bubble City: Ludic Sites for a Mobile Fun Palace Program	Article	
2016	Kozlovsky: The Architectures of Childhood	Book	

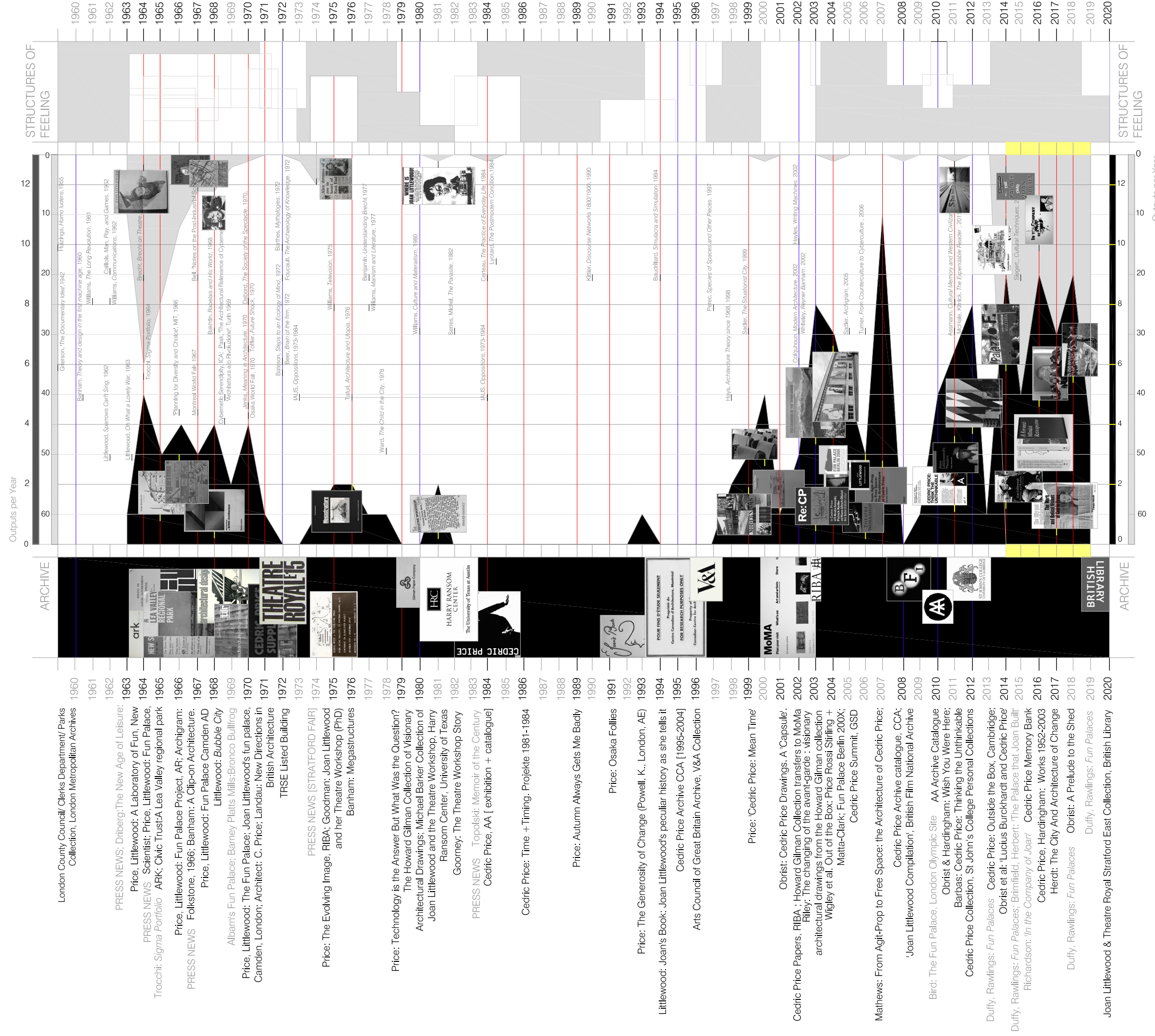
2016	Richardson: In The Company of Joan	Documentary	
2017	Hardingham: 'An Afternoon with Cedric Price no. no. 2' (Cedric and Words)	Seminar	An Afternoon with Cedric Price no. no. 2' . CCA
2017	Wigley: 'An Afternoon with Cedric Price no. no. 2' - (Anti-Buildings and Anti-Architects)	Seminar	An Afternoon with Cedric Price no. no. 2' . CCA
2017	Bernal et al: Fun Palace	Film	Spring 2017 Syracuse SOA Elective Arc500 Posing Architecture "The magnifying glass" Prof. Ivan Berna
2017	Bonet: On Playgrounds and the Archive. Joan Littlewood's Stratford Fair 1976-1975.	Conference and Article	AHRC, Architecture, Festival and the City, Birmingham, Nov 2017.
2017	Fernandez: The Complexity of Anticipation	Article	A+T
2017	Herd: The City And Architecture of Change: The Work and Radical Visions of Cedric Price	Book	
2017	Karlidag: Reading the Old Left in the Ewan MacColl and Joan Littlewood's Theatre Workshop and Beyond: In Joan Littlewood's Post-theatrical Engagements in the 1960s	PhD	Washington University
2017	Wright Steenson: Architectural intelligence : how designers and architects created the digital landscape	Book/ PhD	
2018	Smartness? Between Discourse and Practice	Conference	15th AHRA Conference, Eindhoven 15-17 Nov Salinsbury Center for Visual Arts, Norwich, March 24 - Sept 2
2018	Superstructures : The New Architecture 1960-1990	Exhibition	Cite de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine, Paris, Nov 9-Mar 11
2018	The Art of the Building Site. Construction and Demolition from the 16th to the 21st Century	Exhibition - Cultural event	The Shed, NY, May 1 – 13.
2018	Obrist: A Prelude to the Shed	Set	The Shed, NY, May 1 – 13.
2018	Adeyemi: Prelude transformable structure	Article	Artforum vol. 57, p.
2018	Bishop: Palace in Plunderland	Article	Technoetic Arts: A Journal of Speculative Research, June, Vol 16 Issue 2
2018	Raonic, Westerman: Framing indeterminacy: Pedagogical journey into experimental architectural thinking	Book	Routledge Research Series in Architecture
2018	Xu: Small scale Public Transportable and Pre-Fabricated Buildings	Article	American Association of Geographers Annual Meeting
2018	Dickens: The Fun Palace and the Future City: Situating Visions of a Transient Architecture for Radical Participation	Article	
2018	Bonet: From Filmed Pleasure to Fun Palace	Exhibition	MoMa Saitama, Japan, Feb 2-March 24.
2019	Impossible Architecture: Hidden History of Architecture	Competition	
2019	macau [ morphosis ] WATERFRONT FUN PALACE	Book chapter	Drawing Into Architecture
2019	Dorrian: Auto-Affection: On Michael Webb's Sin Centre and the Drawing of Mobility	Exhibition	WUHO (Woodbury University Hollywood), Los Angeles, September
2019	Hardingham, Marshall & Studio Nauta: 'Cedric Price: Room for Learning?'		

## Fun Palace Press News Sub-index

Date	Headline	Press Title	Author
19600425	Take the plunge, Miss Littlewood!	<i>Tribune</i>	Mervyn Jones
19630000	Joan's Fun Palace nearer fruition'	<i>Evening Standard ?</i>	Michael Hughes
19630331	Joan Littlewood on the Agony of Making Films'	<i>The Observer Weekend Review</i>	Penelope Gilliatt
19630428	The New Age of Leisure	<i>Sunday Citizen</i>	Tom Driberg's Column
19630430	Nothing but fun on the Isle of Dogs	<i>Daily Herald/Sun</i>	Henry Feilding
19630501	Pleasure park of rare design	<i>Bolton Evening News</i>	
19630502	Isle of Dogs as pleasure park?		
19630505	Tom Driberg writes about a dream-playground	<i>Sunday Citizen</i>	Tom Driberg
19630606	Something New - Just for Fun	<i>Daily Telegraph</i>	Harold Atkins
19630614	Joan has her eye on a fun palace	<i>East London Advertiser</i>	
19630908	Nonsense' row at drama conference	<i>The Observer</i>	
19630909	Joan Littlewood's 'dream' sparks off a rumpus. Island residents protest	<i>Evening Standard</i>	
19640101	Multi-level-multi-purpose glass caged bridge'	<i>Building Materials</i>	
19640501	(London Diary excerpt)	<i>New Statesman</i>	Malcolm Muggeridge
19640504	Newbrick festival	<i>The Guardian</i>	Ian Finch
19640529	Noddyland atmosphere?	<i>The Times Educational Supplement</i>	
19640616	6000-acre play area planned. Lea Valley lung for London	<i>The Times</i>	
19640704	Fun Palace architect	<i>The Guardian</i>	Ian Finch
19640705	World Fiesta in Miniature	<i>The Sunday Telegraph</i>	Sunday Morning with Mandrake
19640708	Price of leisure	<i>The Architect &amp; Building News</i>	
19640712	Frayn	<i>The Observer</i>	Michael Frayn
19640723	Planning Ahead For The Age Of Leisure.	<i>The Stage and Television Today</i>	
19640724	Weskler and Littlewood to the fore	<i>Tribune</i>	
19640724	Play. Ideas for a socialist Britain		
19640807	People's Palaces	<i>New Statesman</i>	Reyner Banham
19640816	Joan Littlewood by Frank Norman	<i>The Sunday Times Magazine</i>	Frank Norman
19640824	A Showboat on canal?	<i>The Guardian</i>	
19640904	Guardian Jennie	<i>The Architect's Journal</i>	
19640906		<i>Sunday Mirror</i>	Professor Richie Calder
19640906	In The Cage: Theatre	<i>The Observer</i>	Bamber Gascoigne
19640906	Change and Decay	<i>The Observer</i>	Colin Jones
19640906	Sin Centres & Fun Palaces	<i>The Sunday Times magazine</i>	Priscilla Chapman
19640913	Atticus	<i>The Sunday Times</i>	
19640915	Joan Littlewood	<i>Vogue</i>	Alan Brien
19640919	The trend to buying to throw away	<i>Saturday Sun</i>	Peter Senn
19640927	Joan Littlewood	<i>New York Herald Tribune</i>	
19641002	Flook comic strip		
19641004		<i>Weekend Telegraph</i>	
19641018		<i>Newark Sunday News</i>	
19641025	Workers' playtime	<i>The Observer</i>	

19641101	Palaces are for fun	<i>Architectural Design</i>	Terence Bendixon
19641101		<i>Holiday</i>	
19641204	Fun Palace Faces A Quick KO	<i>Stratford Express</i>	
19641208	Littlewood Fun Palace Plans Get Under Way	<i>Evening Standard</i>	Londoner's Diary
19641209	Miss Littlewood looks at Bishopsgate	<i>Evening Standard</i>	Londoner's Diary
19641225	Fun Palace may open next year	<i>North London Press</i>	
19641231	Setting the scene in Glasgow	<i>The Stage and television today</i>	
1965?	Arts Centre for Liverpool	<i>Supplement to Liverpool Daily Post</i>	Peter Fiddick
19650107	The Value of A Small Zoo. Essays in Local Government edited by Ellis Hillman	<i>New Society/ Books</i>	Paul Barker
19650122	Church slams 'fun palace' project for Chalk Farm'	<i>North London Press</i>	
19650122	Chalk Farm fun palace?		
19650126	Fun palace protests		
19650205	A Fun Palace'	<i>New York Herald Tribune, Paris</i>	John Crosby
19650205	Fun Palace "will increase amenity"	<i>North London Press</i>	
19650205	Residents Hammer The Chalk Farm	<i>North London Press</i>	
19650212	Joan's Fun Palace runs into trouble with residents	<i>Evening Standard</i>	
19650212	Fun Palace protests	<i>Hamstead &amp; Highgate Express</i>	
19650217	(Note by Richard Perry, SW12)	<i>Evening Standard</i>	
19650301	A Pasionate Belief in Her Fun-Palace'	<i>Liverpool Daily Post</i>	
19650310	Talks on Fun Palace Plan for Liverpool	<i>Liverpool Echo</i>	
19650311	Miss Lee to discuss fun palace idea	<i>Liverpool Daily Post</i>	
19650312	Schemes to End the "Dead Town" Title'	<i>Welwyn Herts and Hatfield Advertiser</i>	
19650318	A Passionate Belief in Her Fun-Palace	<i>Liverpool Daily Post</i>	Peter Fiddick
19650415	Fun Palace: Counter-Blast to Boredom	<i>New Society</i>	Brian N Lewis
19650418	Where are they now - in 1990?	<i>The Sunday Telegraph</i>	Nickolas Gurland
19650419	Will this be a lot of fun	<i>Daily Mail</i>	Charles Greville
19650428	Arts Council patronage under fire	<i>The Times</i>	
19650429	Fun Palace	<i>New Society / Letters</i>	Charity James
19650506	Fun Palace	<i>New Society/ Letters</i>	Brian N Lewis
19650613	Joan's Fun Palace	<i>Sunday Citizen</i>	Tom Drieberg
19650620	Slow struggle for super park'	<i>The Observer</i>	Anne Taylor
19650815	Fun Palace' planned	<i>The Scottish Sunday Express</i>	
19660123	Art Notes: Flotsan, Not Jetsam	<i>The New York Times</i>	Grace Glueck
19660303	London's Palace of Fun has nowhere to go	<i>Evening Standard</i>	Judy Hillman
19660420	The Fun Palace Scheme	<i>Evening Standard</i>	Londoner's Diary
19660429	Who will support the Fun Palace	<i>Tribune</i>	Jane McKerron
19660624	Fun Palace not for Hackney	<i>Hackney Gazette and North London Advertiser</i>	
19660708	Too Old to Play-at 11!	<i>Stratford Express</i>	
19660710	Littlewood in Exile	<i>The Observer</i>	Ronald Bryden
19660812	So Keep off that Grass	<i>Stratford Express</i>	
19661001	The massive white elephant of Muswell Hill	<i>The Times</i>	
19661007	Joan Celebrates with champagne in the park	<i>Evening Standard</i>	Londoner's Diary Letter to the Editor/
19661024	St Enoch as a fun palace	<i>The Glasgow Herald</i>	William MacLellan

19670101	World:Fun Palace	<i>Architect's Journal</i>	
19670505	Centre 42. You're being left behind, Mr Wesker	<i>Tribune</i>	Ted Willis
19670519	Why does Willis hit below the belt?	<i>Tribune</i>	Arnold Wesker
19670728	Playground plan runs into trouble	<i>Stratford Express</i>	
19670825	A Right Royal Splash	<i>Stratford Express</i>	
19670901	A Play Won't Stop Holiday Classes	<i>Stratford Express</i>	
19680310	Fibre-glass fun palace	<i>The Observer</i>	Iane Bown
19680301	Fun Palace-not a Freakout	<i>New Worlds</i>	Charles Platt
19680322	Kiddies Playground is Banned- to the Kids	<i>Stratford Express</i>	
19680508	Like man, fun is a 3-letter word	<i>Daily Mirror</i>	David Clemens
19680510	A Touch of Kew in Salway-Rd'	<i>Stratford Express</i>	
19690000	Funny business at the seaside	<i>Design Journal</i>	Alastair Best
19700403	Available to all	<i>The Guardian</i>	Joan Littlewood
19740206	A Taste of Money	<i>Daily Mirror</i>	
19740206	A flop, or a long run ahead?	<i>The Guardian</i>	Nicholas de Jongh
19740510	Let's make East London swing	<i>Evening News</i>	Bernard Josephs
19740510	Alex dreams of a zoo in heart of East End	<i>Evening Standard</i>	
19740726	Palace of Fun Cast a Spell	<i>Stratford Express</i>	



1960 London County Council/ Clerks Department/ Parks Collection, London Metropolitan Archives

1961

1962 PRESS NEWS; Driberg: The New Age of Leisure; Price, Littlewood: A Laboratory of Fun, New

1963 PRESS NEWS Scientist; Price, Littlewood: Fun Palace, *Sigma Portfolio* ARK; Civic Trust: A Lea Valley regional park

1964 Trocchi: *Sigma Portfolio*

1965 Price, Littlewood: Fun Palace Project, AR; Archigram: Folkstone, 1966; Banham: A Clip-on Architecture, 1967; Price, Littlewood: Fun Palace Camden AD Littlewood: *Bubble City*

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1967 Albarr's Fun Palace; Barney Platts Mills: Bronco Bullfrog

1968 Price, Littlewood: The Fun Palace; Joan Littlewood's fun palace, Camden, London; Architect: C. Price; Landau: New Directions in British Architecture

1969 TRSE Listed Building

1970 PRESS NEWS [STRATFORD FAIR]

1971 Price: The Evolving Image, RIBA; Goodman: Joan Littlewood and her Theatre Workshop (PhD) Banham: Megastructures

1972

1973 Price: Technology is the Answer But What Was the Question? The Howard Gilman Collection of Visionary Architectural Drawings; Michael Barker Collection of Joan Littlewood and the Theatre Workshop, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas Goorney: The Theatre Workshop Story

1974

1975 PRESS NEWS Topolski: *Memoir of the Century* Cedric Price, AA [exhibition + catalogue]

1976 Cedric Price: Time + Timing, Projekte 1981-1984

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1978 Price: Autumn Always Gets Me Badly

1979 Price: Osaka Follies

1980 Price: The Generosity of Change (Powell, K., London, AE)

1981 Littlewood: Joan's Book: Joan Littlewood's peculiar history as she tells it Cedric Price Archive CCA [1995-2004]

1982 Arts Council of Great Britain Archive, V&A Collection

1983

1984 Price: Cedric Price: Mean Time'

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1986 Obrist: Cedric Price Drawings. A 'Capsule'. Cedric Price Papers, RIBA; Howard Gilman Collection transfers to MoMA Riley; The changing of the avant-garde: visionary architectural drawings from the Howard Gilman collection Wigley et al. Out of the Box: Price Rossi Stirling + Matta-Clark; Fun Palace Berlin 2000; Cedric Price Summit, GSD

1987

1988 Mathews: From Agit-Prop to Free Space: the Architecture of Cedric Price; Cedric Price Archive catalogue, CCA; 'Joan Littlewood Compilation', British Film National Archive

1989

1990 Bird: The Fun Palace, London Olympic Site AA Archive Catalogue Obrist & Hardingham: Wish You Were Here; Barbas; Cedric Price: Thinking the Unthinkable Cedric Price Collection, St John's College Personal Collections

1991 Duffy, Rawlings: *Fun Palaces* Cedric Price: Outside the Box, Cambridge; Obrist et al: 'Lucius Burckhardt and Cedric Price'

1992 Duffy, Rawlings: *Fun Palaces*; Brimfield, Herbert: The Palace that Joan Built Richardson: *'In the Company of Joan'* Cedric Price Memory Bank Herdt: The City And Architecture of Change

1993 Duffy, Rawlings: *Fun Palaces* Obrist: A Prelude to the Shed Duffy, Rawlings: *Fun Palaces* 2019

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Joan Littlewood & Theatre Royal Stratford East Collection, British Library

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