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Based on archive material, this paper reconstructs the c.1963 Fun Palace film and interprets it as a critical communicative model which dramatizes the conditions of contemporary leisure.

## From Filmed Pleasure to Fun Palace

*Ana Bonet Miro*

The Fun Palace, a collaborative enterprise initiated by the radical theatre producer Joan Littlewood and architect Cedric Price in London early 1960s, articulated a response to the ‘increased leisure’ available to post-war British society. A critical model for cultural production in which civics met pleasure, the Fun Palace project aimed to construct *situations* for playful exchange conducted through self-directed actions as a way to activate audiences. Pleasure for all – a ‘breakthrough to total enjoyment’,<sup>1</sup> in opposition to what was seen as existing commodified leisure practices – became understood as a critical agenda pitched against the elitist and interventionist Labour government’s 1965 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 the media in the rise of the leisure society. In analysing British communications in the 1960s, the cultural critic Raymond Williams argued that, rather than opposing fine art with popular entertainment, social growth could only be achieved through the circulation of public and independent media, opportunities for which were at the time limited within the corporate structure of British broadcasting and press.<sup>2</sup>

Extensive scholarship to date grounds the significance of the Fun Palace as a visionary and emancipatory architecture.<sup>3</sup> It has been interpreted as experimental,<sup>4</sup> indeterminate,<sup>5</sup> a situationist undertaking<sup>6</sup>, an ‘educreative’ megastructure<sup>7</sup>, a public park of tomorrow<sup>8</sup>, and a future-responsive mobile,<sup>9</sup> to cite just a few. However, the history of the reception of the Fun Palace does not exhaust the complexities of its cultural programme. Crucially, the role that media played in the production and communication of the Fun Palace’s democratic ideals demands closer attention. Struggling to find a site in the institutional map of London, the Fun Palace became disseminated through publicity. In an ongoing search for 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 put it – '[...] that makes for rather a disjointed reading'.<sup>10</sup> Each representation and its media context, defined a site of information within which the Fun Palace was constituted and circulated. Among these, the as-yet unexplored Fun Palace film was key, because it intimated the social aspirations of the programme most effectively. 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 paper reconstructs the Fun Palace film as a montage which dramatised the conditions of contemporary leisure production. Aimed to infect British consumer audiences with pleasure, the film – this paper argues – established as a critical communicative model that set the scene for a socialist alternative to modern urbanity.

### **The film: a site for a mobile Fun Palace programme.**

The idea of making a promotional film for the Fun Palace can be traced back in the archives to the beginnings of the project in 1962, when hopes for its establishment were linked to the derelict banks of Glengall Wharf, on the Isle of Dogs, in the docks of East London. The idea grew under conditions of 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. Joan Littlewood first made the Fun Palace public on 28 April 1963 in the BBC television programme *Monitor*. A week later, Driberg further expanded the idea 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 outlets.

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*. As Price commented at the time, 'since this was in a series called 1984, we avoided mentioning both the proposed sites and the practical completion dates'.<sup>11</sup> The first public image of the project was unveiled in association with this account. 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 article permeated the image. Beyond the indication of scale, it showed an abstract assemblage of components detached from any contextual reference. The isometric drawing corresponds closely to the plans and sections of a drawing titled 'Film Model Information' produced to guide the construction of a model that would appear in the film.<sup>13</sup> In this model, 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 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 a 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 programme. It also 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 both its spring and summer issues in 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 the late 20<sup>th</sup> century metropolis',<sup>16</sup> a short description in the first issue introduces the social relevance of the Fun Palace project. 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'.<sup>17</sup> These schematic drawings resemble the frames sketched in the 'storyboard for the film and sketches' in the archival record.<sup>18</sup> Within the article, site plan drawings locate the Fun Palace idea on an existing site in East London's Lea Valley, while 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 film storyboard. Captions in the storyboard document invoke the 'explosions', 'blurs' and other artifices imagined to construct transitions between events. If encounters in the air between human and technological bodies following random movements would yield occasions for pleasure, the film enacts this through the movement of the camera plunged inside the model frame, and through certain special effects afforded by the medium.

### **Archive records**

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 of the 'storyboard for 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 ranging from two to three minutes is freely accessible on the online BFI Player as part of an ongoing project titled 'Britain on Film'<sup>21</sup> which offers glimpses of London's urban life in 1963. In addition, the Cedric Price Archive at the Canadian Centre for Architecture 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 presumably used as a set, and some textual records dated between 1963 and 1964.

Several considerations regarding the archive material have to be noted. Firstly, the model of the typical two-bay section of the Fun Palace held at the Cedric Price Archive 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 which allows us to better appreciate what counted as sites of pleasure for Littlewood and how she investigated its existing

conditions through the eye of the camera. Thirdly, the low-budget 16 mm technology used to shoot the films reflected both the independence of the production but also a certain directness in relation to real conditions which the film achieves. Finally, what this loose assemblage of material effectively embodies is the mobile condition which marks the whole production of the Fun Palace programme – 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, seemingly announcing ‘the future architecture of democracy’.<sup>22</sup>

The undated record ‘Pleasure Film: Assembly’,<sup>23</sup> held in the Cedric Price Archive, sets out the plan for the film as a two-part production. This document suggests that the film was to open with a documentary sequence of London’s street life, and to 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 loose footage catalogued as Joan Littlewood’s ‘Pleasure Rolls’.

Based on the collection of material available in the different archives, this paper 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: first, the shot-by-shot juxtaposition in the opening documentary; second, 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) which was offered by British commercial television in the 1960s.

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

The archive document ‘Pleasure Film: Assembly’<sup>24</sup>[1] builds a story about how people produced themselves in the leisure situations ‘as found’ in London’s streets in the 1960s. Littlewood found them to be passive consumers instead of active creators, engaged in leisure rather than pleasure. The montage grows through a sequence of 81 shots grouped into 7 thematic areas. The sequence that Littlewood chose to open the inquiry on pleasure was titled ‘Catholic christening’. It continues 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>25</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>26</sup>

The active tracking by the camera wanders around available pleasures. 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>27</sup>*

The action-oriented subject matter, the non-poetic quality of the rushed footage, and the repetitive aspect of the social commentary, are all qualities that Littlewood borrowed 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 celluloid for an audience which cannot affect its performance. Raymond Williams' definition of film as 'total performance',<sup>28</sup> or Susan Sontag's claim for 'the camera (as) an absolute dictator',<sup>29</sup> make the point that the medium of film, as distinct from a live play, restrains the vital participation of audiences. How then does Littlewood use film conventions to 'dialecticise' the conditions of pleasure in urban life 1963, as a way to mobilise audiences? In other words, how does she release pleasure from the flatness that the medium imposes?

Nothing extraordinary apparently happens in Littlewood's 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 passivity and loss of motivation as the key social issue, for example: '2 small boys throwing stones by Stratford canal'.<sup>30</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 newly estranged narrative that shakes us from our habits. In an illustrative 'shoe shine' sequence,<sup>31</sup> the camera stands by the kneeling shoe polisher and, after making eye contact with him, tilts around to show the worldview from his position. Pinned-down at the doorstep of West End theatres, the client's legs obscure leisure time for the worker. Momentary 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 intermittent subjectivisation and slow the 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 scrutinises 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>32</sup> In manipulating the distance with the 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>33</sup>

The intimate documentary of familiar pleasure locations and distinctive faces starts to lose definition throughout the following 18-shot 'waiting sequence', which presents how 'most people spend most of their lives bored, sleeping, waiting',<sup>34</sup> and the 11-shot 'Fun arcade/Present pleasures' sequence. 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).<sup>35</sup>

At this point, the film reaches its climax. The estrangement increasingly curated 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>36</sup> A transitional sequence of 21 shots shows 'pictures of politicians mixed with actors' (shot 63),<sup>37</sup> and 'plans for new Alcatraz blocks and roads' (shot 64), after presenting a funny 'robot doll walking computer singing as background' (shot 62),<sup>38</sup> [2] approaching the camera. It closes by blurring London's reality into the abstract alternative of the Fun Palace. A quick sketch, 'white on black'<sup>39</sup> single line in the making, appears on scene after a 'helicopter shot over London and river to last frame of mudflat',<sup>40</sup> and a shot which 'dissolves mud to blackness'.<sup>41</sup> 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.<sup>42</sup> 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'<sup>43</sup>, 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 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, noting 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>44</sup> If abstraction is estrangement radicalised, Dorrian argues, 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 recognise 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>45</sup> Radical abstraction, through estrangement, becomes a way to mobilise 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>46</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 mechanised world liberated even from the sun.

Abstraction was, in Lyubuv 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>47</sup> The abstracted materiality of the Fun Palace publicity, conveyed in its diagrammatic images, becomes the expression of the transitory nature of such a 'short-term exploratory social toy'<sup>48</sup> named Fun Palace. It shares the optimistic mood of the 1920s avant-garde, for in defining its temporal usefulness – the programme – it also anticipates the time when the hopes for a full realisation 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 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 relatively affluent Britain. A large rounded and tuneable plastic 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: '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>49</sup> The robot-toy appears to be a personification of the Fun Palace itself. Its clumsy movements anticipate how its technological core acts just 'for your diversion'<sup>50</sup> in the closing comic piece of the film.

### **Stage Two: Releasing Pleasure**

A significant early letter from Joan Littlewood to Cedric Price, dated 2 January 1963, attributes 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>51</sup>

Between 1963 and 1964, the preliminary sketch of 'square shapes' on black and white backdrops evolved 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>52</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>53</sup> If that was the case for avant-garde experimental drama, by the 1960s – Williams argued – it had been appropriated by capitalist forces to support the organisation of society into a market.<sup>54</sup> Williams' arguments invite us to explore the end of the film's dramatic form, with a view, in the closing section of the paper, 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 present the delights of the Fun Palace. The humour of the vignette progressively grows from contradictory gestures and distorted measures 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 [3]. 'On opening the box the clowns should be looking down on a model of extreme complexity and confusion'.<sup>55</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>56</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 should be shown'.<sup>57</sup> So grotesque scenes of clown faces crowding the model set 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 Spinetti to enter into the complex through the optical illusion of 'shrinking or expanding [her]'.<sup>58</sup>

Two undated pictures held in the Price archives show a low-tech working model of a double bay of the complex which differs from the mobile device depicted in the document 'Film Model Information'.<sup>59</sup> A central wire truss spans across the whole section supported from the two towers of the interior row of the lateral bay, suggesting 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 key components of 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 externalised; that is to say, it must be developed into a gesture [...] Special elegance, power and grace of gesture bring about the A-effect'.<sup>60</sup>

The mime episodes itemised in Littlewood's scripts share this Brechtian gestural form, 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 on 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>61</sup>

It is through the sequence of gestures laid-out by the evident inadequacy of the model-clown interaction that Littlewood dramatises the unsurmountable 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 mark printed on the black suitcase. If the film operated to actualise the Fun Palace and reach mass audiences, how then could 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>62</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>63</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 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>64</sup>

On the other hand, it is worth considering Jose Ortega y Gasset's arguments about the agency of desire within his *Meditations of Quixote*, written in 1914.<sup>65</sup> The reality of the main character Don 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 whomever is capable of making-up the project of an adventure to command his or her own miserable existence. At 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>66</sup> and, while voicing 'technical jargon',<sup>67</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 destabilises 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 criticism by the clowns. As the model-toy becomes consumed in

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

The end of film sketch seems comparable to the comic treatment of the mundane depicted in the minor form of drama from the Spanish Renaissance named the *Entremés*. Familiar to Littlewood, as scholarship acknowledges,<sup>68</sup> the *Entremés* was a short, funny and mocking representation played during the interval of a comedy to enhance variety or to amuse the audience. Beyond qualities shared with the Fun Palace film, such as looseness, gestural form and weightlessness, the interest in the *Entremés* lays in the fact that, in being a minor and parasitic form, its intensity and effect depended on its contingent position within the overall drama: the interlude. The *Entremés* brought an arrest to the overall programme in which the title character, landing in a grotesque and hilarious situation, becomes more human, vulnerable and real. Similarly, the full significance of the end of the film springs from the contingent position it was intended to occupy as an interval within the broadcast programming of British TV, 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 28 August 1964, mentions that ‘the Fun Palace film is nearing completion and will be shown on commercial television eventually.’<sup>69</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 when understood within the context of the newly-established independent commercial TV stations in London in the 1960s. In *Television*, Raymond Williams problematised the understanding of communications technology as an independent force to society,<sup>70</sup> and argued for the necessary consideration of the purposes and practices that enabled the emergence and use of these technologies not as marginal, but as direct social needs. The technology of broadcasting was, Williams explained, important to the function of an increasingly mobile and expanded society. It was the social product of a ‘mobile privatisation’ that, having started in the 1920s, created the need to provide the private living room with news from outside at the same rate as the public realm would disappear.<sup>71</sup> By the early 1960s, broadcasting shaped the ‘dramatized society’;<sup>72</sup> a term Williams coined to refer to the dependence of society on broadcast drama. 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,<sup>73</sup> which became the expression of consumerist social consciousness and the active method for its reproduction. What ‘is being seen in what appears to be natural form is, evidently’ – claimed Williams – ‘what is actually ‘being made to be seen’.<sup>74</sup> ‘Advertising’, Williams argued:

*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>75</sup>

The film – and the overall Fun Palace programme – reacted against this scenario, specifically the effect of the corporate control of communications in public and independent initiatives. In this light, the film montage emerges as a kind of critical advertisement designed as an interlude within the broadcast flow of commercial television in 1964. The film offers a model of communicative production aligned with Williams’ alternative democratic, autonomous, self-managing and multi-way interactive communication.<sup>76</sup> On one hand, it inverts the sponsorship formula devised by commercial 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>77</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, there is here an ironic reversal of the funding formula of corporate TV production. Littlewood’s independent labour for these TV commercials, was, through the film, bonded to the promotion of the altruistic Fun Palace programme. On the other hand, considering Williams’ claims about modern advertising techniques, which guarantee as if by magic the satisfaction of a specific human need while constantly deferring it,<sup>78</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.

Despite the resistance that this unfinished initiative might have encountered in its production or distribution, the film material seems to wait in the archives for the Fun Palace’s reactivation. In casting some light upon the significance of the film’s scattered records, this paper has sought to open paths for further interpretation of the Fun Palace’s complex cultural initiatives.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Cedric Price, ‘Observations on “A Policy for the Arts” Government White Paper’, in *New Towns New Cities*, ed. Ellis Hillman, Essays in Local Government Enterprise (London: The Merlin Press, 1965), p.173.

<sup>2</sup> Raymond Williams, *Communications* (London: Penguin, 1966).

<sup>3</sup> Particularly, Stanley Matthews’, *From Agit Prop to Free Space: The Architecture of Cedric Price* (London: Black Dog, 2007) and Samantha Hardingham’s *Cedric Price Works 1952-2003: A Forward Minded Retrospective* (London: AA, 2017), have thoroughly developed the argument.

<sup>4</sup> Peter Cook, *Experimental Architecture* (London: Studio Vista Universe Books, 1976), p.141.

<sup>5</sup> Royston Landau, *New Directions in British Architecture* (New York: G. Braziller, 1968), pp.74–75.

<sup>6</sup> ‘Joan Littlewood Presents...’, Folio number 11, in Alexander Trocchi, *Sigma Portfolio: A New Dimension in the Dissemination of Informations [Sic]* (London: Alexander Trocchi, 1964).

<sup>7</sup> Reyner Banham, *Megastructure: Urban Futures of the Recent Past* (New York: Harper and Row, 1976), pp.86–88.

<sup>8</sup> George F. Chadwick, *The Park and the Town: Public Landscape in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (London: Architectural Press, 1966), 369.

- <sup>9</sup> Alvin Toffler, *Future Shock* (New York: Random House, 1970).
- <sup>10</sup> Cedric Price, 'Letter to John McMichael', 8 August 1963, DR 1995:0188:0525:002:001, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.
- <sup>11</sup> Cedric Price, 'Letter to Norman Fisher', 15 June 1964, DR 1995:0188:525:002:001, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.
- <sup>12</sup> Joan Littlewood and Cedric Price, 'A Laboratory of Fun', *New Scientist*, 14 May 1964, 432.
- <sup>13</sup> Cedric Price, 'Film Model Information. Drawing Number 51/38', 18 February 1964, DR 1995:0188:302-321, Cedric Price Archive, CCA.
- <sup>14</sup> Cedric Price, 'Film Model Information. Drawing Number 51/38', 18 February 1964, DR 1995:0188:302-321, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.
- <sup>15</sup> 'Articles of the Fun Palace', DR 1995 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> *Ibid.*, 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> [accessed 16 August 2017].
- <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 24<sup>th</sup> / filming finishes whenever it does'. Shelagh Delaney, 'Internal Memo "Regarding the Fun Palace Partnership" on Filming', undated, DR 1995:0188:0525:002:001:032, Cedric Price fonds, CCA. <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 August 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> R. Banham, 'Zoom Wave Hits Architecture', *New Society* 7 (1966): 179.
- <sup>23</sup> Joan Littlewood, 'Pleasure Film: Assembly', undated, DR 1995:0188:0525:003:003, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.
- <sup>24</sup> DR 1995:0188:525:003:003, Cedric Price fonds, CCA
- <sup>25</sup> Littlewood, 'Pleasure Film: Assembly', 1.
- <sup>26</sup> Littlewood, 2.
- <sup>27</sup> 'Masterful Treatment of a Model' in Bertolt Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre : The Development of an Aesthetic* (London: Methuen Drama, 1990), note 1, p.210.
- <sup>28</sup> 'Film and the Dramatic Tradition', in Raymond Williams and Michael Orrom, *Preface to Film* (London, 1954), p.7.
- <sup>29</sup> 'A Note on Novels and Films', 1961, in Susan Sontag, *Against Interpretation: And Other Essays* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1967), pp.242-43.

- 30 Littlewood, 'Pleasure Film: Assembly 2', Footage located in 'Pleasure Roll no. 34: Canal', British Film Institute.
- 31 'Talent Contest II' Joan Littlewood, *Pleasure Rolls (Fun Palace outtakes)*, 1963 no. 50, British Film Institute.
- 32 Bela Balasz, 'The Close-up', from the *Theory of the Film*, in Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen, *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, Sixth edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p.308.
- 33 Michael Gardiner, *From Trocchi to Trainspotting: Scottish Critical Theory Since 1960* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006).
- 34 Littlewood, 'Pleasure Film: Assembly', 2.
- 35 Ibid.
- 36 Littlewood, 'Pleasure Film: Assembly', 3.
- 37 Ibid.
- 38 Ibid.
- 39 Shot 71 Littlewood,2.
- 40 Ibid.
- 41 Shot 70 Littlewood, 'Pleasure Film: Assembly'.
- 42 Ibid.
- 43 Littlewood.
- 44 Mark Dorrian, 'The aerial view: Notes for a cultural history', *Strates: Matériaux pour la recherche en sciences sociales*, 13: 31 December (2007), p.11.
- 45 Joan Littlewood and Cedric Price, 'What Is the Fun Palace', n.d., DR 1995:0188:0525:005, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.
- 46 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.
- 47 Nancy Van Norman Baer et al., *Theatre in Revolution: Russian Avant-Garde Stage Design, 1913-1935* (New York; San Francisco: Thames and Hudson and Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, 1991), 154.
- 48 Cedric Price, 'Public Space Programme' Ellis Hillman, *Essays in Local Government Enterprise, Vol. 2.* (London: Merlin Press, 1965), p.159.
- 49 'A Message to Londoners/ WE COULD ENJOY OURSELVES. All about Joan Littlewood's Palace of Fun', DR 1995:0188:0525:001, Cedric Price Archive, CCA.
- 50 'Draft. London Now London Now', Promotional literature of the Fun Palace, DR 1995:0188:0525:003:023, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.
- 51 DR 1995:0188:525:002:07, Cedric Price fonds, CCA
- 52 'Drama in a Dramatized Society' in Raymond Williams and Alan O'Connor, *Raymond Williams on Television: Selected Writings* (New York: Routledge, 1989).
- 53 Ibid., p.7.
- 54 bid., p.8.
- 55 'Discussion on nature of F.P sequence of film' meeting, dated 06.07.1964; in attendance Joan Littlewood, Cedric Price, Frank Newby and Price's collaborator Stephen Mullin, DR 1995:0188:525:002:003:004, Cedric Price fonds, CCA
- 56 DR 1995:0188:525:002:003, section no 6, Cedric Price fonds, CCA

- <sup>57</sup> Meeting Cedric Price, Tony O’Leary, Anthony Shaffer, Simon Gutman, Robert (Model Maker), dated 06.03.1964, DR 1995:0188:525:002:001:009, Cedric Price fonds, CCA
- <sup>58</sup> Meeting Littlewood, Price, Stephen Mullin, dated 06.07.1964, DR 1995:0188:525:002:003, Cedric Price fonds, CCA
- <sup>59</sup> DR 1995:0188:0525:002:003:005; and DR 1995:0188:0525:003:007, Cedric Price fonds, CCA
- <sup>60</sup> ‘Short Description on a New Technique of Acting’ in Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre*, p. 139. <sup>61</sup> ‘Discussion Film Sequence & Script’, internal meeting, Cedric Price and Frank Newby, dated 09.07.1964. DR 1995:0188:525:002:003:023, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.
- <sup>62</sup> ‘Toys’ in Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (London: Vintage Classics, 2014), p.53.
- <sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p.54.
- <sup>64</sup> Letter from Richard Lubblock to Cedric Price, dated 19.08.1964, DR 1995:0188:525:002:003, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.
- <sup>65</sup> José Ortega y Gasset, *Meditations on Quixote / José Ortega Y Gasset ; Translated from the Spanish by Evelyn Rugg and Diego Martín ; Introduction and Notes by Julián Marías* (Urbana, Ill. : University of Illinois Press, 2000).
- <sup>66</sup> DR 1995:0181:525:003:021, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.
- <sup>67</sup> DR 1995:0181:525:003:020, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.
- <sup>68</sup> Gwynne Edwards, ‘Theatre Workshop and the Spanish Drama’, *New Theatre Quarterly* 23, no. 4 (2007): 304–316, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0266464X0700022X>.
- <sup>69</sup> Internal memo from Pain to JL, copied CP, Ian Mikardo dated 26.08.1964, DR 1995:0188:525:002:003, Cedric Price fonds, CCA.
- <sup>70</sup> He refers to ‘technological determinism’ and what he named ‘technological symptomatism’. Raymond Williams, *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* (New York: Schocken Books, 1975), 6.
- <sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p.10.
- <sup>72</sup> Williams and O’Connor, ‘Drama in a Dramatized Society’, p. 3.
- <sup>73</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’. Williams, *Television*, p.93.
- <sup>74</sup> ‘Means of Communication’, in Raymond Williams, *Culture and Materialism: Selected Essays* (London; New York: Verso, 2005), 61.
- <sup>75</sup> ‘Advertising: The Magic Circle’ in Williams, *Culture and Materialism*, p.193.
- <sup>76</sup> ‘Means of Communication as Means of Production’, *Ibid.*, p.61.
- <sup>77</sup> Joan Littlewood, *Joan’s Book: Joan Littlewood’s Peculiar History as She Tells It* (London: Methuen, 1994), p.709.
- <sup>78</sup> ‘Advertising: The Magic Circle’ in Williams, *Culture and Materialism*, p.189.

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Ana Bonet Miro has been Lecturer in Architectural Design and Architectural Technology at the University of Edinburgh since 2015. She is currently researching Joan Littlewood's Fun Palace programme. Her research interests lie at the intersection of architecture with cultural studies of play, technology and education.

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### CAPTIONS -

1. Cedric Price, Fun Palace: pleasure film assembly, 1960-1964, typescript on paper, 33 x 21 cm, DR1995:0188:525:003:003, Cedric Price fonds, Canadian Centre for Architecture.
2. Robot doll shot, 'London from the Air 1' (Fun Palace Outtakes), 1963, Joan Littlewood, 3 min.  
<https://player.bfi.org.uk/free/film/watch-london-from-the-air-2-fun-palace-outtakes-1963-online>, accessed 03.02.2017.
3. Still from Fun Palace film, ca. 1964, digital image from 16mm negative DR2003:0006, , Cedric Price fonds, Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal.

### WEB ABSTRACT

The Fun Palace, a collaborative enterprise initiated by the radical theatre producer Joan Littlewood and architect Cedric Price in London early 1960s, articulated a response to the 'increased leisure' available to post-war British society. A critical model for cultural production in which civics met pleasure, the Fun Palace project aimed to construct *situations* for playful exchange conducted through self-directed actions as a way to activate audiences. A range of representations across different forms of media conveyed its emancipatory ideals during the decade. By 1964, while the extraordinary cybernetic environment of the Fun Palace was being designed for the banks of London's Lea Valley, Littlewood was scripting and shooting the end of a film sequence to promote the idea to a mass public via commercial television.

Scholarship to date has extensively discussed the visionary and emancipatory ambition, and impact, of the Fun Palace's architectural depictions. The related film, however, has not been explored, yet it constructs a mobile image which indicates effectively the social aspirations of the Fun Palace. Drawing on archival material, this paper reconstructs the shattered Fun Palace film as a montage which aimed to dramatise the conditions of contemporary leisure production. 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 clasp with the 'flow' (as defined by Raymond Williams)



experienced by commercial television audiences. Crucially, this paper argues that the film constitutes a critical communicative model for an audience of citizens rather than consumers, which continues to set the scene for a socialist alternative to modern urbanity.

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