

# Arte inglese oggi

## English Art Today 1960-1976

The show « English Art Today » open in Palazzo Reale in Milan from 26 February until 16 May, has been set up by the British Council and the Comune di Milano, advised by a joint British/Italian committee whose members include Sir Norman Reid, Franco Russoli, Norbert Lynton, Guido Ballo, David Thompson and Richard Cork.

It is not only the largest show of British modern art ever seen in Italy but the biggest display of British modern art ever mounted anywhere in the world. The organizers have deliberately chosen 1960 as the starting point for this show, to give a view as detailed as possible of the work of the younger generation. It was also decided that the exhibition should concentrate on a selective number of key artists and to represent each in some depth rather than displaying a couple of works by each of a very large number of artists. Some of the 48 artists invited are internationally known, others are just beginning to become recognized abroad, for others still, this show will be their first one outside Britain. The artists invited are: Ivor Abrahams, Keith Arnatt, Art&Language, Peter Blake, Marc Boyle, Victor Burgin, Antony Caro, Patrick Caulfield, Alan Charlton, Bernard Cohen, Robyn Denny, Rita Donagh, David Dye, Barry Flanagan, Gilbert&George, Nigel Hall, Richard Hamilton, Julian Hawkes, Tim Head, Antony Hill, John Hilliard, David Hockney, John Hoyland, Malcolm Hughes, Paul Huxley, Allen Jones, Phillip King, R.B. Kitaj, John Latham, Bob Law, Richard Long, Peter Lowe, Tim Mapston, Kenneth Martin, Keith Milow, Jeremy Moon, New Generation Sculpture (Bolos, Annesley, Witkin), Eduardo Paolozzi, Tom Phillips, Carl Plackman, Bridget Riley, Tim Scott, Dick Smith, Ian Stephenson, John Stezaker, Joe Tilson, William Tucker, William Turnbull, John Walker.

Each artist is represented individually by a chosen group of works that reflects either his own development over the period or a selection of recent works that sum up the different stages of artistic involvement over the last few years.

A continuous program of artists films is also on show and several performances have taken place in the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele arcade.

On this occasion we are publishing a series of documentary notes by Lynda Morris which, ignoring the official selection, includes a number of young and less young artists not represented in the show.

**This series of notes gives a contemporary background to some of the artists in « Arte Inglese Oggi » exhibition in Milan. It ignores many of the artists in the official selection and includes many artists ignored by the official selection. Lynda Morris, January 1976.**

## Keith Arnatt

He does not show with any galleries. Arnatt has not shown in London since the New Art Show in 1972 where his main work was a series of photographs of the security staff who would be on duty during the exhibition.

## Art&Language

The current members of the group are Michael Baldwin, Charles Harrison, Philip Pilkington, Harold Hurrell, Kevin Lole, Sandra Harrison and Dave Rushton. The departure of Terry Atkinson in 1975 brought the English group to a crisis point. (Atkinson is now working independently.)

However their recent exhibitions and seminars at Oxford and the ICA showed a continuing interest in their work. The recent work has a more overt sociopolitical content and the use of language in their exhibitions has become more surrealist. The group increasingly emphasizes that it is a loose network of people with common interests, but independent beliefs.

## The Arts Council

The Fine Art department of the Arts Council organises exhibitions for the Hayward Gallery and part of the programme at the Whitechapel and Serpentine galleries. It also organises almost every exhibition that takes place outside London. It is also the main body for the distribution of grants to artists. It is unsympathetic towards new art and is most interested at the moment in photography and the community arts.

It is generally criticized for the lack of information amongst the permanent staff and as a monopolistic organisation.

## The Art Schools

In Britain it is impossible to underestimate the importance of the art school network. There are more than 40 main colleges producing nearly 2,000 fine art graduates a year. The art schools are the main source of income for artists, and the route by which young artists establish their reputation.

The history of recent art is also a history of art education; Hamilton and pop art at Newcastle University, Caro and the New Generation at St. Martin's School of Art, John Latham and Barry Flanagan with the Conceptual generation at St. Martin's and Art & Language at Coventry College of Art.

2/3 of the artists in the Milan exhibition teach regularly.

## Art as Thought Process

This exhibition was organised by Michael Compton of the Tate Gallery in 1974 for the Arts Council. It was rather a confused concept but included the work of Willats, Burgin, Craig Martin, Hilliard and Art & Language.

## John Blake

An American artist who has lived in London since the late '60s. He has shown with Situation and PMJ Self Gallery. He is an artist and filmmaker. His early photographic « Equivalent Series » were followed by a series of photo-

graphs of bridges, presented in various degrees of focus. His exhibition in 1975 dealt with a more philosophical approach to questions of seeing and understanding, with a combination of diagrammatic objects and photographic texts.

## The British Council

The British Council is responsible for Foreign art in Britain and for British art abroad. It has been more sympathetic to new art than the Arts Council possibly because it has the policy of using independent critics rather than a permanent staff as exhibition organisers. The Council organised the British Avant Garde exhibition in New York, the British Road Show and the current exhibitors in Milan.

## The British Avant Garde

The British Avant Garde was an exhibition organised by Charles Harrison for the New York Cultural Centre in 1971 and sponsored by the British Council. The artists were, McLean, Arnatt, Dye, Tremlett, Louw, Flanagan, Gilbert & George, Newman, Long, Art & Language and Burgin. This exhibition was the first major group show of this generation of artists and it was an accurate prediction of the future of British art. It was soon after this exhibition that Charles Harrison decided to retire from Studio and work as a member of the Art & Language group.

## British Sculpture out of the Sixties

This exhibition was organised by Gene Baro for the ICA, in 1970. Most of the exhibition was a survey of New Generation Sculpture but the inclusion of Tremlett, Hemsworth and Louw left the question of sculpture in the seventies open-ended.

## Victor Burgin

He showed with the Lisson Gallery and Nigel Greenwood. He will show in the near future with PMJ Self. His earliest important work was the photographic pathways, these were followed by the sentences and more recently he has been concerned with the study of semiotics through advertising photography.

## Alan Charlton

Lives in London. Charlton was the most serious young painter to emerge in Britain during the « New Painting » period. He does not show with any British galleries. His most recent exhibition was at the MOMA in Oxford, in November 1975.

## Michael Craig Martin

An American artist who lives and teaches in London. He has shown with the Rowan Gallery since 1968. His earliest work was minimal boxes. The work progressed through various visual paradoxical stages with weights and mirrors to the more recent, relaxed humour.

## David Dye

His first gallery show was with the Lisson in late 1975. Dye has long been respected as an artist and filmmaker and has shown consistently outside the

commercial galleries since 1970. His work for exhibitions is mostly stills taken from his live film performances.

#### **Barry Flanagan**

He has shown with the Rowan Gallery since the late '60s. His early soft sculptures are well known but less attention has been given to other aspects of his work which are as diverse as drawing, stone carving, installations of found objects and building materials, pottery, wood work and choreography. He is respected in Britain as one of the major artists of recent years. He will have a major exhibition in 1976 at Eindhoven in Holland.

#### **Lesley Foxcroft**

Lesley Foxcroft is a young artist who works minimally with folded and cut paper pinned in basic grid patterns. She has shown with the Fischer Gallery in Düsseldorf and at MOMA in Oxford.

#### **Hamish Fulton**

Fulton lives in Kent and shows with PMJ Self Gallery. His recent work has completely concentrated on pure photography. The work has increased in size to 12 foot panoramas. The photographs are carefully framed and processed for a special grainy surface.

#### **Gilbert & George**

Live in London and show with the Nigel Greenwood Gallery. They are two artists who do not need any introduction. They have recently returned from their first exhibition in Japan where they performed a new Living Sculpture called the « Red Sculpture ». Their most recent set of photographic sculptures was titled « Dusty Corners » and showed them amongst the building work on 12, Fournier Street. Their new book « Dark Shadows » has just been published in London.

#### **Tim Head**

He shows with the Rowan Gallery. Head's work with installations has been developed in a series of shows at MOMA in Oxford, Gallery House, the Whitechapel. Garage and the Arnolfini in Bristol. The installation is made by taking several photographs of the space. He then places mirrors in various positions, and slides made from the photographs are projected back onto their original image.

#### **John Hilliard**

Lives in London and shows with the Lisson Gallery. Hilliard is by now well established as an artist in Britain. His photographs have developed from an analysis of the mechanics of cameras to an interest in the subjective distortions of the media. He chooses a photograph and then shows its ambiguities through titles and editing.

#### **ICA**

The Institute of Contemporary Arts was founded in 1946 by Roland Penrose and Herbert Read. In the '50s it became the home of Hamilton/Alloway and the Independent Group. It moved to the Mall in 1968 where successive directors have included Mike Kustow, David Thompson and Peter Cook. Kustow brought « When Attitudes Become Form » to London but otherwise the programme has been undistinguished. The new director is Ted Little who is

using the main building for community arts and mixed media events. Barry Barker has recently been appointed director of the New Gallery at the ICA and he has produced an intelligent series of exhibitions including Merz, Broodthaers, Art & Language and Burgin.

#### **Alan Johnston**

Lives in Edinburgh and shows with the Nigel Greenwood Gallery. His work is an extremely minimal form of drawing. The marks are tiny cross hatching over large surfaces, either directly on the wall or on loose sheets of paper. The marks show all the tensions of pressure and time in the mechanics of hand and mark. He has also shown with the Fischer Gallery in Düsseldorf and the Van der Heydt Museum in Wuppertal.

#### **John Latham**

Lives in London and shows with The Gallery. Latham's recent exhibition at the Kunsthalle in Düsseldorf organised by Rosetta Brooks was evidence of the long overdue respect for this fluxus artist. He is best represented by the « Art & Culture » piece now in the MOMA in New York. Latham, with some help from Flanagan chewed up a copy of Greenburg's book Art & Culture borrowed from St. Martin's Library. He soaked the remains in acid for about a year. He was then asked to return the book to the library, and so he returned a small jar of the remaining liquid.

#### **Bob Law**

Lives in London and shows with the Lisson Gallery. Law's exhibition of Black Paintings 1958-1974 at MOMA in Oxford renewed interest in his work. The black paintings were recently followed by white paintings. The apparently bare canvas was coated with several layers of paint containing a small quantity of pigment. The painting was contained within the canvas by a single pencil line around the edge.

#### **D'Arcy Laing**

A New Zealand artist who lives in London and showed with Jack Wender. Laing has produced a series of videos on people working. The subjects have ranged from shepherds in Scotland and New Zealand to factory workers in industrial Britain.

#### **Richard Long**

Lives in Bristol and shows with the Lisson Gallery. Long has recently returned from a visit to Nepal with Hamish Fulton. His work has established a continuum which represents refinement rather than development. The natural form of his work is constantly strengthened by his personal integrity. He continues to make a few installations but mostly continues with his made and found natural sculptures and documentation of them in photography.

#### **Tim Mapston**

Lives in London and has had one show with the Lisson Gallery. Mapston is the least known of the artists in the Milan show. His work until recently has been labelled Anthropomorphic Sculpture. He produces well made wooden structures which relate to the human body in different natural poses.

#### **Gerald Newman**

Lives in London and shows with PMJ Self. Newman's work has long been respected in London but it remains unknown in Europe. The work has also been concerned with the electronics of light and sound. The recent work has been a series of tapes of natural sounds from the landscape, which are played from two speakers at the back of a room which also contains board with some words to direct attention to the subjective content of the sound.

#### **Oxford**

The Museum of Modern Art in Oxford has been the most respected public gallery in Britain in the '70s. The MOMA was established in 1966. Peter Ibsen began an important series of exhibitions between 1971-1973 which included Richard Long, Hamish Fulton, Daniel Buren, Sol LeWitt and Douglas Huebler. Nick Serota became director in 1974 and his one man shows have included Beuys, Andre, Art & Language, Broodthaers, Tremlett, and Charlton. Shows of younger British artists have included, Robbins, Murphy, Hilliard and Foxcroft.

#### **Outside London**

Apart from Oxford there has been very little activity with new art outside of London. The National Gallery of Modern Art in Edinburgh has been one exception with exhibitions by Agnes Martin, Richard Long and Sol LeWitt. The Lisson Gallery also organised a New Painting show for the Scottish Arts Council.

The Arnolfini Gallery in Bristol has shown a consistently high standard of exhibitions of established artists, and the City Gallery in Bristol is now planning a Richard Long exhibition. Also the opening of the Robert Self Gallery in Newcastle has brought a more open attitude to the area.

Lives in London and shows with PMJ Self. His work has continued on two parallel themes for several years. One is a series of very skillful drawings of clothes, sheep and slate blocks. The other developed from his early earth works which related to his personal dimensions, and has developed into a series of dirt paintings.

#### **John Stezaker**

Lives and teaches in London. Shows with Nigel Greenwood. Stezaker's early concentration on language has recently developed into an interest in the political semiotics of advertising photography. He analysis the use of words such as « new, free and pure ». His most recent work is titled « Liberty misleading the people ».

#### **David Tremlett**

Lives outside London and shows with Nigel Greenwood. Tremlett made a difficult transformation from his early working sculptures to documentation of natural landscape and its social use around 1972. The subjects of his work have included Irish tinkers, Australian aborigines and the counties and folk law of England, particularly Cornwall. He places simple drawings alongside photographs and also makes a series of grey covered cards which are placed on the wall in planned shapes.

*Lynda Morris*