Introduction: "Pop Since 1949"

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Clement Greenberg and Lawrence Alloway offered two types of value at the beginning of the 1960s. Greenberg's opinions represented a culmination of ideas that had been developed in the early twentieth century. Alloway's ideas had emerged in the 1950s and came to fruition in the 1960s. Where Greenberg's universe, defined in terms of "pure painting" and its "opposition," whether that is called "impure" or "literary" art, had precisely defined boundaries, Alloway's was a continually expanding one, defined in terms of possibilities and potentialities, even complexities and contradictions.

If today we tend to recognize affinities between our universe and that of Alloway's, the question is how much they extend into the late twentieth, and even twenty-first, centuries.

Born in England in 1926, Alloway began to formulate his ideas during the meetings of the Independent Group in London in the early to mid-1950s and, at the celebrated "This Is Tomorrow" exhibition in 1956, he was already thinking of art as part of a "communications network" of different discourses—including movies, advertising, graphics, product design, and fashion—rather than as a separate and supposedly "higher" entity distinguished by aesthetic timelessness and disinterested experience. His first fully worked-through theory of culture appeared in 1957, and it established a position from which he never essentially departed. Alloway's aim was to include popular and fine art as "part of a general field of communication. All kinds of messages are transmitted to every kind of audience along a multitude of channels." The final paragraph of the 1957 essay spells out the implications:

We begin to see the work of art in a changed context, freed from the iron curtain of traditional aesthetics which separated absolutely art from non-art. In the general field of visual communications the unique function of each form of communication and the new range of similarities between them is just beginning to be charted. It is part of an effort to see art in terms of human use rather than in terms of philosophical problems. The new role of the spectator or consumer, free to move in a society defined by symbols, is what I want to write about. (1)

This was a radical outlook, and it signaled a shift from modernist to postmodernist thinking. The traditional "vertical" axis based on evaluation and judgment—and epitomized by formalist critics from Roger Fry to Greenberg—is being replaced by a concern with the "horizontal" axis that includes the range of modes of discourse that constitute "the general field of visual communications." In this model, art is but one channel within a more socially constructed set of visual communications; art is viewed less in aesthetic terms (in the traditional sense) than along sociocultural lines. This perspective anticipates the interest in semiotics within art history in the '70s and the concern with signs in circulation

associated with postmodernist theory in the late '70s and '80s. The role of the critic includes examining the "function" of each discourse, a project that sounds similar to those of Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu, the latter in terms of how social groups use art for cultural capital. The shift implied in Alloway's final sentence from the emphasis on the producer/creator to that of the consumer/spectator is in keeping as well with the postmodernist growth of interest in reception and audiences.

In "Pop Since 1949," Alloway was reacting to Pop art not as a novel and threatening phenomenon—or even as a new and promising one—but as the latest manifestation of an altered cultural situation he had formulated in 1956–57. Alloway may be strongly associated in many readers' minds with the Pop art movement in the United States in the '60s, but his interests and commitments far exceeded Pop. Not only did he critically support "Systemic" art, Land art, the revival of realism, and importantly, feminist art, but he also developed the cultural model into which these movements can be located. In the case of Pop, he provides an understanding that transcends the actual movement and offers ways of thinking about Pop after Pop—about art and its relationship to the mass media and popular culture.

In his 1962 essay Alloway charts three phases of Pop art and the changing meaning of the phrase. His working definition "refers. . . to the use of popular- art sources by fine artists" (2)—a definition that largely accords with what we now label the Pop art movement of the '60s. Alloway is credited as being the first critic to use the term "pop art," in an article of 1958. (3) However, at that time it was meant to refer to Americanized mass-media popular culture, such as Hollywood movies and science fiction. In his 1962 piece he dates the origins of Pop art proper to 1949 and Francis Bacon, whose "recognition of the photographic origin of a part of his image is central to his intention." This centrality distinguishes his work from earlier or contemporary artists who had happened to use popular culture sources as an element in their work but in the same way they may have used other types of sources. Bacon was the precursor of a more considered involvement of artists with popular culture in the '50s, whether in the form of Richard Hamilton's use of advertisements for Maidenform bras and Detroit autos or Eduardo Paolozzi's brutalist figures, with—in Alloway's words—their "allusions to obsolescent robots as well as to the Frankenstein monster." Much of this phase centered on the deliberations of the Independent Group in London, with Alloway at its heart.

The second phase of Pop art, around 1957 to 1960, short-lived and of limited success, was an attempt to align abstract painting and popular culture. Abstraction had been linked to the absolute and transcendent or to the spirit of industrial production and the factuality of materials. But by the late '50s, critics began to draw parallels between the relatively large size of a Jackson Pollock and other Abstract Expressionists with the larger-than-life scale of CinemaScope, billboards, and other forms of expansionist Americana. The colors used by artists like Richard Smith came not with the underpinnings of, say, Kandinsky's theories of spiritual communication between souls but with the marketing underpinning of an adman's theories of sales appeal. The use of menthol-cigarette-pack green, for example, connected abstraction to "the sensuous world of leisure."

The third phase had started only in 1961 and was ongoing when Alloway broadcast—on BBC Radio—then published "Pop Since 1949." It had been associated with a generation of young painters in England such as David Hockney, Peter Phillips, and Derek Boshier. Almost simultaneously, the new work of Rosenquist, Lichtenstein, Warhol, Wesselmann, and Indiana was being codified as Pop art in the United States. Alloway likened the new British work to the art of the first phase but thought it more catholic in its popular-culture sources. He also thought it was less rigorous, both conceptually and visually: "The power to connect diverse sources into a unified pictorial structure is missing from most of the third-phase painters." There was too much of an influence of graphic design in which "anything goes, measured only by an unchecked and mobile standard of vividness and charm." Worse still, "Pop art has become a game for those who want to tell themselves. . . that they 'think young.'" Perhaps there is an element here of the father, present at his child's birth and proud of the infant's development in his own image, coming to terms with his adolescent offspring's indolence and rebelliousness. By 1966, when Alloway revised the essay for inclusion in Lucy Lippard's Pop Art book, he had got over his disappointments. Reassessing his offspring's qualities, he seemed happy to be publicly associated with the popular and successful young pace setter. Furthermore, he had moved to the United States in 1961 and been appointed curator of the Guggenheim Museum in 1962, so his perspective on Pop transcended the parochialism of the British art scene. He immediately began to realize the significance of Pop art as a movement and planned the pioneering "Six Painters and the Object" show at the Guggenheim in 1963, featuring Dine, Johns, Lichtenstein, Rauschenberg, Rosenquist, and Warhol. This was followed by an exhibition of West Coast artists at the Los Angeles County Museum, titled "Six More" and including Ruscha, Thiebaud, Mel Ramos, Billy Al Bengston, Phillip Hefferton, and Joe Goode. Alloway had carved a niche in the critical interpretation of Pop art and would, henceforth, appear in all its histories and anthologies.

I would argue, though, that Alloway should not be entombed in the history of Pop art but should live on in the broader context of the fine art/popular culture continuum. There are a number of issues raised in "Pop Since 1949" that enable us to examine the legacy of his thinking in the context of Pop after Pop.

A key point in the essay—and one with continuing repercussions—is Alloway's attitude toward the popular culture of the mid-'50s. He notes that when he and Paolozzi used to go to B movies, "our feeling was never that we were slumming, or getting away from it all, or not being serious. It was our assumption that what we felt at, say, Tarantula [1955], was as serious and interesting and worthwhile as our other aesthetic feelings." At the time most conventional critics assumed that any art that drew on popular culture was bound to be ironic or subversive, and thus a form of neo-Dada. But Alloway makes the point that the popular culture they enjoyed, dismissed by cultural commentators as kitsch, escapist, exploitative, or socially dangerous, was as valid—serious, interesting, worthwhile—as high culture. Here is the primary significance of the continuum model of culture: The traditional, high-culture critic who would have seen popular culture only as trivial or "mere entertainment" is being superseded by a new critic committed to a notion of different aspects of an inclusive and diverse visual culture. Richard Hamilton remarked in

1961 that the continuum model is grounded not in Dada and disaffirmation but is "like Futurism, fundamentally a statement of belief in the changing values of society. . . . Perhaps it. . . upholds a respect for the culture of the masses and a conviction that the artist in twentieth century urban life is inevitably a consumer of mass culture and potentially a contributor to it." (4)

Subsequent attitudes to popular culture have, of course, not been as straightforward and unitary. The rise of camp in the '60s, with its use of irony and parody, revealed a knowingness and self-consciousness that indicates an ambivalence in our attitude to popular culture. Today we are less excited by popular culture, and it is hard to think of contemporary artists using words like "serious and interesting and worthwhile." Also, popular culture has become so dominant and ubiquitous that it is difficult for us to see it in the way that Alloway did. Alloway revisited popular culture in the 1950s via an immersion in high culture. Instead of replacing the former once he had experienced the latter—the conventional cultural route—he reevaluated the former and elevated it to the same level of critical attention as the art he visited in the National Gallery. In the light of current, more neutral attitudes, to describe a source as "serious and interesting and worthwhile" has connotations of heroism and earnestness that are less in keeping with our emotionally cool age. Warhol has been more influential in this regard than Alloway. Hamilton's quest, quoted by Alloway, for what is "epic in everyday objects and attitudes" sounds, by today's expectations, presumptuous, even pretentious. Arguably we are less critical, less attentive, and more willing to let forms swim past in a cultural flow that is everyday life. It makes the contribution of artists such as Cindy Sherman, Barbara Kruger, and Richard Prince all the more valuable because they treat popular culture seriously and critically so that we are forced to deconstruct orthodoxies and stereotypes.

Alloway's cultural model is a direct outcome of his approach to popular culture. Popular culture and art no longer occupied fundamentally different realms: Art and life were moving closer together, and art could be an outgrowth of ordinary existence. In the early '60s, Pop artists looked toward life and employed "the artifacts of culture," but their work retained "the compact identity of art no matter how extensively they quote from the environment" (5), so in "Pop Since 1949" Alloway was still able to write about "the borders of art and non-art." He was enthusiastic about tracking the "new willingness to treat our whole culture as if it were art" (6) and aware that this tendency meant that borders between categories would become increasingly permeable. When Alloway was writing it was a bit like the duck/rabbit phenomenon—the visual conundrum in which one perceives either a rabbit or a duck but not the two simultaneously. We can view Rauschenberg or Warhol in the same way—now you see it as art, now you see it as material from the life. It was the tension between the two that gave the work its edge. Today the duck and rabbit have formed a hybrid: the art is less obvious as art, and the life is more literal than transformed source material. Popular culture has become less of a separate category from "high culture," even if they lie along a continuum.

Alloway writes about "an appeal to common experiences" as being one of the motivations of the first phase of Pop. There's a sense in which he is hoping for a common culture that goes beyond the increasing bifurcation identified by C.P. Snow in The Two Cultures and the Scientific

Revolution (1959) or the hierarchical models offered by F.R. Leavis and T.S. Eliot. Part of the appeal of a common culture for Alloway was the notion of what Peter Fuller would later term a "shared symbolic order." (7) Alloway saw a common culture as facilitating the "general tradition of iconographical art." He envisaged great potential for an understanding of the society in which we lived: "By means of iconography. . . one could discover shared themes between ads and art, movies and sculpture, science fiction and constructivism." Art based on a paradigm of aesthetic experience and quality was being replaced by an art involved with meaning: The Pop artists "situated their art within the communications-soaked world they, and you and I, live in. They represent art as one of the battery of messages in the world today." Iconography was the means of decoding messages and interrogating meaning, and a way of connecting art with other aspects of visual culture along the continuum. Alloway's concern with meaning helps to define the era of postmodernism, but the idea that Pop was "an episode, a thread, in a general tradition of iconographical art" is hard to carry forward to the present, partly because the notion of shared understanding within a common culture is problematic. Since postmodernist theory in the '70s, we have come to terms with the instability of meaning and accept that artists do not communicate definitive meaning but play with, intervene in, and represent meanings as part of a continuing process.

Abstract painting is a case in point. Modernists thought meaning was communicated intrinsically through the particular configuration and "mood" of the formal components (Kandinsky), the paralleling of Machine Age forms (Malevich), or an evocation of the "tragic and timeless" (Rothko), whereas Alloway welcomes the cross-referencing of learned codes and conventions (e.g., menthol green) that could be decoded iconographically. Ironically, what in 1962 he presumed to be a short-lived phase in this kind of abstraction has revived in recent years. It is futile to seek an abstract art of transcendent experience in art today, but there are great possibilities in abstract painting as referencing its own codes and conventions, as in the work of Richter and Halley, and so suggesting deferred or negated meanings.

Alloway may have been writing about painting, but he did not think of art in terms of traditional media. He welcomed new technologies in the '60s and '70s, applauding, in "Pop Since 1949," Pop artists' "acceptance of science and the city." In the '50s and '60s, science had provided new potentialities for the artist. Alloway cites two important exhibitions—"Parallel of Life and Art" (1953) and "Man, Machine and Motion" (1955)—which made use of a range of photographic modes, from the documentary, through motion studies and microscope-derived images, to "imaginative fantasy." Photographic techniques enabled us to get closer in that the eye could see or could arrest time and space beyond human perception. Alloway encouraged the artist to pursue any vehicles that were available. He surely would have welcomed the extensions of photography into time-based media and into such new media as the digicam and the Internet, not because he believed the artist should run with new technologies—he was perfectly happy that an artist use paint and canvas or charcoal and paper—but because everything should be available. Pop also signified a coming to terms with the city: the availability of resources, the stimulus of diversity, and the immediacy of action were part of the appeal of mid-twentieth-century urban life. The city offered no modernist utopian promise for Alloway but a gamut of

responses, from delight and pleasure in the possibilities it offered to acceptance of its dangers, degeneration, and decay. Art since Pop has been an urban phenomenon, with often the seamier and banal sides of city life—whether urban squalor, going-out-of-business sales, or the difficulties of maintaining identity in an anonymous society.

Alloway thought the disinterestedness associated with formalism had an unwelcome distancing effect, and he sought to counter it with "intimacy and ‘spectator participation.'" He wanted active viewers who were emotionally engaged and able to connect what they see to their own experiences of life. This not only brought art and life closer together but also broke down boundaries between categories. The new model of the artist was not the seer, prophet, or shaman but the critic, commentator, or observer of life who shared the same life experiences as the spectators and who provided the opportunity for critical reflection, celebration, or just observation of the everyday. Alloway criticized the third phase of Pop artists around 1962 because they "use [their] imagery to differentiate [themselves] from the regular audience for art, instead of, as earlier, to reach it." There is an irony here in that many contemporary artists would applaud the success of the third-phase artists whose imagery their audience intimately shared. Many if not most artists today seem very happy to move beyond the "regular" audience for art if that audience is described in conventional terms of art history—informed, professional-class "culture vultures." The new audience that arose in the '90s may be less knowledgeable about art history, but they are certainly more culturally savvy; they are young, fashion-conscious, and unaware of, and uninterested in, art's baggage. Visiting a museum like Tate Modern is part of the style scene and takes its place on the continuum of cultural activities alongside shopping, eating, and clubbing.

Alloway berates the new Pop artists in 1962 because they "lack a grasp of the history their art belongs to." In this respect he would probably not be reassured by today's artists. But many contemporary artists would see less of a need for a historical grasp because their art does not belong in a discipline such as painting or sculpture but is shaped by an interest in cultural meaning that can be traced across disciplines, media, and forms. It is, therefore, in the nature of contemporary culture, visual practice, and art education that the artist is less embedded in the history of his or her own discipline.

How might Alloway have reacted to this altered cultural situation that provides a context for Pop after Pop? Perhaps, paradoxically, what we have witnessed is an explosion and implosion of Alloway's continuum. For Alloway the continuum not only offered a crucial alternative to hierarchy, with its established set of criteria, but also manifested width. Along the length of the continuum could be found a wide range of cultural practices from fine art, through fashion, design, and science-fiction illustration, to Hollywood movies, to name but a few. There was permeation, seepage, overlap, and cross-referencing, but the practices, although various, were fundamentally differentiated, and one could usually be distinguished from another. The explosion we have witnessed since the '60s is easy to identify when we look at the range of practices available to a contemporary artist. Contemporary visual culture has come about through the dynamics of consumer capitalism and the commodification of culture, and it has been underwritten by postmodernist theory concerning signs in circulation.

As our cultural situation has become expanded and de-differentiated, art doesn't look that different from interior design, fashion, and advertising—we now inhabit a generalized visual culture, but the supposed diversity can very easily look homogeneous. The variety can resemble the superficial one of mass-media choice. It is in this sense that there has been a cultural implosion at the same time as an explosion, and we find less width along our continuum compared to that of Alloway's time. Perhaps this is the legacy of Alloway's "both/and" approach. One of the dilemmas it gives us is undoubtedly historical. Alloway's continuum in the '60s existed in relation to the hierarchical model of traditional and established culture. The liberation and sense of possibilities it offered was palpable and exhilarating. In today's culture of Pop after Pop, the sense of radicalism has given way to "spectacularization" or sensationalization. The continuum has leaked to the point of saturation and is beyond salvage, even if reconstruction were thought to be desirable. The price of Pop's liberation after Pop might be that everything is possible—but less and less counts.

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Notes

1. Alloway, "Personal Statement," *Ark* (no.19, March 1957): 28.
2. All quotations, unless indicated otherwise, are from "Pop Since 1949."
3. "The Arts and the Mass Media," op. cit.: 84–85. It was used by Alloway only in captions in this piece.
4. Hamilton, "For the Finest Art Try—POP" (1961) reprinted in *Richard Hamilton* (ed.), Richard Hamilton: Collected Words (London: Thames and Hudson, 1982): 42–43.
5. Alloway, *American Pop Art* (New York: Collier Books, 1974): 2.
6. Ibid: 5.
7. Peter Fuller, *Aesthetics After Modernism* (London: Readers and Writers Publishing Cooperative Society Ltd., 1983): 19.

Pop Since 1949

Lawrence Alloway

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The term "pop art" has been very popular this year, welcomed by critics who think that the use of a slogan confers awareness to their sluggish prose and by dealers who always prefer a trend to a single artist. But the term is not all that new in London: In the recent history of Pop art I detect at least three phases. The term refers, I suppose you know, to the use of popular-art sources by fine artists. By itself this is nothing new: One of Max Ernst's earliest paintings has its distinctive outline of Charlie Chaplin in it; in the early '50s de Kooning called one of his woman paintings "Marilyn Monroe." Such use of the popular arts is incidental to the main purpose of these artists, however; it is merely one of the possibilities that can occur in the act of painting.

Pop art begins in London about 1949 with work by Francis Bacon. He used, in screaming heads that he painted at this time, a still from an old movie, The Battleship Potemkin. This image, of the nurse wounded in the eye in the Odessa-steps sequence, though mixed with other elements, of course, was central to the meaning of the work. About 1951 Bacon extended his use of photographic sources to include Eadweard Muybridge's, whose motion studies of people and animals, made in the 1890s, provided Bacon with motives. The difference between Bacon's use of quotations from the mass media and other, earlier uses is this: Recognition of the photographic origin of a part of his image is central to his intention. In fact, his painting has often depended on being stretched between the style of the grand manner and topical, pop art–derived incidents of violence.

Pop art, after Bacon, got linked with technology, and this was the first phase of Pop. It was at this time that I became involved in it. Influential in London about ten years ago were three books that were certainly known to the artists who were to use pop sources: Ozenfant's Foundations of Modern Art, Giedion's Mechanization Takes Command, and Moholy Nagy's Language of Vision. I know that what I liked in those books, and I know it rang a bell with other people then in their twenties, was the pro-science, pro-urban bias. Science fiction, because it was pro-technology but highly fantastic, was popular at this time. I remember that magazines and paper books used to be handed around and swapped a great deal. Then, Romanticism, with its lingering nostalgia for picturesque nature and antiquarianism, was stale and boring but very much around. These books were also being read by the British constructivists, but the artists I am speaking of valued the illustrations more than the texts, which we thought perpetuated a good many clichés. You know the kind of thing: They called for a "modern spirit," "the integration of the arts," and all that. It was the visual abundance of these books that was influential, the choice of illustrations that ranged freely across the borders of art and non-art. The visual explosion of the twentieth century, with its wealth of vivid imagery, became a direct source of art.

There were two exhibitions that reflected this situation and indeed furthered its understanding in London, in 1953 and 1955. Both were held at the Institute of Contemporary Arts, which has been a center for the investigation of the relations between fine and pop art. First was "Parallel of Life and Art," arranged by Eduardo Paolozzi, Peter Smithson (the architect), and Nigel Henderson (the photographer). A hundred blown-up photographs of motion studies, ethnographical material, child art, and microphotographs blended technology and fantasy in wild profusion. Then, in "Man, Machine and Motion," Richard Hamilton explored the intimate contact of men and machines and the extensions of speed and reach that resulted. He used photographs that were valued not solely as documentary records, though they were that, but also as imaginative fancy. Thus, properties usually reserved for the fine arts were associated with photographs. Hamilton, later in the '50s, used pop-art elements in his own paintings that look like versions of Marcel Duchamp's glass ordered by Maidenform Bra or General Electric as part of a very soft-sell campaign. Hamilton has stated, and this is a very important point to get clear about the use of pop-art sources in general, that his paintings are not "a sardonic comment on our society." "I would like to think of my purpose as a search for what is epic in everyday objects and everyday attitudes," he has said.

Typical of this first phase of Pop art in England is the work of Eduardo Paolozzi, whose bronze sculptures of the '50s carry allusions to obsolescent robots as well as to the Frankenstein monster. As a boy Paolozzi had seen Karloff monster movies, and he retained the massive, lumbering contours in his memory until they returned in his sculptures of the human image. I remember Paolozzi and I used to go to the London Pavilion, which was the first-run house for monster movies in the '50s. And our feeling was never that we were slumming, or getting away from it all, or not being serious. It was our assumption that what we felt at, say, Tarantula was as serious and interesting and worthwhile as our other aesthetic feelings. What happened was that these emotionally charged images from the mass media dramatically reduced aesthetic distance. In place of Roger Fry's "disinterested contemplation," in place of Sir Herbert Read's elaborate theoretical schemes, which were the main aesthetic systems available in London at the time, something intimate and simple was offered. An appeal to common experience was central to the first phase of Pop art. It lasted, strongly, from about 1951 to 1958. All the art of this phase was figurative, with references to pop art that could be demonstrated. John McHale, for example, made collages in 1955 out of the then-fresh postwar color-printed American magazines. These bright painted fragments were assembled into squat human figures consisting of signs of all the goods and services that you and I consume. They were, in effect, portraits of consumers. First-phase Pop art had its casualties and perils: McHale, for instance, became so engrossed by the non-art material that he failed to forge it into, traditionally defined, art.

The second phase of Pop art, which overlaps the first, is abstract and begins about 1957. The effort, now, was to align abstract painting with Pop art. The problem was to preserve, however elliptically, the basis in common experience that both Bacon and Paolozzi had demonstrated, but without specifying their sources so legibly. The "humble" sources had to feed the art in another way. This was the time when big paintings, whether Monet's murals of lily ponds in L'Orangerie or the giant easel

paintings of Jackson Pollock, were compared to Cinemascope. The big-screen revolution in the cinema started in 1954 and gave a polemical point of reference to discussions of art in terms of intimacy and "spectator participation."

Richard Smith, one of the artists who linked abstract to Pop art, wrote three years ago: "Current technology, gossip column hearts and flowers, Eastmancolor features, have no direct pin-pointable relation to my work of the moment, but they are not alien worlds." Thus, abstract painting is linked not to the absolute (as it was by Mondrian), not even to the rational economy of industrial production (as by Malevich), but to the sensuous world of leisure. As paintings expanded to environmental scale, they were likened not only to the big screens but also to billboards. The references were highly allusive, as by color cues: For instance, the color used in a painting might be the green identified with menthol cigarettes. Big scale and color brilliance were the two main means of connecting the mass media with abstract painting. William Green, who a few years back was a hero of the mass media because he rode a bicycle over his paintings, had an exhibition that he called "Errol Flynn." It is not that the sticky, bituminous paintings were about Errol Flynn, in any referential sense, but that this was the kind of meaning that Green assigned to his art, in accordance with his other interests. In Paris, on a similar principle of arbitrariness, Georges Mathieu used feudal history and genealogy for titles. In London, Green, Smith, and others declared their allegiance with the public by evoking the instantaneously shared themes of mass communications. In 1960 four Cambridge undergraduates, masterminded by Robert Freeman, staged an exhibition in London with throwaway, pinup material mingled equally with their own abstract art. Thus they situated their art in the communications-soaked world they, and you and I, live in. They represented art as one of the battery of messages in the world today, not as an act in relation to an absolute.

Whereas the painters of the first phase used objectively popular material that modified the image of man with which they were all concerned, the artists of phase two (most of whom were friendly with their immediate predecessors) shifted the emphasis to the man-made environment. The basic assumption was that our idea of nature had changed because of the bombardment of our sense by the signs, colors, and lights of the mass media. Hence it was supposed to be possible to create an analogue of the man-made environment, which we all participate in, by means of a nonverbal but highly topical imagery. In Life magazine once, a solemn red Rothko was compared to a color photograph of a sunset. Now this certainly has nothing to do with Rothko, but it demonstrates the kind of relation sought for between abstract paintings and the environment. It wasn't the sunset the abstract painters wanted but the flow of neon, the dazzle of high-style fashion, the envelopment of big-screen cinema, realized not by one-to-one references but by color and scale.

The second phase of pop-based abstract art has not continued as a strong force. Other aspects of the tradition of abstract art have resumed the role played briefly by pop-art references. It was in 1961 that the third wave of Pop art appeared, in the "Young Contemporaries" exhibition. That marked the beginning of the situation in which we now find ourselves. Pop art is now figurative again but drawing not on a single

source, such as movies or science fiction, but on a medley of popular techniques. Peter Phillips uses symbols of the pin-table, the leather-jacket set, and playing card eroticism. Derek Boshier mingles images from cereal packets, weather maps, and transfers; and David Hockney mingles graffiti and child art. Pop art is, perhaps, part of a general revival of interest in iconography, in figurative imagery as a means of expression. Iconography, the study of visual meanings in art, has been very influential through the '50s to date. It was a favorite word of Paolozzi's, I remember, and I used to use iconographical methods in my art criticism as a way of writing about art while getting away from overrefined formal analysis. By means of iconography, too, one could discover shared themes between ads and art, movies and sculpture, science fiction and constructivism. In England, the paintings of American-born R.B. Kitaj continue the iconographical theme. His paintings include pop references, but only as one of a number of sources, which also include, for example, ancient cosmogonies. The journals of the Smithsonian and the Warburg institutes are among the sources that he coaxes, with his remarkably acute pictorial sense, into diagrammatic yet painterly displays. He has been a decisive influence on recent uses of pop art, but his followers have all neglected the essential breadth.

Paolozzi, in a lecture given at the ICA in 1958, observed: "The evolution of the cinema monster from Méliès onwards is necessary study for the fabricator of idols or gods containing elements which press in the direction of the victims' nerve-senses." You'll notice that the study of pop art, growing out of his spontaneous enjoyment of it, is to aid in the fabrication of "idols or gods." Thus a traditional role of the sculptor, the forging of heroic figures, is not abandoned; only the base on which it is to be established has been widened.

This power to connect diverse sources into a unified pictorial structure is missing from most of the third-phase painters. Derek Boshier and David Hockney, for instance, seem unable to translate their awkward arrays of different kinds of signs into one coherent format. A reason for this, I suspect, is the fact that they take their standards from graphic art rather than from painting. In graphic art, of course, anything goes, measured only by an unchecked and mobile standard of vividness and charm. Hence the flips in scale in their imagery, and the loose chains of form that zigzag episodically over the field of the painting. American painters, of equivalent ages in many cases, who use this kind of imagery have a stronger painting tradition to measure their performance by. They have not abandoned the high standards of the older American abstract painters, though, of course, they have moved decisively away from abstraction as such. Thus there is a continuity between recent and current work, which confers a certain formal strength on what's new. England, not supplying any comparable standard of rigor, has, in a way, let these artists down. One who has solved the problem of painterly coherence, Peter Phillips, has another difficulty. Gifted painter though he is, he lacks Kitaj's or Paolozzi's sense of Pop art as the latest resonance of long iconographical traditions. He seems to use pop art literally, believing in it as teenagers believe in the Top 20. In a sense, the appeal to common sources within a fine-art context, one of the strongest original motives for using pop art, has been lost. The new Pop-art painters use the mass media in the way that teenagers do, to assert, by their choice of style and goods, their difference from their elders. Thus the third wave of Pop artists uses its imagery to differentiate itself from the regular

audience for art, instead of, as earlier, to reach it. Hockney's paintings, abounding in autobiographical graffiti, are like a diary kept jointly by Holden Caulfield and Baron Corvo. Peter Blake, a prestigeful figure in the circle, also relies more on the charm of his personality than on the production of substantial works.

Hockney wrote recently: "I paint what I like, when I like, and where I like," and this freedom is, of course, his right and his pleasure. He went on to list some of his "sources": "landscapes of foreign lands, beautiful people, love, propaganda, and major incidents (of my own life)." Given this program, one can see that a rambling and discursive kind of art is likely to follow, unless governed by a firm formal control. In a way, Hockney is not to blame for not reaching this level of control. The fault lies not with the talented young but with the store of information, called tradition, that is available to them. The older painters and the younger do not mix and do not discuss their work in any serious or sustained way. Fey elements of the romantic, the amateur, and the graphic are officially praised before sophistication and professionalism. The importance of the abstract painters of the "Situation" group, which showed twice, once in 1960, once in 1961, lay in their high level of professionalism. They eschewed the purely local standards of English art and aimed at mastery of the international tradition of abstract painting. Too many of the current wave of Pop artists, though benefiting from the environmental openness of some of the "Situation" painters, are content with negligent and permissive formal standards. The odd and the cute, the whimsical and the queer, are threatening British art again, under the guise of topicality. What is needed is more painting like, say, Allen Jones, who uses pop-art themes but not exclusively. As he wrote: "I don't mind a picture having a story as long as the beginning and the end exist within the four edges of the canvas," which is a way of asserting the sufficient formality of the painting. Too many of his contemporaries, on the other hand, make their art open-ended, and everything passes through it.

We tend, because of the simplicity everybody likes to impose on our lives and culture, to think of postwar art as overwhelmingly abstract. However, parallel with the abundance, and high quality, of abstract art is a great deal of, let's call it, iconographical art. Let me remind you of a few names: Bacon, Balthus, Giacometti, Dubuffet, Asger Jorn, de Kooning. The real condition of modern art is diversity, and theories or arguments that nominate one tendency over the others impoverish our culture. In historical terms, Pop art is part of this iconographical line that runs alongside, coexists with, abstract art. One piece of evidence to support this is the contribution of Dubuffet to artists of the first and third phases in England. Dubuffet influenced Paolozzi, in his human figures, and his influence is implicit also in the textures and graffiti of David Hockney. My point is that Pop art is an episode, a thread, in a general tradition of iconographical art that has exploded since the late nineteenth century, when the riches of visual material, in many styles, was first recognized.

Pop artists of the third and current phase deny this historical setting by the use they make of pop-art elements. The effect of the first and second phases of Pop was (and this was badly needed in the '50s) to reduce the idealism and snobbery of English aesthetics and art criticism. Now, however, happy in the playground of this opened-out situation, Pop artists lack a grasp of the history their art belongs to, as well as a sense of the internal rigor necessary to art. Instead of contributing to the

expanded communications system, which is nineteenth- and twentieth-century art, they are coasting along and relaxing. Pop art has become a game for those who want to tell themselves, and their peers, that they "think young."