

Parallel of Life and Art: Indications of a New Visual Order*

NIGEL HENDERSON, EDUARDO PAOLOZZI, AND
ALISON AND PETER SMITHSON

The exhibition Parallel of Life and Art opened on September 11, 1953, at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London. Consisting of 122 photographic enlargements edited by Nigel Henderson, Ronald Jenkins, Eduardo Paolozzi, and Alison and Peter Smithson, it explored how reproductive technologies affect the terms of cultural production. The architectural historian and critic Reyner Banham would later refer to the exhibition as a “locus classicus” of the New Brutalist movement.—A.K.

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In this exhibition an encyclopedic range of material from past and present is brought together through the medium of the camera which is used as recorder, reporter, and scientific investigator. As a recorder of nature objects, works of art, architecture and technics; as reporter of human events the images of which sometimes come to have a power of expression and plastic organization analogous to the symbol in art; and as scientific investigator extending the visual scale and range, by use of enlargements, X-rays, wide-angle lens, high-speed and aerial photography.

The editors of this exhibition, Nigel Henderson, photographer, Eduardo Paolozzi, sculptor, Peter and Alison Smithson, A/A.R.I.B.A. architects, and Ronald Jenkins, A.C.G.I. engineer, have selected more than a hundred images of significance for them. These have been ranged in categories suggested by the material which underline a common visual denominator independent of the field from which the image is taken. There is no single claim in this procedure. No watertight scientific or philosophical system is demonstrated.

In short it forms a poetic-lyrical order where images create a series of cross-relationships.

—August 31, 1953

* ICA Archives, Tate Gallery, TGA 9211.5.1.2.