

7 February –  
30 May 2015

Huddersfield  
Art Gallery

ICA

Cybernetic Serendipity:  
A Documentation

Educator's  
Resource Pack

**Cybernetic Serendipity**

**Serendipity**

The Faculty of making  
supply chance (dis)coveries by means of control and communication machines  
both human and electronic

in exhibition

to exhibition

to exhibition

Institute of Contemporary Arts  
August 2 - October 31

**CYBERNETIC SERENDIPITY LECTURES**

Thursday August 6	David G. Hertz
Tuesday August 12	Richard Scudlark
Thursday August 15	Richard Scudlark
Tuesday August 20	Richard Scudlark
Thursday August 27	Richard Scudlark
Tuesday September 3	Richard Scudlark
Thursday September 5	Richard Scudlark
Tuesday September 10	Richard Scudlark
Thursday September 12	Richard Scudlark
Thursday September 18	Richard Scudlark
Tuesday September 24	Richard Scudlark
Thursday September 26	Richard Scudlark
Tuesday October 1	Richard Scudlark
Tuesday October 8	Richard Scudlark
Thursday October 20	Richard Scudlark
Thursday October 27	Richard Scudlark

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## About this Pack

This resource pack has been developed to support teaching and learning both at the ICA and offsite. It offers starting points and ideas for visiting educators to use with students. It was developed with GCSE and A-Level students in mind but is well suited for work with other age groups.

Activities and discussion points are suggested and one of the key learning objectives is for students to develop their skills in aesthetic understanding and critical judgement. Students will be guided towards an analysis and exploration of how the artworks in *Cybernetic Serendipity* reflect the social and cultural contexts in which they were made. Suggested activities are offered for use in the gallery and offsite.

### Please note

We will tailor programmes to respond to curriculum needs whenever possible. Please contact us to make arrangements and check the website for upcoming Learning Events.

Contact [learning@ica.org.uk](mailto:learning@ica.org.uk) for more information or to add your contact to our learning mailing list.

# Huddersfield Art Gallery Exhibitions

The Priseman – Seabrook Collection  
of 21st Century British Painting  
1 November 2014 – 14 March 2015  
Gallery 3 & 4

Cybernetic Serendipity: A Documentation  
7 February – 30 May 2015  
Gallery 1

Perspectives: Aspects of the Kirklees Collection  
Permanent Collection  
Gallery 5

Yorkshire Makers  
Permanent Collection  
Gallery 6.

## About the Huddersfield Art Gallery

Located in Huddersfield's town centre, the art gallery houses an extensive collection of paintings, drawings and sculptures by internationally renowned artists such as Francis Bacon, LS Lowry and Henry Moore alongside work by significant local artists.

Throughout the year it presents a programme of exhibitions, giving visitors the opportunity to view work by a range of young and established artists. A wide variety of events and activities for all ages are organised to encourage visitors to be inspired and creative.

## About the ICA

The ICA supports radical art and culture. Through a vibrant programme of exhibitions, films, events and talks, the ICA challenges perceived notions and stimulates debate, experimentation, creativity and exchange with visitors.

Founded in 1946 by a group of artists including Roland Penrose, Peter Watson and Herbert Read, the ICA continues to support living artists in showing and exploring their work, often as it emerges and before others. The ICA has been at the forefront of cultural experimentation since its formation and has presented important debut solo shows by artists including Damien Hirst, Steve McQueen, Richard Prince and Luc Tuymans. More recently Pablo Bronstein, Lis Rhodes, Bjarne Melgaard and Juergen Teller have all staged key solo exhibitions, whilst a new generation of artists, including Luke Fowler, Lucky PDF, Hannah Sawtell and Factory Floor have taken part in exhibitions and residencies.

The ICA was one of the first venues to present The Clash and The Smiths, as well as bands such as Throbbing Gristle. The inaugural ICA / LUX Biennial of Moving Images was launched in 2012, and the ICA Cinema continues to screen rare artists' film, support independent releases and partner with leading film festivals.



Installation view of Cybernetic Serendipity  
14 Oct – 30 Nov 2014  
Institute of Contemporary Arts London (ICA)  
Photo: Mark Blower

# An Introduction to Cybernetic Serendipity: *A Documentation*

'Where in London could you take a hippy, a computer programmer, a ten-year-old schoolboy and guarantee that each would be perfectly happy for an hour without you having to lift a finger to entertain them?' 2 August 1968, Evening Standard

Cybernetic Serendipity, the landmark exhibition curated by Jasia Reichardt at the ICA in 1968, is being celebrated at Huddersfield Art Gallery with a display of documents, installation photographs, press reviews, invitation cards and publications.

Attracting the attention of the national and international press at the time, Cybernetic Serendipity was the first international exhibition in the UK devoted to the relationship between the arts and new technology. This groundbreaking exhibition, designed by Franciszka Themerson, presented the work of over 130 participants including composers, engineers, artists, mathematicians and poets. The exhibition ran from 2 August - 20 October 1968 and was seen by some 60,000 visitors.

Its aim was to present an area of activity which manifested artists' involvement with science, and scientists' involvement with the arts; in particular to show the links between the random systems employed by artists, composers and poets, and those involved with the making and the use of cybernetic devices. Cybernetic Serendipity dealt with possibilities rather than achievements, especially since in 1968 computers had not yet revolutionised music, art, or poetry, in the same way that they had revolutionised science. Nearly 50 years later, at a time when our relationship with computers permeates every aspect of visual culture, this exhibition offers documentation of Cybernetic Serendipity to highlight its impact and continued relevance today.

In Partnership With:



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# Discussion Points

1



The exhibition *Cybernetic Serendipity* brought together the work of creators who were using computers, traditional artists who worked with machines, avant-garde musicians, poets, filmmakers, dancers and animators. Explore the archival material and discuss the nature of the exhibition. What do you think the curator Jasia Reichardt wanted to explore and achieve?

2



What might the aim of curators be in re-staging the exhibition today? How is it relevant to audiences now compared with the original viewers? One of the aims of the 1968 exhibition was to explore new possibilities between the arts and technology. What new possibilities exist today between these two fields?

3



If we were to curate an exhibition now with the same idea; to show pioneering technology which links art and technology, what could we expect to see in it? How was the exhibition viewed then, and how do we view it now in a different digital context?



**4**

Serendipity is defined as the facility of making happy chance decisions. How do you understand this term in relation to the exhibition? How important do you think serendipity is to the creative process? Can you think of the value of serendipity to technology? How valuable is chance, indeterminacy and randomness to art?

**5**

The exhibition *Cybernetic Serendipity* brought together the work of creators who were using computers, traditional artists who worked with machines, avant-garde musicians, poets, filmmakers, dancers and animators. Explore the archival material and discuss the nature of the exhibition. What do you think the curator Jasia Reichardt wanted to explore and achieve?

**6**

What might the aim of curators be in re-staging the exhibition today? How is it relevant to audiences now compared with the original viewers? One of the aims of the 1968 exhibition was to explore new possibilities between the arts and technology. What new possibilities exist today between these two fields?

# Activities

## Curate

*Cybernetic Serendipity* was originally staged in 1968. Design a re-staging of the exhibition for the ICA that focuses on current issues and themes in cybernetics. What artists, technology and designers might you include to make it a collaborative project?

## Listen

The original exhibition featured the work of avant-garde musicians such as John Cage and Peter Zinovieff. Listen to Lejaren A. Hiller's 'Illiac Suite' on YouTube. This was the first landmark in digital composition. Listen to a piece of music by Emily Howell, a computer programme which composes classical music. Explore the ICA's Soundworks website which features work by contemporary sound artists. Document the works that you have listened to and record your thoughts on these.

## Design

The artist Wen Ying Tsai created a cybernetic sculpture for the 1968 exhibition. Steel rods reacted to various stimuli such as lighting. As participants viewed the work they changed the frequency of the strobe light which in turn changed the motion of the rod. Produce a design for a simple sculpture which features components that change in relation to various stimuli and the behavior of the viewer.

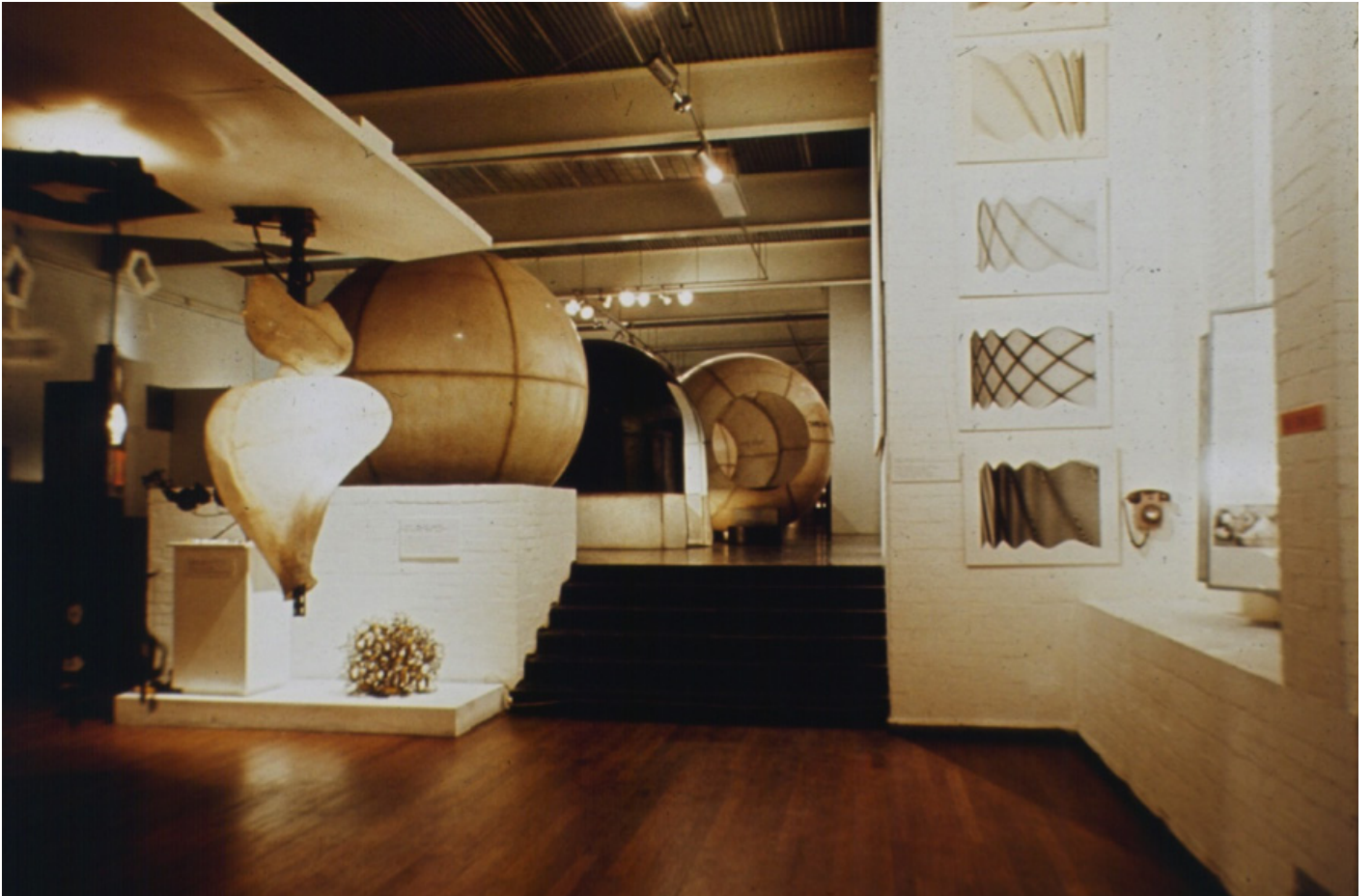
## Timeline

Audiences in 1968 would have seen the timeline below in the catalogue for the exhibition, which documents developments in cybernetics. Complete this up until 2014 by adding what you believe to be significant developments in the field or produce an alternative timeline to do with a different theme explored in the exhibition.

1642	Pascal's calculator was built
1673	Leibniz builds his calculating machine
1801	Jacquard's punch-card-controlled loom
1840	Babbage working on his Analytical Engine
1868	Maxwell publishes his theoretical analysis of Watt's governor
1927	Bush constructs his Differential Analyser
1944	ENIAC constructed
1946	First Josiah Macy Foundation conference on Cybernetics
1948	Norbert Wiener's book <i>Cybernetics</i> published
1949	Shannon publishes his paper <i>The Mathematical Theory of Communication</i>
1956	First congress of the International Association of Cybernetics at Namur, Belgium

## Link

In the original catalogue for the exhibition an analogy is made between the nervous system and cybernetics. Make a list of as many different systems that you come across in your daily life. How many of these might be considered cybernetic?



Cybernetic Serendipity at the ICA 1968



Courtesy ICA, Cybernetic Serendipity 1968

## Huddersfield Art Gallery Learning

The Huddersfield Art Gallery runs inspiring and encouraging workshops for students at key stages 1 and 2, including “Exploring Art in the Gallery” and “Art and Identity”, as well as Artist – led workshops which are adapted to any key stage. The Gallery works closely with professional artists specialising in a diverse range of art forms. Sessions encourage debate and discussion about art, teach artistic techniques, and offer young people the opportunity to explore new creative processes.

Self-guided visits and short talks area also available to schools. Talks can be a general introduction to the gallery or they can focus on a specific theme or exhibition.

For further information please email [info.galleries@kirklees.gov.uk](mailto:info.galleries@kirklees.gov.uk)

## Touring Programme Learning Events

### Build Your Own Robot

Sat 7 Mar/Sat 21 Mar, 11:00–13:00

Mark Milnes/Samantha Bryan

Inspired by Bruce Lacey’s ROSA BOSOM, participants will work with a range of found materials to create their own robots.

### Cybernetic Serendipity Music Workshop

Thu 23 Apr, 14:00–17:00

Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival

Participants will listen collectively to the Cybernetic Serendipity Music soundtrack, discuss the works and their compositions.

### Artist Film Screening

Thu 12 Mar, 17:30–19:30

An ICA curated screening of artist films that relate to the context of the exhibition. For example a selection of Bruce Lacey rarely-seen films.

### Artist Talk with Yuri Patterson

Sat 14 Mar, 12:00–16:00

A talk that looks back at the 1968 exhibition to discuss why it was so ground breaking and what its legacy might be.

**Educator's Tour with Mark Milnes**

Thu 12 Feb, 18:00–19:00

At these free events designed especially for teachers, lecturers and educators, participants explore the exhibitions on a walking tour, receive free resources and get the opportunity to discuss the exhibitions.

**Gallery Tours**

Thu 19 Feb–Thu 28 May, 18:00-19:00

Given by students from Huddersfield University. For school groups but open to all.

# Huddersfield Art Gallery Information

**Huddersfield Art Gallery Opening Hours**

Monday-Friday, 10am–5pm

Saturday: 10am-4pm

Sunday: Closed.

**Admission**

Free

**Shop**

Monday-Friday, 10am–5pm

Saturday: 10am-4pm

Sunday: Closed.

Day Membership £1

Wednesday–Sunday, 11am-6pm

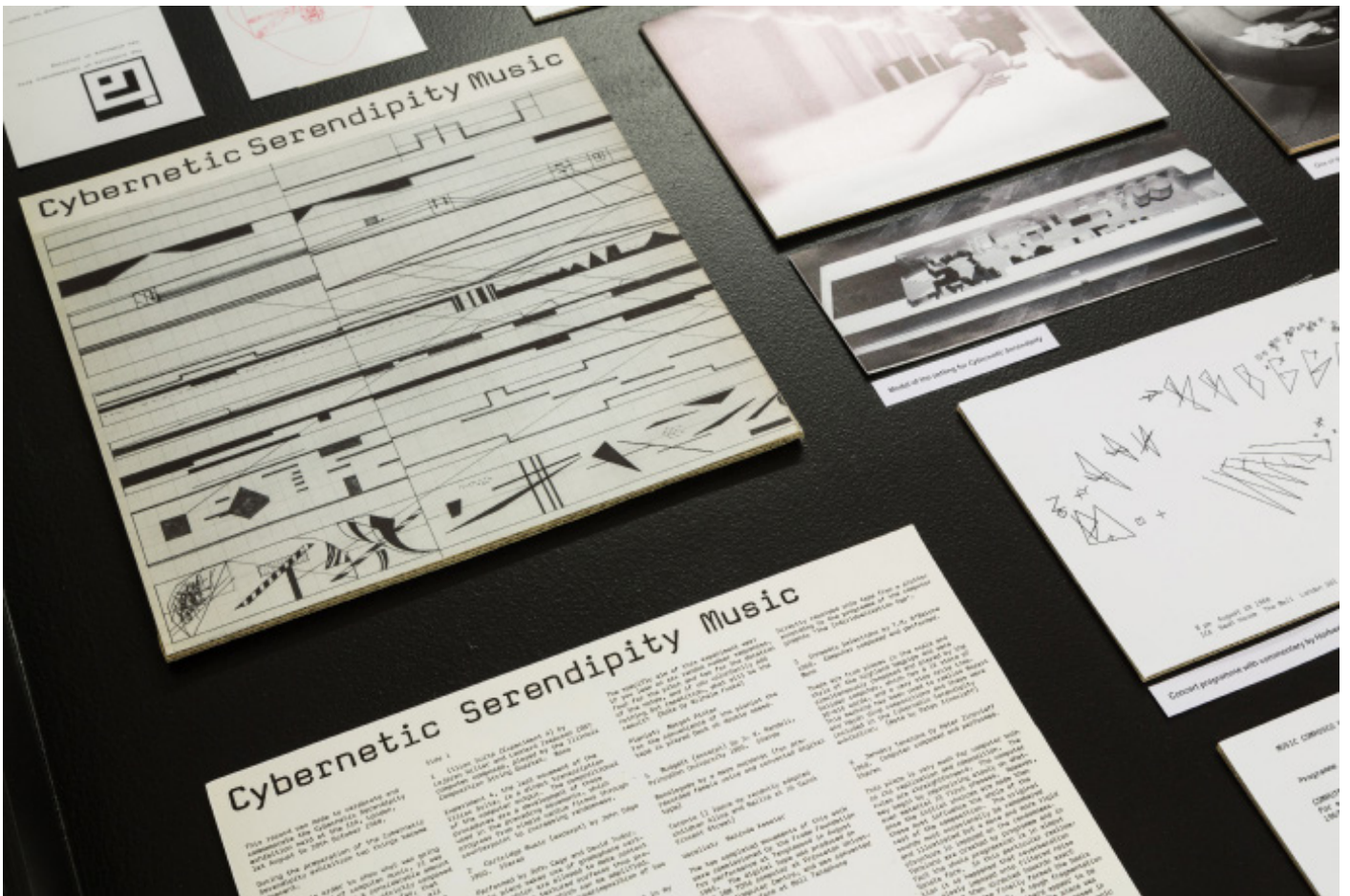
Until 9pm on Thursdays

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<http://tinyurl.com/n985ckp>

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Installation view of Neil Beloufa: Counting on People

**ICA Learning**

[ica.org.uk/learning](http://ica.org.uk/learning)  
[learning@ica.org.uk](mailto:learning@ica.org.uk)

**Educators' Previews**

Join our teacher's previews for all of our exhibitions

**Educator Resource Packs**

Educator resource packs are available at the ICA Box Office, or by emailing [learning@ica.org.uk](mailto:learning@ica.org.uk)

**Art Rules**

Art Rules is an online space to discuss the rules of art today. Engage your students by visiting:  
[artrules.ica.org.uk](http://artrules.ica.org.uk)

**MA in the Contemporary**

Find out more about our unique, interdisciplinary MA programme, in partnership with University of Kent.  
[ica.org.uk/ma-contemporary](http://ica.org.uk/ma-contemporary)

**Cinema Matinee Screenings**

Cinema group matinees are available for schools, colleges and universities.

[ica.org.uk/learning/school-and-groupscreenings](http://ica.org.uk/learning/school-and-groupscreenings)

**ICA Student Forum**

Join the ICA Student Forum to shape and develop a public programme of events in response to the ICA programme.

[ica.org.uk/student-forum](http://ica.org.uk/student-forum)

**University Partnerships**

Through our University partnerships we engage and promote greater collaborative opportunities between university students, teaching staff and the ICA's public programme.

[ica.org.uk/university-partnerships](http://ica.org.uk/university-partnerships)

**ICA Opening Hours**

Tuesday—Sunday, 11am—11pm

**Day Membership £1**

Wednesday—Sunday, 11am-6pm  
 Until 9pm on Thursdays

**Exhibitions**

Tuesday—Sunday, 11am—6pm  
 Open late every Thursday until 9pm

**ICA Box Office & Bookshop**

Tuesday—Sunday, 11am—9pm

**ICA Café Bar**

Food served from 11.30—3.30pm / 5.30—9pm

**Tuesday Cinema**

All films, all day: £3 for ICA Members / £6 non-Members

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[ica.org.uk/signup](http://ica.org.uk/signup)

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