

14 Oct – 30 Nov 2014
Reading Room

ICA

Cybernetic Serendipity

Educator's Resource Pack



Contents

About this pack	3
ICA Exhibitions	4
About the ICA	4
Introduction to <i>Cybernetic Serenpidity</i>	5
Activities	6
Discussion Points	8
ICA Learning	9-10
Art Rules	11
Information	12

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 for more information or to add your contact to our learning mailing list.

ICA Exhibitions

Neil Beloufa: Counting on People
24 September – 16 November 2014
Lower Gallery & Theatre

Beware Wet Paint
24 September – 16 November 2014
Upper Gallery

Cybernetic Serendipity
14 October – 30 November 2014
Fox Reading Room

ICA Off-Site
14 – 18 October 2014
Old Selfridge's Hotel

Bloomberg New Contemporaries
26 November 2014 – 25 January 2015
Lower and Upper Galleries

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.

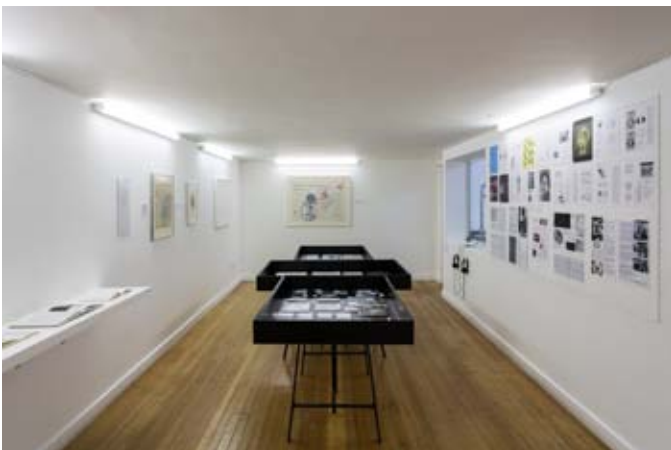
An introduction to *Cybernetic Serendipity*

'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 in 1968, is being celebrated in the Fox Reading Room 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. The ICA continues to explore the relationship between art and technology through the events programme.



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

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?

Discussion Points

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 successes new possibilities exist today between these two fields?

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?

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?

According to the original catalogue, the most important single revelation of the 1968 exhibition was that new media and new systems brought new people to become involved in creative activity. What might this tell us about the nature of creativity?

The first landmark in computer composition was Lejaren A. Hiller's 'Illiac Suite'. Today, a professor from the University of California has created a computer program called Emily Howell which composes original classical music. Emily Howell has a record deal. The music industry, however, is divided by the validity of computer generated music. Do you think it undermines the human element? How removed is this to the act of using computers to generate imagery, rather than physically using the materials that they emulate?

ICA Learning

Our dynamic learning programme provides opportunities for creative exchange, investigation and discussion between practitioners and audiences. The ICA strives to build sustainable relationships with universities, students, schools and our wider audiences, nurturing interest and appreciation of the creative process, and broadening engagement with contemporary arts.

ICA Learning provides different opportunities to engage with the ICA programme through gallery tours, guided visits to our exhibitions, Friday Salons, online educational platforms and the ICA Student Forum, a dedicated student body that curates events and projects for the Public Programme.

Our University Partnerships exist to encourage the development of joint projects and research. In addition, ICA Academy provides career paths to Further Education, Higher Education and employment.

For further information or to make a booking, please email learning@ica.org.uk

ICA Learning is generously supported by The Ernest Cook Trust

ICA Learning Events

Workshop : Wet Paint Beware!

Sat 1 Nov, 2pm

Led by artist Sarah Sparkes, this practical session introduces students to different painting techniques and encourages reflection on painting as a contemporary practice. Developed in response to Beware Wet Paint.

Educator Tours

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

Educators Tour: Neil Beloufa's Counting on People
led by ICA Curator Matt Williams

Wed 24 Sep, 5pm

Gallery Tours

Join curators, artists and other cultural practitioners on tours through the exhibitions. All are free.

Beware Wet Paint with Gregor Muir

Thu 2 Oct, 6.30pm

Neil Beloufa: Counting on People with Manu Luksch

Thu 13 Nov, 6.30pm

Cybernetic Serendipity with Stephen Gage

Thu 30 Oct, 6.30pm

ICA Learning Events

Friday Salons

Friday Salons provide first-hand accounts of current cultural phenomena and professional development. All £5, free to ICA Members.

On Abstract Language

Fri 3 Oct, 5pm

A discussion on the abstraction of language with artist Rod Dickinson and Matthew Fuller, followed by a screening of *Closed Circuit* (2010) by the artist.

Serendipity after Cybernetic

Fri 24 Oct, 3pm

The discussion led by Dr. Nick Lambert (Birkbeck University) will consider elements in contemporary culture that owe their resonance to Cybernetic Serendipity.

Making Room: Domestic Spaces as Exhibition Places

Fri Nov 7, 3pm

The event will look to examine how artists make use of their domestic space as a means to show their work among peers, in the context of established art galleries. With Eva Rowson and Luke Drozd.

TEXT2SPEECH:

contemporary Art Theory Reading Group

Wed 22 Oct, 6.30pm

Free, Booking required

Join the ICA Student Forum in a series of free reading groups that respond to the ICA's programme of exhibitions and events. It provides a platform for the discussion of texts that have not necessarily reached university syllabuses yet and also provides an opportunity to network with others.

Restaging Exhibitions: Reconsidering Art History and Exhibition Making

Sat 15 Nov, 2pm. £5

Free to ICA Members

A discussion that explores the restaging of exhibitions and their complex mediation between art history and their own materiality. The invited speakers will reflect and critically discuss their thoughts on the exhibitions they have restaged while expanding on the implications this has on collections, curating and the archive.

Group & Matinee Screenings at the ICA Cinema

Contact learning@ica.org.uk for more details.

To book contact ICA Box Office on 020 7930 3647 or email sales@ica.org.uk

Art Rules

The ICA's Art Rules website is an online forum designed to generate debate around contemporary art. The website asks visitors to answer the question: 'What is art?'. Their answers appear on the website for other visitors to comment on, and conversations are started around the submitted 'rules'. Visitors can 'Agree' or 'Disagree' with these rules - as well as share a rule using Twitter, Facebook and Pinterest.

The more people 'Agree' with a rule, the larger it will appear on the website, and vice versa. The website has been seeded with a number of rules written by leading artists, curators and critics. This is to serve as inspiration for visitors and enable the site to become a repository of outstanding thinking as well as a community of cultural commentators.

Activity

Log onto the 'Art Rules' website and submit your very own 'Art Rule' and discuss with the group why you chose it. The rest of the group will then have the opportunity to debate the rule and decide whether or not they agree with it.

artrules.ica.org.uk

Rule 903

**Remember that
your generation will always
have its own rules.
Listen but don't take it
as truth.**

Erin Elwood
21 Oct 2013

ICA Learning

ica.org.uk/learning
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

Art Rules

Art Rules is an online space to discuss the rules of art today. Engage your students by visiting:
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

Cinema Matinee Screenings

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

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

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

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

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Installation view of Neil Beloufa: Counting on People
 24 Sep 2014 – 16 Nov 2014

Institute of Contemporary Arts London (ICA)

Photo: Mark Blower