

# EVENTS

## FILM

### **The Human Scale**

Mon 30 Oct, 7.30pm

Life in a mega city is both enchanting and problematic. Danish architect and Professor Jan Gehl documents how modern cities repel human interaction. In *The Human Scale* he argues that we can build cities in a way that takes the human need for inclusion and intimacy into account.

Followed by post-show discussion with architect and Professor Peter Clegg, and Marion Milne, Bath-based Emmy-nominated Director and film maker.

Event kindly supported by Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios

## SPECIAL EVENT

### **Robin Hood Gardens Remembered**

Fri 3 Nov, 6.30pm-8pm

An evening considering the much debated demolition of Alison and Peter Smithsons' Robin Hood Gardens in London; a social housing offering scheduled for demolition. How will Robin Hood Gardens be remembered once it's gone? For further details about this event please see [edgearts.org](http://edgearts.org)

## SYMPOSIUM

### **Alison and Peter Smithson: Ideas, Impact, Architecture**

Sat 4 Nov, 10.30am-5pm

Featuring leading international architects, artists and thinkers this symposium investigates the legacy and impact of British architectural pioneers Alison and Peter Smithson across urbanism, habitation and education. Speakers include Simon Smithson and Peter Salter (2017 RIBA award winner and project architect for A+PS), Assemble, Christine Boyer, David Turnbull, Keith Bradley, Juliet Bidgood, Dr Amy Frost (Bath Preservation Trust) and more. This event is designed to appeal to audiences with a specialist or broad interest. For the full symposium programme and schedule see [edgearts.org](http://edgearts.org). £45 (including lunch and refreshments)

Event kindly supported by Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios

# EXHIBITION GUIDE



# PARALLEL (OF LIFE AND) ARCHITECTURE

THE IDEAS AND IMPACT OF  
ALISON AND PETER SMITHSON



Supported using public funding by  
**ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND**



**THE ANDREW  
BROWNSWORD  
GALLERIES**

Fri 22 Sep – Sat 4 Nov

*Parallel (of Life and) Architecture* invites three ‘duos’ of architects, artists and designers to respond to the legacy of Alison and Peter Smithson (A+PS), their relationship with the avant-garde and architecture as a ‘direct result of a way of life.’

Echoing the methods and collaborative processes during their breakthrough phase as architects in 1950s Britain, the resulting commissions offer insight into their research and creative practice. Assemble & Simon Terrill, Warren & Mosley, The Decorators & GOIG each take key developments in the Smithsons’ oeuvre as creative departure points including: calculations for collective planning (*Scales of association* 1954); temporary structures (*Patio and Pavilion* 1956); and historiographical approaches (*Urban Decoration*, Milan Triennale 1968).

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Seen collectively the exhibition highlights the Smithsons’ impact and lasting relevance as radical thinkers. Though concerned with how we lived then, their ideas continue to influence how we live now and undoubtedly will in the future.

The exhibition’s title is taken from the ground-breaking exhibition *Parallel of Life and Art*, staged in 1953 at the ICA, London by the Smithsons, artist photographer Nigel Henderson and sculptor Eduardo Paolozzi.



### **Alison Smithson (1928-1993) Peter Smithson (1923-2003)**

Peter Smithson was born in Stockton-On-Tees. He studied architecture at Durham University but with the advent of WW2, joined the army as an engineer. He met Alison Gill when he returned to University after the war when they both completed their architecture degrees. After initially working for London County Council on various post-war building projects, they established their own architectural practice in 1950.

### **Concepts, collaborations and exhibitions**

The Smithsons’ vast creative outputs which ranged across architecture, art and literature took place against a backdrop of cultural innovation and experimentation in post-war Britain.

This activity often references The Independent Group who met at the ICA from 1952-5, which comprised of a radical group of young artists, writers and critics. The group worked across art, science and popular culture in new inter-disciplinary collaborative ways, challenging the perceived dominant modernist culture of the time. The IG shaped and disseminated the primary ideas of British pop art and late movements in the 1950’s and 60s.

Alison and Peter Smithson came to be involved in the Independent Group through their collaboration with Nigel Henderson and Eduardo Paolozzi, with whom they proposed the exhibition *Parallel of Life & Art* to the ICA in 1952. Curated by Reyner Banham, the show made reference to a diverse range of diverse and disparate subjects, from mass-produced images, architecture, design and the avant-garde art.

### **Brutalism and architectural developments**

Alison and Peter Smithson’s Hunstanton School in Norfolk (1947-54), is the first building that was identified as heralding a new style which critic Reyner Banham described as ‘New Brutalism’. The etymology of ‘Brutalism’ is traced to the French *béton-brut* – ‘raw concrete’. The Smithsons’ Brutalist style was characterized by a focus on low cost materials of a modular design with consideration for their inhabitants and facilitation of communities.

Le Corbusier’s aesthetic as seen in *Unité d’Habitation* in Marseille, 1952, clearly influenced the Smithsons’ approach. A particular characteristic is the notion of designing the internal ‘street’, which informed Smithson’s “streets-in-the-sky” so characteristic of social housing projects in the 1960s and 70s.

Following The Hunstanton school was The Economist Building (1959-64), the Garden Building at St Hilda’s College in Oxford (1967-70), and finally Robin Hood Gardens (1966-72). Robin Hood Gardens was the Smithsons’ first opportunity to put their ideas for a new type of social housing into practice. They were driven to facilitate social interaction and reduce, the ill-effects of an increasingly motorized world, yet the development was quickly subject to vandalism, with many living in poverty.

### **The Smithsons and the University of Bath**

Alison and Peter Smithson designed many buildings on the University of Bath campus. They admired the original 1960’s design of the University of Bath by RMJM Architects and saw their additions as ‘mat-building’, stating that the campus was like a fabric laying on the sloping landscape of the hillside.

The Smithsons’ designs include: *Amenity Building* (6 West South) 1978-85, *The Arts Theatre* now *Edge Theatre* 1980-90, the entrance to *University Hall*, 1983, and *The Department of Architecture and Civil Engineering building* (6 East ) 1980-88, was designed to carry students arriving on campus up to its heart on the Parade.

### **The Smithsons and Bath, Walks within the Walls**

During the 1960s-70s Bath was a city experiencing immense change through the large-scale demolition of its historic architecture. Entire streets of 18th and early 19th century architecture were destroyed during a period that became known as the Sack of Bath. In the middle of this systematic demolition Peter Smithson undertook a series of walks around Bath in 1966 exploring the city and capturing its qualities through photographs. This exercise initiated the Smithsons documentation of architectural aspects of the city, streetscape and spaces that inspired and influenced their developing architectural ideas. A+PS understood the importance of looking after and learning from the city’s historic architecture, seeing Bath not as a place frozen in time, but as a living breathing space. Losing Bath’s historic buildings risked the loss of the architectural lessons they could teach in terms of form, materials, planning and landscape. To highlight this and support the growing campaign to stop demolition in the city Peter Smithson compiled his earliest photos and published *Bath: Walks Within the Walls* in 1969 in *Architectural Design* magazine.

### **Timeline**

#### **1947–54**

Hunstanton School in Norfolk

#### **1949**

Alison and Peter Smithson marry

#### **1950**

A+PS established own architectural practice

#### **1953**

*Parallel of Life and Art*, ICA in 1952

#### **1953**

*Hierarchy of Association* 1954

#### **1956**

This is tomorrow exhibition at the ICA, including *Patio and Pavillion*

#### **1966-72**

Robin Hood Gardens

#### **1968**

XIVth Milan Triennale, Transformation of the city

#### **1969**

Bath: Walks within the Walls produced

#### **1980-88**

6 East, University of Bath

Associated Exhibition: Please visit *Past Present, Future: Bath and the Smithsons* at the Museum of Bath Architecture until 26 November 2017. This original and fascinating exhibition brings together models of University of Bath and further showcases how Bath inspired the work of Alison and Peter Smithson.