

# CONCERNING ARCHIGRAM . . .

edited by Dennis Crompton

WE HAVE CHOSEN TO BY PASS  
THE DECAYING BAUHAUS IMAGE  
WHICH IS AN INSULT TO  
FUNCTIONALISM

THINKS... WE ARE IN PURSUIT OF  
AN IDEA, A NEW VERNACULAR,  
SOMETHING TO STAND ALONGSIDE  
THE SPACE CAPSULES, COMPUTERS  
AND THROW-AWAY PACKAGES OF  
AN ATOMIC/ELECTRONIC AGE

GREAT!



## MORE AND MORE

ALMOST WITHOUT REALISING IT, WE HAVE ABSORBED INTO OUR LIVES THE FIRST GENERATION OF EXPENDABLES.....FOODSAGS, PAPER TISSUES, POLYTHENE WRAPPERS, MALLPENS, E.P.'S..... SO MANY THINGS ABOUT WHICH WE DON'T HAVE TO THINK. WE THROW THEM AWAY ALMOST AS SOON AS WE ACQUIRE THEM.

ALSO WITH US ARE THE ITEMS THAT ARE BIGGER AND LAST LONGER, BUT ARE NEVERTHELESS PLANNED FOR OBSOLESCENCE.....THE MOTOR CAR.....AND ITS UNIT-BUILT GARAGE.

NOW THE SECOND GENERATION IS UPON US - PAPER FURNITURE IS A REALITY IN THE 'STATES, PAPER SHEETS ARE A REALITY IN BRITISH HOSPITAL BEDS, THE LONDON COUNTY COUNCIL IS PUTTING UP LIMITED-LIFE-SPAN HOUSES.

## THROUGH AND THROUGH

EVERY LEVEL OF SOCIETY AND WITH EVERY LEVEL OF COMMODITY, THE UNCHANGING SCENE IS BEING REPLACED BY THE INCREASE IN CHANGE OF OUR USER-HABITS - AND THEREBY, EVENTUALLY, OUR USER-HABITATS.

WE ARE BECOMING MUCH MORE USED TO THE IDEA OF CHANGING A PIECE OF CLOTHING YEAR-BY- YEAR, RATHER THAN EXPECT TO HANG ON TO IT FOR SEVERAL YEARS. SIMILARLY, THE IDEA OF KEEPING A PIECE OF FURNITURE LONG ENOUGH TO BE ABLE TO HAND IT ON TO OUR CHILDREN IS BECOMING INCREASINGLY RIDICULOUS. WE SHOULD NOT BE SURPRISED IF SUCH ARTICLES WEAR OUT WITHIN THEIR 'WELCOME-LIFE' SPAN, RATHER THAN THEIR TRADITIONAL LIFE-SPAN.

THE ATTITUDE OF MIND THAT ACCEPTS SUCH A SITUATION IS CREEPING INTO OUR SOCIETY AT ABOUT THE RATE THAT EXPENDABLE GOODS BECOME AVAILABLE. WE MUST RECOGNISE THIS AS A HEALTHY AND ALTOGETHER POSITIVE SIGN. IT IS THE PRODUCT OF A SOPHISTICATED CONSUMER SOCIETY, RATHER THAN A STAGNANT (AND IN THE END, DECLINING) SOCIETY.

OUR COLLECTIVE MENTAL BLOCKAGE OCCURS BETWEEN THE LAND OF THE SMALL-SCALE CONSUMER- PRODUCTS. AND THE OBJECTS WHICH MAKE UP OUR ENVIRONMENT. PERHAPS IT WILL NOT BE UNTIL SUCH THINGS AS HOUSING, AMENITY-PLACE AND WORKPLACE BECOME RECOGNISED AS CONSUMER PRODUCTS THAT CAN BE 'BOUGHT OFF THE FEO' - WITH ALL THAT THIS IMPLIES IN TERMS OF EXPENDABILITY (FORMGET), INDUSTRIALISATION, UP-TO-DATE-NESS, CONSUMER-CHOICE, AND BASIC PRODUCT-DESIGN - THAT WE CAN BEGIN TO MAKE AN ENVIRONMENT THAT IS REALLY PART OF A DEVELOPING HUMAN CULTURE.

WHY IS THERE AN INDEFINABLE RESISTANCE TO PLANNED OBSOLESCENCE FOR A KITCHEN, WHICH IN TWELVE YEARS WILL BE HIGHLY INEFFICIENT (BY THE STANDARDS OF THE DAY) AND IN TWENTY YEARS WILL BE INTOLERABLE, YET THERE ARE NO QUARMS ABOUT FOUR YEARS OBSOLESCENCE FOR CARS.

THE IDEA OF AN EXPENDABLE ENVIRONMENT IS STILL SOMEHOW REGARDED AS AKIN TO ANARCHY..... AS IF, IN ORDER TO MAKE IT WORK, WE WOULD BULLDOZE WESTMINSTER ABBEY.....

## WE SHALL NOT BULLDOZE WESTMINSTER ABBEY

ADDED TO THIS, THE IDEA OF A NON-PERMANENT BUILDING HAS OVERTONES OF ECONOMY, AUSTERITY, ECONOMY.ARCHITECTS ARE THE FIRST TO BELIEVE THE GREAT POTENTIAL OF EXPENDABILITY AS THE BUILT REFLECTION OF THE SECOND HALF OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY. MOST OF THE BUILDINGS THAT EXIST THAT ARE TECHNICALLY EXPENDABLE, HAVE THE FACT SKILLFULLY HIDDEN.....THEY MASQUERADE AS PERMANENT BUILDINGS - MONUMENTS TO THE PAST.

ON THE VISUAL PAGES WE SHOW (2) THE SELL-OUT TO THE PAST OF OUR PRESENT SHOWING OF 'POP' EXPENDABLE BUILDINGS.....BUT AGAINST THE REAL ATTEMPTS TO DO SOMETHING MORE.....BY B.FULLER AND OTHERS.

(3) FEATURES THE BASIC COMPONENT AND FORMAL INVESTIGATIONS THAT ARE FORMING THE EARLY HISTORICAL PERIOD FOR EXPENDABILITY.

(4) IS A COLLECTION OF PROJECTS WHICH BEGIN TO EXTEND THE RANGE OF EXPENDABLE ARCHITECTURE BEYOND THE SINGLE CELL IN THE SINGLE SITUATION.

(5) ATTEMPTS A SUMMING-UP WITH OUR BASIC MESSAGE.....THAT THE HOME, THE WHOLE CITY, AND THE FROZEN PEA PACK ARE ALL THE SAME.....

1 DISCUSSION

FOLLOWED BY 6 LIVING CITY IN RETROSPECT

ON OTHER PAGES: 2 PROBLEM 3 GROUNDWORK  
4 PROJECTS 5 ACCEPTANCE



distinctions between the extant and the possible. Mainstream modernism had boasted of being technologically determined, yet declined to respond to the catalogue of technological achievements of the decade or so leading up to the launch of *Archigram*—including the bomb (acquired by Britain 1952), electronic computers, television, and manned space flight (1961). *Archigram* no. 4, 1964, returned to science fiction and comic book sources similar to those used by the Independent Group (figure 1.31). A strong factual thread ran through British boys' comics of the 1950s (girls' comics tended to revolve around photo stories), sincerely attempting to predict and inform youthful readers about short-hop air transportation and space travel. An almost postmodern quality pervaded the scenography of the comic strips, and the optimism of the new Elizabethan age pulled the future toward the near horizon.<sup>120</sup>

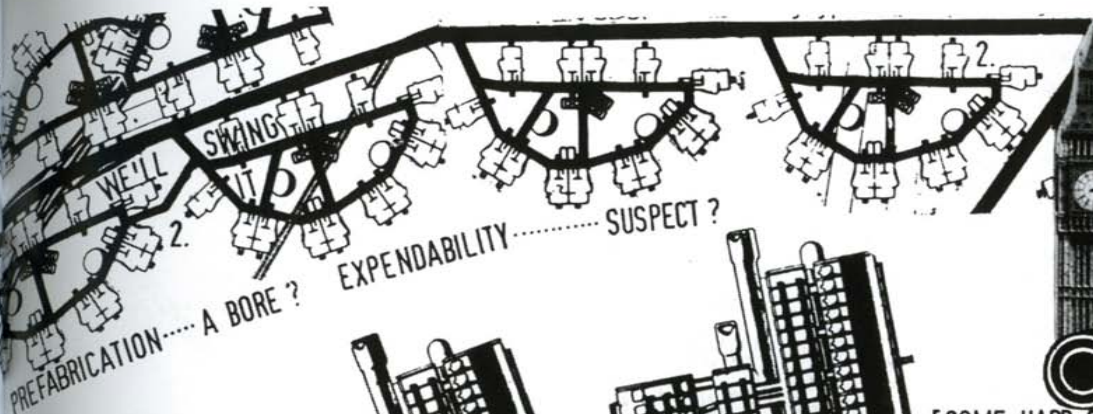
In 1955 Richard Hamilton opened his ICA show "Man, Machine and Motion," containing more than two hundred photographs and copies of drawings illustrating devices that had allowed humans to conquer land, sea, air, and space.<sup>121</sup> A decade later and *Archigram* would be drawing *architecture* that did the same jobs: a Walking City (figure 1.32), an Underwater City (figure 1.33), an Instant City borne by airships (figures 4.1, 4.39), and a Living Pod (figure 3.5) that brought the hermetic environmental conditioning of the Apollo missions back to Earth.<sup>122</sup> It was wayward, it was "boys' stuff," excited by implements, noises, and frontiers, but it had a rationale. *Archigram* projects demonstrated that architecture was an escape hatch from environmental conditions, not an internment within them. Here was the architecture of rescue, partly inspired by the tents and field hospitals of humanitarian relief efforts; Walking City, or a less fanciful version of it, might one day deliver a community of United Nations administrators to a crisis area within days.<sup>123</sup> Humanity stood shoulder to shoulder, as in 1950s comics,<sup>124</sup> or like the Allies in the 1940s. The vision was touched with mythic heroism. Indeed, one commentator has concluded that the architect is the comic strip hero of *Archigram* no. 4.<sup>125</sup>



1.31 Warren Chalk, typical page from *Archigram* no. 4, 1964: architectural form is culled from sci-fi comics and *Archigram*'s own doodles, disrupting "the 'straight-up-and-down' formal vacuum" of contemporary British architecture. Appropriate to its message, it was with issue no. 4 that *Archigram* really took off, selling about one thousand copies and igniting architectural "zoom."



← THE CRANES HANDLE - ANYTHING FROM GRAND PIANOS, CROCKERY TO GENERAL GOODS SHOPS



IN MANY WAYS THE ESSENCE OF THE CITY IS THE SUPREME COMING TOGETHER OF EVERYTHING OF IT ALL PEOPLE COME AND GO IT'S ALL MOVING THE BITS AND PIECES THAT FORM THE CITY — THEY'RE EXPENDABLE

IT'S ALL **COME GO**

[SOME HARD-CULTURE OBJECTS WILL NEVERTHELESS HAVE A PLACE]

- KEY:
- 1. NOTTINGHAM CRANEWAY SHOPS 1962
  - 2. EXPENDABLE CAR BODY HOUSING 1962
  - 3 (BELOW) 'CITY WITHIN EXISTING TECHNOLOGY' 1963



EVERYTHING COMES TOGETHER ALL CULTURES

BECAUSE THE CENTRE IS EVERYWHERE

THIS SORT OF ENVIRONMENT CAN NEVER BE THE ANSWER → AND IT ISN'T EVEN GOOD TECHNOLOGY

THE CITY IS TIGHT AND FREE

AND ALL THE CITY IS THE CENTRE

IT'S ALL HAPPENING

LIVING CITY

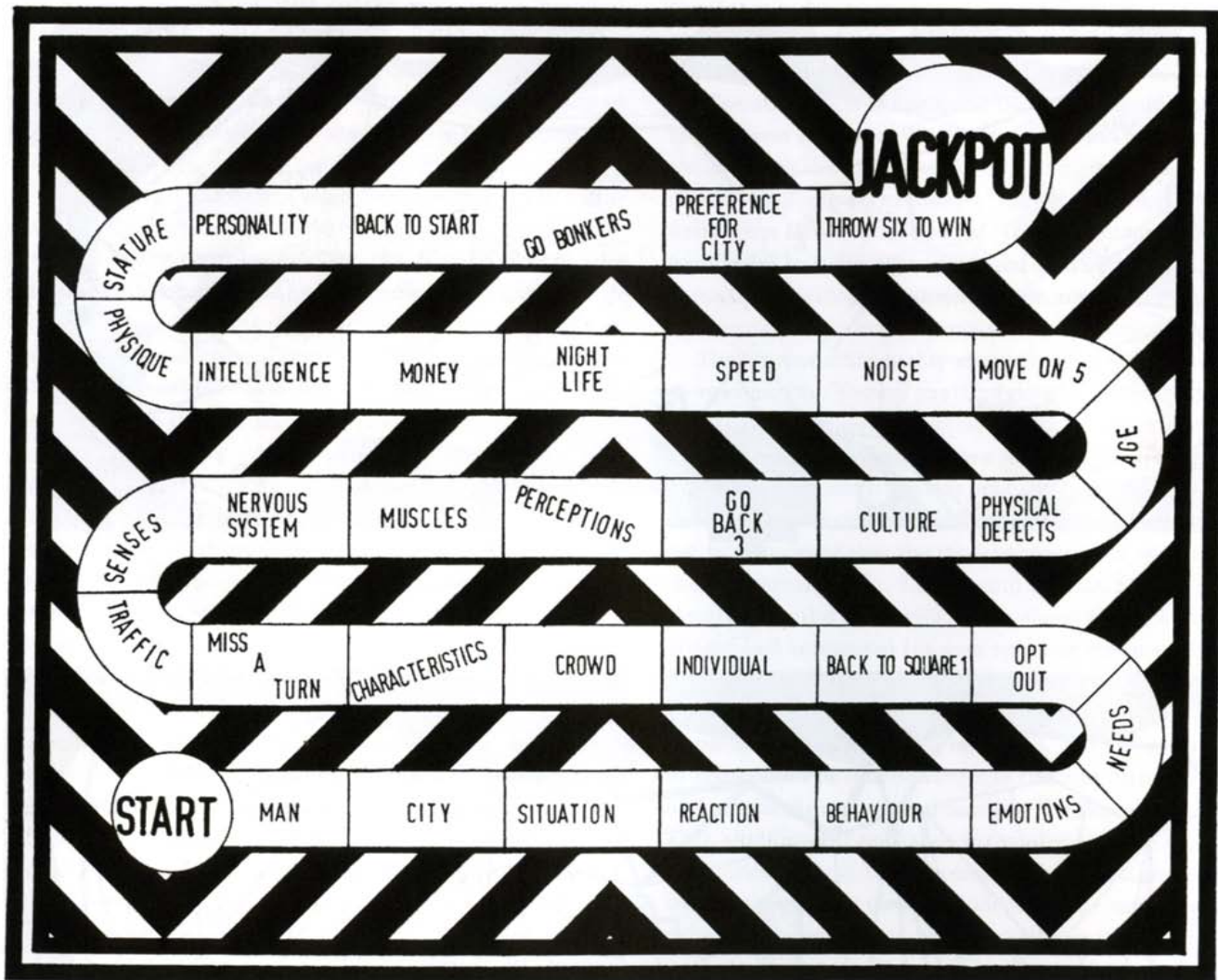
A GRILL

BAR AND GRILL

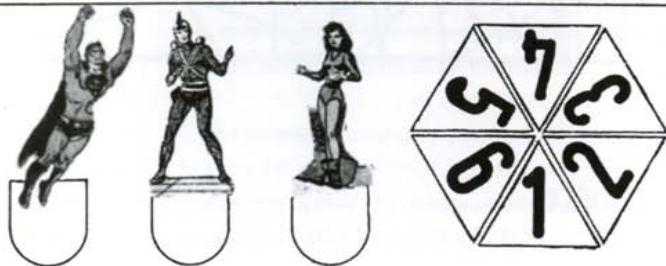


IT'S PEOPLE THAT REALLY

1 BUCK



Trace on a postcard Adam Strange, Superman and Alanna of the planet Rann. (If you do this you will not spoil the magazine.) Colour with your paints or crayons and insert the base of each figure in a slit made in the top of three small corks. Push a pin through the centre of the 'dice' for spinning. The one to spin a six first starts the game.



2.16 Ben Fether, game from "Man" gloop, "Living City," 1963. A natural existentialist, the Living Citizen progresses through the city move by move, matching her or his inner powers to the game of life.



2.19 Warren Chalk, Living City Survival Kit, 1963. The "survival kit" is pop, but too formless to be pop art, looking instead like the contents of a man's London bedsit turned out and put on police display. Supposing this is an architect's survival kit for day-to-day life, he seems less the Olympian figure with command of the city, and more like a man of the city, fragile save for his expendable supplies and emotional sustenance.