

Rob Tufnell presents a retrospective of posters, prints, postcards, journals, jigsaws, records, video and ephemera produced by Art & Language between 1969 and 2017.

In 1968 'Art & Language' was adopted as the nom de guerre a group of artists teaching at Coventry College of Art. The initial group of Terry Atkinson, David Bainbridge, Michael Baldwin and Harold Hurrell had a shared interest in producing what is now understood as Conceptual Art (a movement Mel Ramsden has since characterised as 'Modernism's nervous breakdown'). Their practice, was informed by broad interests including philosophies of science, mathematics and linguistics. They embraced Paul Feyerabend's notion of "epistemological anarchy" to find new ways of producing, presenting and understanding art. They sought to replace Modernism's ambitions of certainty and refinement with confusion and contradiction or a state of 'Pandemonium' (from John Milton's *'Paradise Lost'* (1667)).

In 1969 they published the first of 22 issues of the journal 'Art-Language' with texts by Terry Atkinson, David Bainbridge and Michael Baldwin and others alongside contributions from Dan Graham, Sol Le Witt and Lawrence Weiner. After they were joined in 1970 by Ian Burn and Mel Ramsden the group quickly expanded forming around two nuclei in the small town of Chipping Norton in Oxfordshire, England and in New York. In the following years they were joined by Charles and Sandra Harrison, Graham Howard, Lynn Lemaster, Philip Pilkington, David Rushton and Paul Wood (in England) and Kathryn Bigelow, Michael Corris, Preston Heller, Christine Kozlov and Andrew Menard (in New York).

In 1972 they participated with Joseph Kosuth in Documenta 5, curated by Harold Szeemann for which they produced an installation, *'Index 01'*. This took the form of filing cabinets filled with associates' published writing that sought to clarify shared positions and areas of disagreement. Paul Maenz, their gallerist in Cologne, published a poster designed as an index to the work: *'Alternate Map for Documenta (Based on Citation A)'*. Divergent interests eventually led to the New York-based contingent publishing a new journal, The Fox. The title celebrated pluralism by alluding to Archilochus' 'The fox knows many things, but the hedgehog knows one great thing.' After three issues it was subsumed within its parent publication with Art-Language, Volume 3, Number 4 aka The Fox, Issue 4.

In 1973 Art & Language began working with the musician Mayo Thompson (The Red Crayola/ Red Krayola) occasionally writing oblique and politically charged lyrics and producing sleeve designs for his records. The video *'Nine Gross and Conspicuous Errors'*, 1976 documents an unrehearsed performance following their first collaboration: *'Corrected Slogans'* (1976). Volume 5, Number 2 of

Art-Language (1984) consists of an as yet unperformed libretto for an opera, 'Victorine' with music by Thompson.

Associates of Art & Language also took it upon themselves to initiate exhibition projects in Australia, New Zealand and Yugoslavia whilst others, including the now well-known film director Bigelow, left to pursue other interests. By 1977, this loose and unstable art gang consolidated into a group of three, based in Britain: Michael Baldwin, the art historian Charles Harrison and Mel Ramsden. From their studio near Banbury in rural Oxfordshire Baldwin and Ramsden continue to deconstruct Modernism and challenge hegemonies through writing, drawing and painting and continue to refuse the predetermined role of the artist to act as a "supplier of fuel to an ideological machine." Baldwin has explained the adoption of painting (after pursuing a practice that appeared to want to replace it) by suggesting "it may act as an irritant to a central doctrine."

Major solo exhibitions by Art & Language at public institutions include Museu d'Art Contemporàni de Barcelona (MACBA), Barcelona (2014); Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens, Deurle (2013); Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Zurich (2012); Espoo Museum of Modern Art, (2009); Centro De Arte Contemporáneo (CAC) Málaga (2004); MoMA PS1, New York (1999); ICA, London, UK (1991); the Tate Gallery, London (1985); Musée d'Art Moderne, Toulon (1982) and the Museum of Modern Art, Oxford (1974). Art & Language have participated in numerous significant survey exhibitions, including 'Conceptual Art in Britain: 1964-1979', Tate Britain, London (2016); the Whitney Biennial, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2012); the 50th Venice Biennale (2003); Documenta 10, Kassel (1997), the 5th Biennale of Sydney (1984), Documenta 7, Kassel (1982); 'Kunst in Europa na '68', Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst, Ghent (1980); the 37th Venice Biennale (1976); the 10th Biennale Internationale d'Art, Palais de L'Europe, Menton and 'Projekt '74', Kunsthalle Köln/ Kölnischer Kunstverein (both 1974); Documenta 5, Kassel (1972) and 'Information', Museum of Modern Art, New York (1970). They were short-listed for the Turner Prize in 1986.

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