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Cover image: Rita Duffy, *Soften the Border*, 2017, installation on Blacklion-Belcoo bridge, dimensions variable.. Digital image courtesy of Rita Duffy (all rights reserved).

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“Everything I Learnt About Activism I Learnt in King’s Lynn”: Gustav Metzger’s Formative Years in King’s Lynn

Jonathan P. Watts

Abstract

This article builds on my research and experience as co-curator of *THIRTY QUEENS*, a hybrid exhibition-event, which took place at the contemporary artist-led space LOWER.GREEN, Norwich in 2019, exploring the artist Gustav Metzger’s time in King’s Lynn in the 1950s. King’s Lynn laid the foundations for Metzger’s later fusion of art and activism, and movement from painted or sculpted objects towards event-like works. But it was also in King’s Lynn that Metzger learned how to live, work, and practise as an artist outside of a cosmopolitan centre and was compelled by the imaginative purchase of the historical and the antiquarian. Throughout his time in the town, Metzger scraped a living dealing in furniture, antiques, and books, briefly taking on a shop where, as *Thirty Queens*, he would also organise selling exhibitions. This mixed-economy (not strictly non-commercial) model of artistic production and distribution is an unusual and useful case study to think about British art of the 1950s outside of the capital. With *Thirty Queens*, Metzger was trying to position himself not as peripheral but as an extension of a London-centric British art scene, while providing a platform for regional art and antiquity. Structured around sites of significance, this article presents the first comprehensive account of Metzger’s time in King’s Lynn, and maps his concerns onto those of contemporary artistic and curatorial practices in the region. It demonstrates that *Thirty Queens* provides a lens onto the recent history of British artist-led and alternative art spaces. Drawing together archival research, interviews and oral histories, exhibition histories, and field trips, this article makes use of Mathieu Copeland’s recently published volume of Metzger’s writing and finds particularising, anecdotal detail in Clive Phillpot’s conversations with Gustav Metzger recorded in 1997 for the National Sound Archive. Centring the artist’s voice, this article argues that it is necessary to extend the characterisation of Metzger’s work to include that of artist-dealer, artist-curator, and artist-activist. What emerges, also, is a picture of the artist at work, often in poverty and unwavering in his political convictions.

Authors

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Introduction: Metzger in the Lowlands

The celebrated artist-activist Gustav Metzger made his iconoclastic—and iconic—entry into post-war public life in Britain with his *Recreation of First Public Demonstration of Auto-Destructive Art* on London's South Bank in 1961. First demonstrated a year earlier at Temple Gallery, Sloane Street, film-maker Harold Liversidge's 1963 documentation of a recreation, titled *Auto-Destructive Art: The Activities of G Metzger*, shows Metzger, wearing a military jacket, helmet, and gas mask, painting, flinging and spraying acid onto nylon (Figs. 1 and 2). Set against the backdrop of the City of London, it announces Metzger's focus as an itinerant cosmopolitan artist: the centralised seat of imperial capitalist power. Yet, it was in King's Lynn, in the rural county of Norfolk, where he lived from 1953 to 1959, that Metzger first experimented with what would become the "auto-destructive" technique in his live-work-warehouse studio on St Nicholas Street at the heart of the medieval old town.



Figure 1.

Gustav Metzger, Gustav Metzger demonstrates his "Auto-Destructive Art" technique at the South Bank, London, 3 July 1961. Digital image courtesy of The Estate of Gustav Metzger. Photo: Keystone / Hulton Archive / Getty Images (all rights reserved).

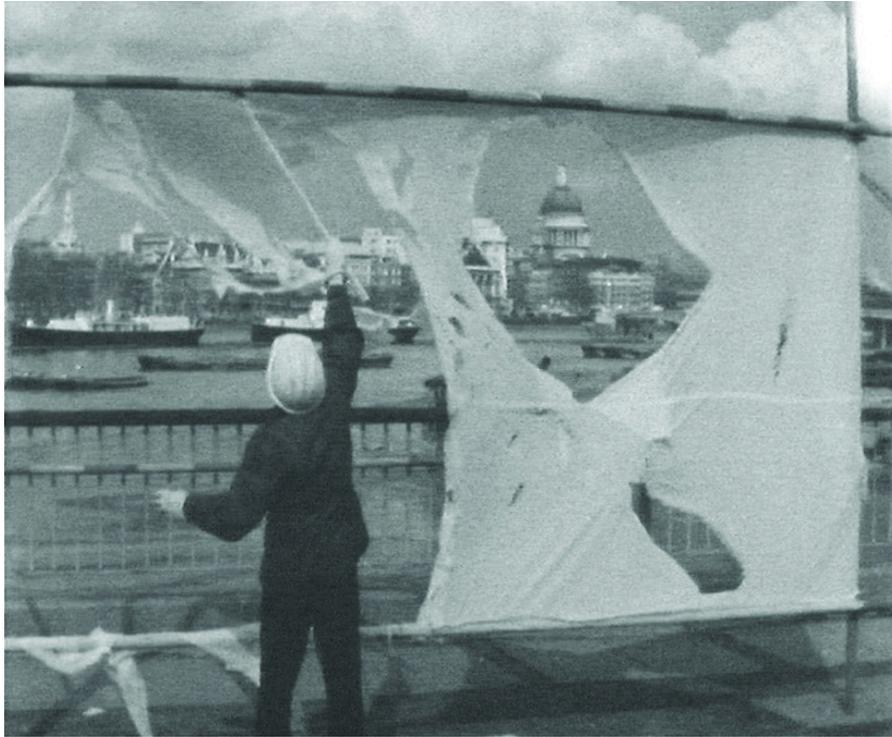


Figure 2.

Gustav Metzger demonstrates his “Auto-Destructive Art” technique, still from Harold Liversidge's film *Auto-Destructive Art: The Activities of G. Metzger*, 1963.

Through his involvement with the local Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) branch, the Committee of 100, and self-organised protests against the redevelopment of medieval wards in the town, Metzger memorably claimed: “Everything I know about activism I learnt in King’s Lynn”.¹ Activism would become central to Metzger’s practice, but there were other lessons learnt in King’s Lynn that will be explored in this article: how to live, work, and practise as an artist outside of a metropolitan centre, as well as the imaginative pull and purchase of the historical and the antiquarian that he found so captivating in this rural Norfolk town.

Metzger relocated to King’s Lynn from London in the summer of 1953 knowing nobody. When he finally left six years later, he claims to have only known a few more people. He first encountered the town when cycling from Norwich to the Midlands. Where the Brecklands opens into the Fens, he passed by a “splendid” medieval town that reminded him of Antwerp—lowlands, by a river, calm—and decided to stay.² Metzger had already begun withdrawing from the London orbit of his charismatic former teacher David Bomberg and was increasingly moving away from painting. Embittered by his marginalisation in contemporary histories of the English avant-garde, Bomberg surrounded himself with a group of mostly former

students who exhibited together as the Borough Bottega. Increasingly, Metzger—who had been the star pupil—felt the Bottega served only Bomberg’s interests and resolved to quit, hoping, however, to remain friends. This wasn’t to be so. Following an exchange of bluntly worded letters, Bomberg severed ties (by withdrawing, Metzger effectively opted out of becoming what was later called the School of London, which included his peers Frank Auerbach and Leon Kossoff).³ Bruised, Metzger spoke of King’s Lynn as a retreat—an opportunity to reconsolidate resources and ideas: “It was a very important time for me,” he later recalled. “I was building up my energy. Separated from London. It did me good.”⁴

After a year, Metzger obtained a lease on St Nicholas House, “a magnificent building”, he told the curator Lynda Morris, “next to the Tuesday Market. It had a 16th-century wooden door and gabled roof. It was in good condition and dry”.⁵ Flanked by handsome commercial buildings, and in Nikolaus Pevsner’s estimation, “[o]ne of the most splendid open spaces in provincial England”, the Tuesday Market Place was where Metzger scraped a living dealing in furniture, antiques, and books.⁶ Although for the first few years in King’s Lynn he ceased to produce art altogether—an anticipation perhaps of the “straitened circumstances” in 1969 that prevented him from undertaking any speaking, singing, or dancing engagements for the remainder of the year, his later call for artists to withdraw their labour in 1974 and the subsequent “Art Strike” of 1977—he began to paint seriously again from 1956 onwards, creating squally, hard-edged works on a mild steel ground before the first auto-destructive experiments.⁷

The year 1956 was a significant one for Metzger. Not only did he begin to paint again but, merely a minute-long walk away from St Nicholas, south of the Tuesday Market Place, he also took on a shop in a broad sweep of Georgian terraces at Queen Street. Here, as well as selling art, antiques, and books, he began hosting, however briefly, selling contemporary art exhibitions. Located at 30 Queen Street, the shop, a mixed-use space, long since redeveloped into flats, became Thirty Queens gallery when it hosted a series of three formal and informal exhibitions, and became a satellite venue for an offsite exhibition organised by Metzger in the fourteenth-century crypt at Clifton House, several doors down at 17 Queen Street.

The first of these formal exhibitions, a group show of recent sculptural work by Eduardo Paolozzi, William Turnbull, and Anthony Hatwell, opened on 19 July 1956, coinciding with the King’s Lynn Festival. *Treasures from East Anglian Churches*, which opened on 27 July 1957, formed part of that year’s festival programme and featured thirty-six church monuments and artefacts collected from around the region that had been damaged, removed, or displaced in the period between the Reformation and the end of the

Commonwealth. Between these two exhibitions, in December 1956, Metzger showed paintings of the obscure local artist and practising witch Monica English. When the *This is Tomorrow* exhibition opened at the Whitechapel Gallery on 9 August 1956, Metzger also collected the event's advertising posters—designed by artists such as Richard Hamilton, Victor Pasmore, and Sarah Jackson in one of twelve participating groups—to display at Thirty Queens for its duration.

Metzger had little artistic context in King's Lynn but his efforts drew in major London-based artists with gallery representation, engaging with the white heat of the post-war avant-garde, while also giving opportunities to regional artists. He also evidently engaged with early modern regional histories—I refer to it as Metzger's antiquarianism—that was no doubt influenced by living in a county densely populated by historic ecclesiastical and commercial architecture. Nowhere is this more evident than in King's Lynn. With Thirty Queens, Metzger was trying to position himself not as peripheral—"out in the sticks" as they say in Norfolk—but as an extension of a London-centric British art scene.

My sustained engagement with this history of the gallery began in 2018 when the curator Nell Croose Myhill and I began planning to restage aspects of the *Treasures from East Anglian Churches* exhibition at LOWER.GREEN, an artist-led space that I ran in Norwich, Norfolk in a former charity shop and a one-time artist studio, from July 2018 to February 2019. Located in a brutalist shopping centre earmarked for contested demolition and redevelopment, the programme of eight exhibitions, as well as talks, events, and a residency, was necessarily of a fixed duration. The *Treasures from East Anglian Churches* exhibition, which we titled *THIRTY QUEENS* in our programme when the exhibition expanded to incorporate talks and events dealing with Metzger's wider activities in King's Lynn, would, fittingly, be the gallery's final exhibition ([Figs. 3](#) and [4](#)).



Figure 3.

THIRTY QUEENS, LOWER.GREEN, February 2019, exterior view. Digital image courtesy of Glen Jamieson (all rights reserved).

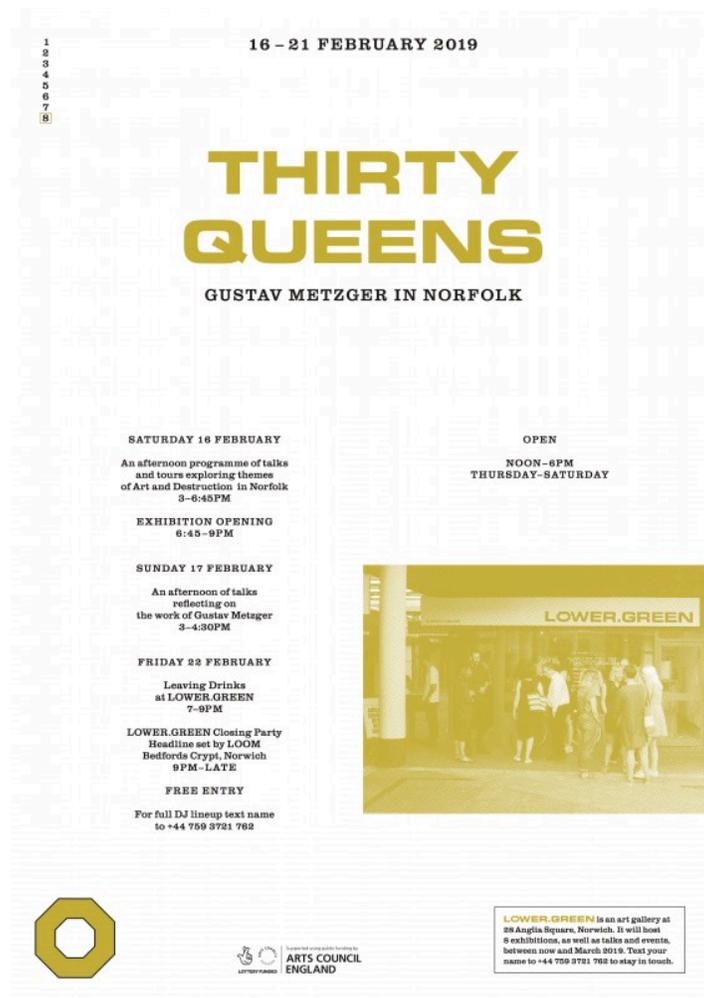


Figure 4. THIRTY QUEENS, LOWER.GREEN, February 2019, exhibition poster. Digital image courtesy of LOWER.GREEN (all rights reserved).

LOWER.GREEN's programme provided exhibition opportunities for Norwich-based and international artists, typically developing and amplifying thematics presented by histories of the region as they interfaced with current concerns of contemporary art. Networked, experimental and engaged with local histories, Metzger's Thirty Queens was an inspiration. While Metzger's own art practice was cross-disciplinary—collapsing activist into dealer, dealer into curator—the site of production, framing, and display of art were fluid and interchangeable too. This mixed-economy model (not strictly non-commercial) of artistic production and distribution is an unusual and useful model to rethink British art of the 1950s, decentring attention from London to consider venues, spaces, and practices of experimental art operating outside of the capital. Metzger's work in King's Lynn spoke to our situation in complex and suggestive ways.

Thirty Queens also provides a lens on to the recent history—a particular interest of ours—of British artist-led and alternative art spaces, not only in terms of curatorial methods but also in terms of alternative economies for art production and display located in Norwich, but still linked to, London, the marketplace, and artist-dealer models. Clearly, this was important to Metzger and, throughout the 1960s and 1970s, he maintained a fiercely antagonistic relation to commercial art galleries. Shortly after his return to London in summer 1959, he began frequenting the artist Brian Robins' basement cafe at 14 Monmouth Street, popular with artists and writers, where he exhibited paintings produced in King's Lynn. Later, he began collaborating with artists David Medalla and Marcello Salvadori, curator Paul Keeler, and critic Guy Brett to establish the Centre for Advanced Creative Study, based in Medalla and Keeler's South Kensington apartment. Its magazine, *Signals Newsbulletin*, lent its name to the experimental gallery space, Signals, opened by the group in 1964 at Wigmore Street.

When Metzger returned to Norfolk for a sustained period of time in 2005 to select the annual EASTinternational exhibition on Lynda Morris' invitation at the Norwich Gallery, his presence in King's Lynn had become somewhat of a myth, circulating among the region's contemporary art community—compelling and strange. What did this figure, central to 1960s London counterculture, *do* in the sleepy medieval fishing town? In this regard, other contemporary artists and cultural figures were pulled to this part of Eastern England, including the Parisian sound poet Henri Chopin—a sometime collaborator with Metzger—who spent his latter years in the Norfolk market town of Dereham and the Dutch curator Rudi Fuchs—former director of the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven and artistic director of *documenta 7*, among other things—who spent his vacations a mere ten miles north in Fakenham.

Lynda Morris' inspirational attitude of looking east, east away from London, over the English channel, into the Continent, from an east of England position, what she has called “international provincialism”, meant that Fuchs had also been invited to select EASTinternational.⁸ Metzger, recalling his time in King's Lynn, told Morris that he'd relocated there:

To get away from London but not too far. Far enough to be in another world but I could take the train and be in central London in a couple of hours to visit galleries and friends, and after a couple of days to go back to King's Lynn.⁹

The train passed through Cambridge where he had started his art studies in 1945; these tracks connected his past life with his present one.¹⁰

Metzger cultivated a position for himself at the edge. He didn't feel like socialising. "I had difficulty finding work. I was an outsider," he said, "I picked peas in the field and I swept up. People would get to know me vaguely, being on the Tuesday Market, once I started dealing. I had a stall with my bits and pieces." Speaking in 2005 for the *EASTinternational Catalogue*, Metzger continued: "The paintings from that time are in storage and the drawings. One day they will be exhibited." ¹¹

In fact, they had already been exhibited. In June 1960, upon Metzger's return to London, they were shown at Temple Gallery (alongside the first lecture/demonstration of auto-destructive art) but subsequently stored away in 1965 above a garage at the home of a relative in North London, where they were kept until 2010. Among those drawings exhibited in the documenta-Halle at *DOCUMENTA (13)* in 2012 as part of *Too Extreme: A Selection of Drawings by Gustav Metzger Made from 1945 to 1959/60* were paintings on steel completed just before the first auto-destructive experiments. ¹² Together with Metzger's *Re-Creation of the First Public Demonstration of Auto-Destructive Art* (1960), these were exhibited again at Haus der Kunst, Munich, in 2015. That same year, *Gustav Metzger: Towards Auto-Destructive Art 1950-1962* opened at Tate Britain, which featured *Re-Creation of the First Public Demonstration of Auto-Destructive Art* alongside steel paintings, documents of earlier cardboard reliefs, manifestos, and work produced in King's Lynn. In 2011, the curator and writer Mathieu Copeland restaged Metzger's gesture of re-presenting *This is Tomorrow* posters by re-presenting facsimiles of the original poster series in the window of David Roberts Art Foundation, London and later on the street side at Circuit Lausanne in 2013. In June 2019, curator Elizabeth Fisher opened *Destroy, and You Create: Gustav Metzger in King's Lynn* at the Fermoy Gallery and Red Barn as part of the King's Lynn Festival. Much of the work shown there was treated and made exhibition-ready at Tate prior to its 2015 exhibition.

Our display at LOWER.GREEN in February 2019 was intentionally slight, featuring one object—a thirteenth-century stone corbel selected by Metzger for *Treasures from East Anglian Churches*—and documents—including the original exhibition catalogue, an early edition of his first auto-destructive manifesto reproduced in *dé-collage* no. 6, July 1967, a special "Auto Destructive" art issue, and John Cox's 1959 sequence of photographs of Metzger in his studio at St Nicholas House, reproduced in the *Art and Artists* "Auto-Destructive" issue, edited in 1966 by the art critic Mario Amaya (Fig. 5).



Figure 5.

THIRTY QUEENS, LOWER.GREEN, February 2019, installation view. Digital image courtesy of Glen Jamieson (all rights reserved).

Metzger preferred actions and performances to objects (an approach that informed his selection of works for *EASTinternational* in 2005, famously billed as “the art exhibition without the art”). Our condensed display, though not secondary, was an accompaniment to two days of events in the gallery. This included an afternoon of talks and tours exploring themes of art and destruction in Norfolk, including a presentation of research that traced the objects from *Treasures from East Anglian Churches*, a walking tour led by Professor Sandy Heslop of iconoclasm in three Norwich churches, and a presentation by Dr Sarah Lowndes on artist-led spaces, meanwhile use, and regeneration. The following afternoon, Mathieu Copeland, then editing *Gustav Metzger: Writings*, shared his experience of working with Metzger’s prose and Lynda Morris gave an illustrated talk about her time working with Metzger as part of *EASTinternational*. Afterwards, Copeland and Morris joined in conversation. Copeland’s book, published by JPR Ringier in October 2019, is a major achievement in Metzger scholarship.¹³ Documents relating to Metzger’s activity in King’s Lynn, in particular the catalogue for *Treasures from East Anglian Churches*, were shared with us by Copeland in the research process of our exhibition. Now reproduced, I draw on various articles in Copeland’s edited volume throughout this article.

Studio, Quarters, Storehouse, Gallery: St Nicholas House and 30 Queen Street

A number of buildings and sites around the medieval centre of King's Lynn—most of which remain today—had significance for Metzger: St Nicholas House, Tuesday Market Place, 30 Queen Street, and 26 Pilot Street in the North End (Figs. 6, 7, 8, and 9). These became more or less significant at different times throughout his six-year stay in the town. St Nicholas House, however, was a constant. In spring 1954, shortly after his arrival the previous summer, he took on a six-year lease of the property, which expired a year after he'd returned to London. Across the road, Metzger ran a stall on the Tuesday Market Place on and off from around 1954, except for a brief hiatus in 1956—for around six months perhaps—when he opened shop at 30 Queen Street (occasionally he would also trade at Market Hill in Cambridge on Saturdays).



Figure 6.

St Nicholas House, King's Lynn, March 2021. Digital image courtesy of Glen Jamieson (all rights reserved).



Figure 7. Tuesday Market Place, King's Lynn, March 2021. Digital image courtesy of Glen Jamieson (all rights reserved).



Figure 8.

30 Queen Street, King's Lynn, March 2021. Digital image courtesy of Glen Jamieson (all rights reserved).



Figure 9.

26 Pilot Street, King's Lynn, March 2021. Digital image courtesy of Glen Jamieson (all rights reserved).

Later, in the midst of protests against the destructive redevelopment of the North End, Metzger purchased a house, which, like St Nicholas, he kept for a short period after he returned to London. Briefly between London and King's Lynn, ultimately he let both properties go when he committed to remaining in the capital. A press photograph for the *Lynn News and Advertiser* places Metzger on Pilot Street discussing redevelopment plans with the president of the Chamber of Commerce and John Cox's photographic series of 1959 shows Metzger, who by this time had returned to London, conducting experiments with acid on nylon inside his studio at St Nicholas House ([Figs. 10](#) and [11](#)).



Figure 10.

Gustav Metzger, Gustav Metzger meets the president of the Chamber of Trade outside 26 Pilot Street, 1958, from *Lynn News and Advertiser*, 1958. Digital image courtesy of Lynn News (all rights reserved).

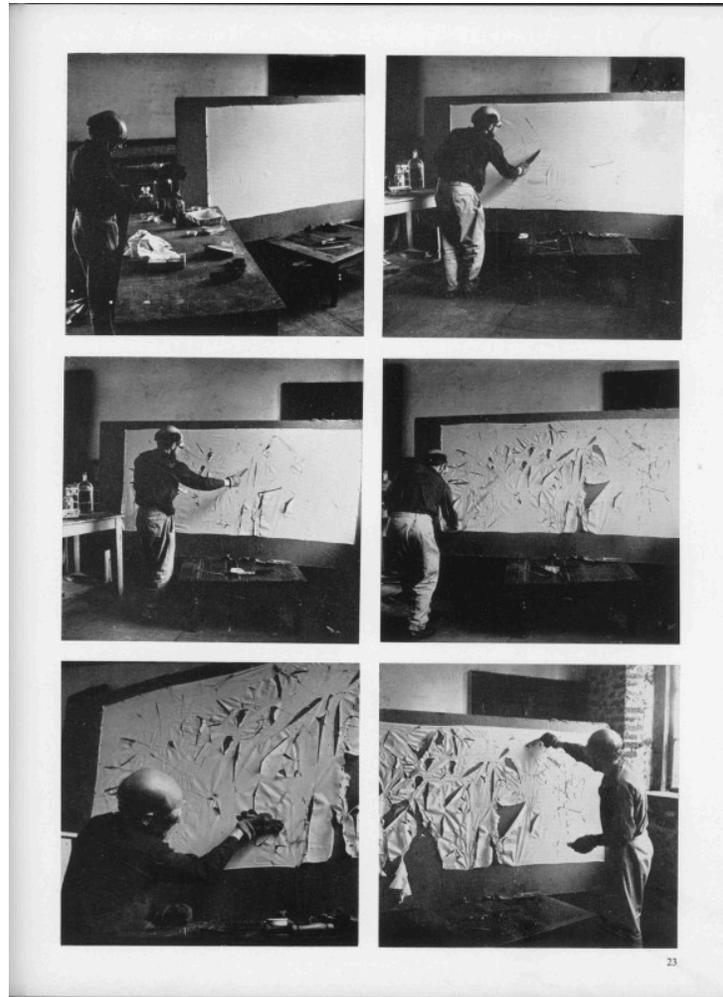


Figure 11.

Gustav Metzger, Gustav Metzger in his studio at St Nicholas House, from "Auto-Destructive", Mario Amaya, ed., *Art and Artists* 1, no. 5, London, August 1966 (London: Hansom Books, 1966). Digital image courtesy of The estate of Gustav Metzger / Photograph: John Cox, 1959 / Hansom Books (all rights reserved).

In the years prior to King's Lynn, Metzger had lived with the support of a Haendler Trust grant in 1946, which he had gained with the help of David Bomberg (extended later on the recommendation of Frank Dobson). When in Antwerp, he received a grant from the Jewish community to study, which enabled him to travel extensively on his stateless passport, and on his return he received another Haendler Trust grant (engineered through Bomberg, with the help of Jacob Epstein). When this last grant ceased in 1951, he began the first of many casual labouring jobs on building sites and on the land alongside painting. It was on the land, picking peas, that Metzger first found work on arrival in King's Lynn. Much like today, in the summer, such work—hard and poorly paid—was readily available. When winter came, opportunities to work were few and far between. "It was difficult," Metzger

recalls. "I had no money. I found it hard to find work. Any work." In the early part of 1954, he found a full-time day job in the labour exchange as a maintenance man in a town centre fashion shop:

The first thing I had to do was clean the entrance. Glass ... I had to remove the dog droppings first thing. Then I would have to go inside, switch on the lights. It wasn't difficult. Do some cleaning ... Maybe I had the afternoons off. ¹⁴

At some point in spring 1954, Metzger noticed a large, old property standing vacant on St Nicholas Street. In the sixteenth century, many houses along this street, known then as Woolmarket, contained shops used by the overflow of the Tuesday Market. Dwellings were mixed with both storage and shop space. Back then, the river coursed more closely to the west of the marketplace, around the docks. A "turnkey" at the mouth of the River Ouse, goods passed in, through, and out of King's Lynn into the Midlands and across the English Channel to Norway and Spain, a legacy of which are the abundance of warehouses in the town dating right back to the late medieval period. "Indeed," Vanessa Parker writes in *The Making of King's Lynn*, "it must be unique for a town to have preserved so much visual evidence of its past commercial activity." ¹⁵ Constructed at this time, and reworked in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the property Metzger had seen, known as St Nicholas House, would have belonged to a wealthy merchant or a prosperous retailer. ¹⁶

Metzger convinced the estate agents to put him in touch with the current owner, an elderly solicitor based in Golden Square, London. After a year of negotiations, he was granted the lease and had even been allowed to move in before completion, paying rent of £1 per week. ¹⁷ "The owner was clever," Metzger recalls, "and thought it is better someone is in there if things go wrong." The landlord, he continues, "was concerned with maintaining the heritage of the building. The antiquity. He thought an artist was an ideal tenant." ¹⁸ This is a striking example of a mixed-use live-work-storage space that mutually benefited both the landlord and the artist, in this instance framed as aesthetic connoisseur, which Metzger was happy to leverage (Fig. 12).

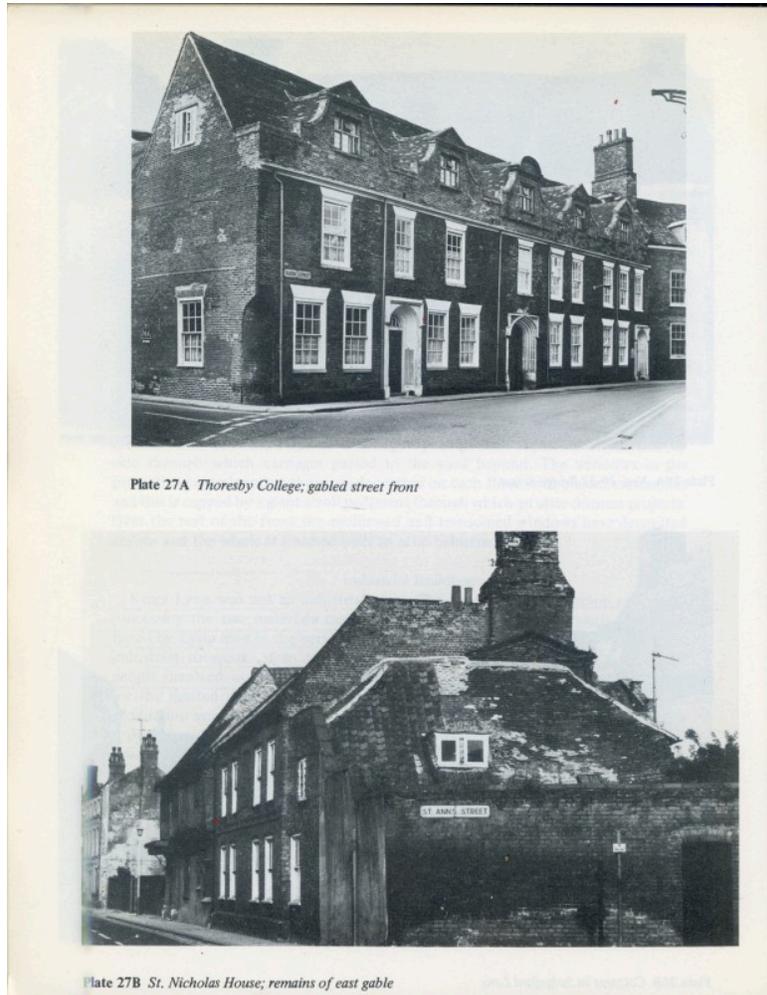


Figure 12.

View of St Nicholas House ca. 1970, shortly before redevelopment, from Vanessa Parker, *The Making of Kings Lynn: Secular Buildings from the 11th to the 17th Centuries* (London: Phillimore, 1971). Digital image courtesy of Vanessa Parker / Phillimore (all rights reserved).

Today, 11 St Nicholas Street, as it is known, has been converted into flats. Following extensive restorations in 1972, it was amalgamated with the neighbouring building as the Tudor Rose Hotel, at around the time 9 St Nicholas Street was demolished. Pevsner pays particular attention to the “excellent traceried door. It has five vertical panels with early Perp tracery patterns”. The internal hall, he notes, has an early sixteenth-century stack with double-roll moulded stone jambs to the fireplace.¹⁹ Metzger recognised its potential:

One of the rooms I decided would be ideal for a studio. There was one window. The rest were walls. It looked on to the vicarage of the garden in front. Across I could see St Nicholas. A beautiful small medieval church. It didn't frighten me. It was very modest ... Next door I arranged my sleeping room, which was smaller. Beyond that was an enormous room with a timber roof going back hundreds of years where I stored my things.²⁰

Across the road, adjoining at the north, was the Tuesday Market Place, where, soon after moving in he decided to become—like the owners identified by Vanessa Parker in *The Making of King's Lynn* generations before—a dealer. Unlike his sixteenth- and seventeenth-century predecessors, however, Metzger would begin dealing in junk, not rich materials. “I specialised in nothing,” Metzger recalls. “I would go to the auction and buy a box for five shillings and wheel it into my store through the door on a wheelbarrow.”²¹ Metzger would open the box, clean up the items as required, then cart them back out across the road in a wheelbarrow to his stall where everything and anything was for sale.

Week by week he became more knowledgeable of the value of things. “I wasn't particularly good at it,” he admits, “I would sell books, pictures. Sometimes I would bid on things. I would work on the principle of doubling ... I was after 100 per cent profit.”²² To his surprise, people who saw him buy the boxes for 5 shillings at auction came to his stall to buy stuff, even though they knew it was marked up. Metzger lived a lean existence. He was a poor artist-dealer living in the remains of a rich merchant's house, who nonetheless—like some Baudelairian ragpicker—learnt the machinations of capitalist economy:

I didn't need much money. I didn't have much money. In all those years I barely managed to exist. You travel further to buy. You invest money. I had no money. I was gaining practical experience of capitalism in a way. Low scale. Lower than the proletariat in terms of the income. If I had knowledge I would have done well but I had none.²³

Finally, in spring 1956, it became untenable. St Nicholas House, which had been taken on, after all, as a studio space, was not being used for art production, and all his spare time and money went into hustling to stay afloat. Metzger was merely surviving.

Then his luck changed. A regular customer at the Tuesday Market—“female, sensitive, middle-class”—who was aware of Metzger’s finances, offered to introduce him to a dealer in surplus goods who’d recently purchased the estate of another bankrupted dealer.²⁴ Together they travelled to a vast storehouse in the countryside where they struck a deal: Metzger would purchase it all for less than £100 and pay back the debt on a monthly basis at an agreeable rate. The following weekend two lorries arrived with the stock at St Nicholas House where it was carted upstairs into storage before resale. “That saved me,” he recalls, “I could see now I could think of being an artist. I didn’t have to go out buying every week.”²⁵ The stock lasted Metzger for his remaining time in King’s Lynn—in fact, he even left stuff behind when he departed. This deal changed Metzger’s fortunes, effectively enabling him to be an artist again. With time and relative stability, he began painting in earnest, first abstracted images of an old table on reused canvases and old boards, drawings on paper, later exhibited at Temple Gallery, and then increasingly hard-edged abstractions applied with a palette knife onto small pre-cut mild steel sheets.

When buyers began going directly to St Nicholas House, Metzger decided to take on a shop. A vacant property in Queen Street—described by Pevsner as “one of the most satisfying Georgian promenades in England”²⁶—was available, but required renovation. Taking an initial six-month lease at a reduced rate, his intention was to formally establish an antique shop on a more permanent basis. At this point, he imagined a longer-term future for himself in the town. With the help of his girlfriend, he invested time, energy, and money into a property that ultimately proved beyond his means. “The shop never worked!” Metzger exclaims. “It was never opened. It was a failure. An attempt. I gave up the lease after six months. I said I didn’t want to renew it. I spent too much time decorating it and I gave it up.”²⁷ In the interim, however, the premises were used to stage a number of exhibitions and displays: posters from *This is Tomorrow*, an exhibition of paintings by Monica English, and an exhibition of new sculpture by William Turnbull, Eduardo Paolozzi, and the relatively unknown artist Anthony Hatwell. A selling exhibition—nothing sold.

Metzger, artist-dealer turned curator, never exhibited his own work at Thirty Queens, nor indeed elsewhere in town. He never received people for studio visits, unless they happened upon it while visiting his stockroom. “I wasn’t interested in exhibiting,” he remembers, “I wasn’t conscious of painting to exhibit.”²⁸ Ironically, it is the upstairs studio of St Nicholas that is the setting for the best-known, early photograph of Metzger in King’s Lynn by John Cox: cast in chiaroscuro by its single leaded window, he gazes into the middle-distance, surrounded by junked books and torn product packaging. Metzger

had left King's Lynn the year previous, before his lease for St Nicholas expired; meanwhile, his invention of what he called "self-destructive art" had developed into "auto-destructive art".

Cox, who had photographed Metzger several times with works in London, had travelled from the capital for an afternoon on Metzger's invitation. Knowing he would arrive on the Wednesday at 11 a.m., Metzger went a week earlier to experiment with materials, eventually arriving at nylon and acid applied with whatever brushes were to hand—including a toilet brush.²⁹ Metzger was aware of the mediating power of the image. The resulting series of photographs—produced in one take—were only reproduced belatedly six years later, in the special auto-destructive art edition of *Art & Artists* magazine. Considered too dramatic, too romantic, even sinister, Metzger suppressed the image of himself in his studio surrounded literally by the rejectamenta of his life in King's Lynn (Fig. 13). The value of Cox's photographs was that they acted as certification of Metzger's claim to his innovative technique, not an artistic lifestyle—if indeed these could be separated. By returning to King's Lynn from London, he consciously embedded an association between his new methods and his earlier life and practice.

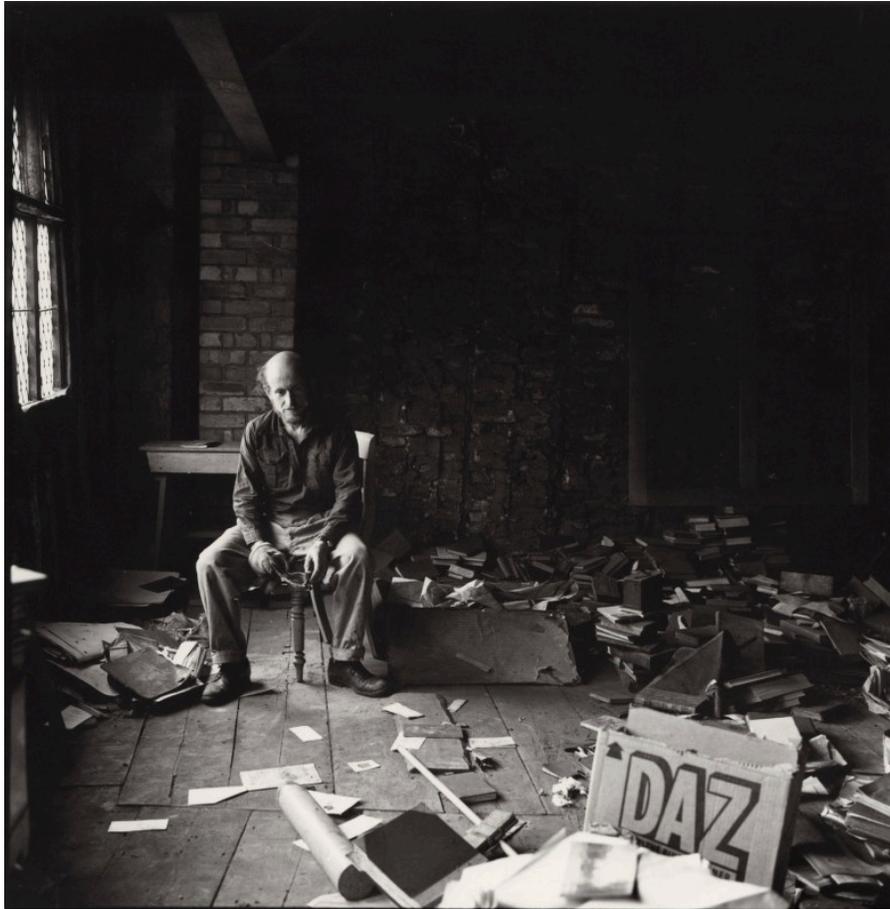


Figure 13.

Gustav Metzger in his Studio at St Nicholas House, photograph. Digital image courtesy of John Cox, 1959 (all rights reserved).

Sculpture Exhibition at Thirty Queens

The exhibition, *Sculpture at Thirty Queens*, featuring recent works of Eduardo Paolozzi, William Turnbull, and Anthony Hatwell, was arranged to mark the opening of Gustav Metzger's art, antique, and bookshop at 30 Queen Street on 19 July 1956. The exhibition opening coincided with the launch of the annual King's Lynn Festival, although, unlike *Treasure from East Anglian Churches* the following year, it was not part of the official programme. Open daily from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. until 30 July, admission was free. Thirty Queens was, as a commercial venture, a total failure; nonetheless, of the three displays he hosted there throughout 1956, he considered *Sculpture at Thirty Queens* the "principal exhibition". ³⁰

The display was distinctive for its professionalism. In addition to a press release and an accompanying price list of works, Metzger designed cards and an exhibition poster, printed in King's Lynn (Fig. 14). Strikingly modern in its

visual language—two-colour, uppercase sans serif, and gridded lines—the poster design recalls Richard and Terry Hamilton’s work for the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA) or Toni del Renzio’s magazine work of the mid-1940s, in particular issue 8 of *Polemic* journal (Fig. 15).³¹ Conscious of the importance of press coverage and critical discourse, when the exhibition opened, Metzger took the unusual step of reviewing it himself: “These Artists are Possessed: They Gamble with Life”, Metzger’s first published writing, appeared in the *Lynn News and Advertiser* on 27 July 1956.



Figure 14.

SCULPTURE AT THIRTY QUEENS, Hatwell, Paolozzi, Turnbull, exhibition poster, 19 July 1956. Digital image courtesy of The Estate of Gustav Metzger (all rights reserved).

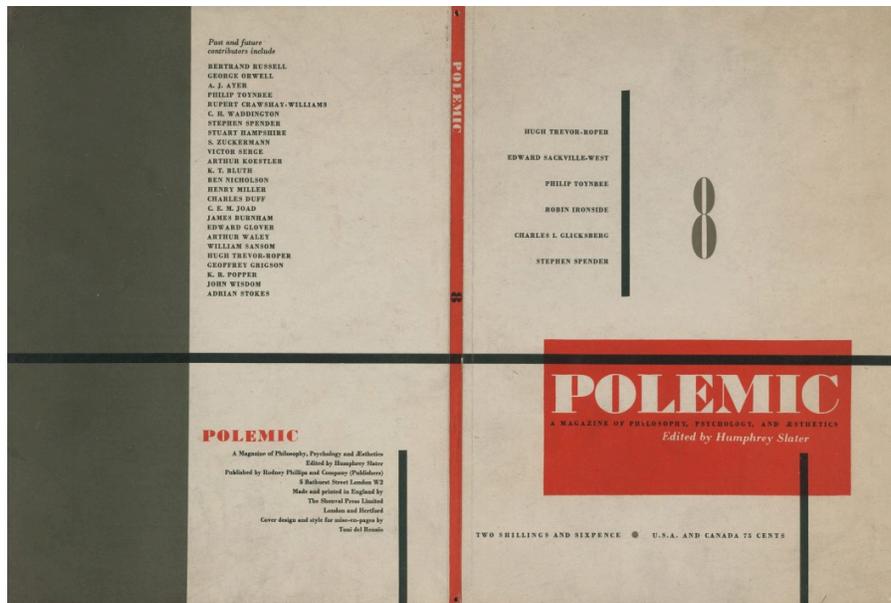


Figure 15. Toni del Renzio, *Polemic 8: A Magazine of Philosophy, Psychology, and Aesthetics* (London: Rodney Phillips and Company, 1950), cover layout, 1950, letterpress, 24.8 × 37 cm. Collection of The Museum of Modern Art, New York (646.1999). Digital image courtesy of The Museum of Modern Art, New York / Scala, Florence (all rights reserved).

Metzger drew on all of his resources to make the exhibition happen. In late summer 1944, he had a chance meeting with Paolozzi at the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford (earlier that summer Metzger had made the decision to become a sculptor instead of a professional revolutionary). Still a student at the Slade, Paolozzi invited Metzger to visit the art school where he met his peers Nigel Henderson and William Turnbull. Hatwell studied at the Slade several years after Paolozzi and Turnbull; but met Metzger in David Bomberg's Borough Polytechnic classes of 1945–1946 and became a fellow member of the Borough Bottega.

Paolozzi was Metzger's deeper interest in the exhibition. By 1956, Paolozzi had already participated in the 1952 Venice Biennale *New Aspects of British Sculpture* exhibition curated by Herbert Read alongside Kenneth Armitage, Lynn Chadwick, and William Turnbull, among others. For Read, these artists' tortured figures gave expression to the Cold War climate's "geometry of fear". The following year, in late 1953, while lodging with then director of the ICA Dorothy Morland, Paolozzi learnt to cast small bronze works in a home-made foundry using the lost wax method.³² During summer 1956, after a period of pursuing textile art and printing, Paolozzi produced ten small sculptures that were exhibited at the Hanover Gallery, some of which were cast at the famous Susse Frères foundry in Paris.³³

All of Paolozzi's works exhibited at Thirty Queens were produced in 1956. Although there is no known itemised list, of those named in the press release *Small Figure* was also exhibited at the Hanover Gallery (Fig. 16). As the Hanover exhibition occurred at the same time as *This is Tomorrow*—9 August until 9 September—then it would seem Paolozzi's figures had their first display in King's Lynn. It was the tension of the Paolozzis that appealed to Metzger: "In '56 he was homing in on destruction, violence. It was new work of the lost wax process. Full of violence. Terror. What appealed was the distortion and destruction."³⁴ The only two other works named in the press release are *Head Looking Up*, "an image of a man battling with indomitable will against a mechanical hostile environment", and *Black Figure*, "made up of steel girders against which life struggles - barely triumphant" (Fig. 17).³⁵ A sense of the disturbing presence of the gathered "Figures" is conveyed in the spread of Frank Whitford's later 1971 Tate catalogue on Paolozzi (Fig. 18).³⁶



Figure 16.

Eduardo Paolozzi, *Small Figure*, circa 1956, bronze with a green patina, 26.5 cm high. Private Collection. Digital image courtesy of The Paolozzi Foundation, Licensed by DACS 2021 (all rights reserved).



Figure 17.

Eduardo Paolozzi, Head Looking Up, 1955–1956, bronze with a green/brown patina, 30.5 cm wide. Private Collection. Digital image courtesy of The Paolozzi Foundation, Licensed by DACS 2021 (all rights reserved).

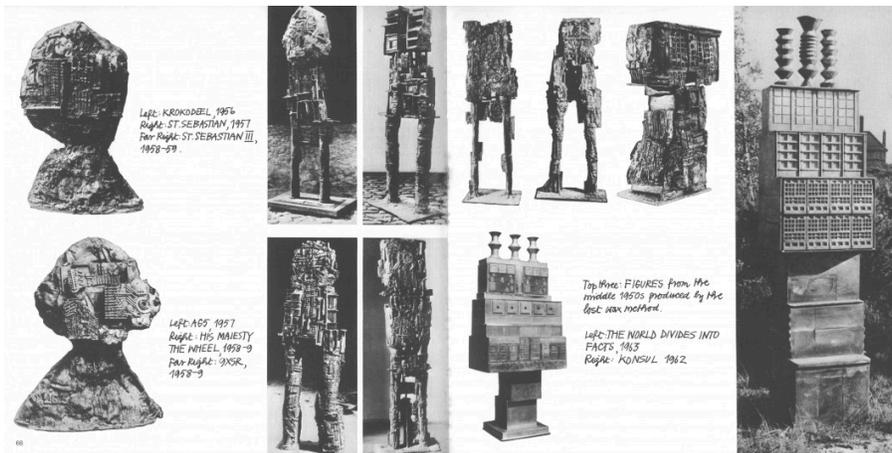


Figure 18.

Frank Whitford, Eduardo Paolozzi, exhibition catalogue, Tate, 22 September–31 October 1971 (London: Tate Gallery Publications, 1971), 68–69. Digital image courtesy of The Paolozzi Foundation, Licensed by DACS 2021 / Tate Publications (all rights reserved).

Within their respective groups, both Paolozzi and Turnbull participated in *This is Tomorrow*. Like Paolozzi, in 1956 Turnbull also exhibited at the Hanover Gallery, but in the years preceding had shown relatively little. The following year, his solo show of new sculptures and paintings would open at the ICA—perhaps the reason he exhibited earlier work at Thirty Queens.³⁷ Of the works listed in the press release, two bronzes, *Head* (1951) and *Growth* (1949), and *Skull* (1954), one of four works in plaster, Metzger attributes to “the most refined imagination of the young sculptors; he is a poet using earth instead of words and sound”.³⁸ It is likely Metzger got some of this information wrong (there is misattribution in his listings for *Treasures from East Anglian Churches*, too). Based on titles, dates, and descriptions, *Head* is more likely the correctly titled *Small Head* (Fig. 19); *Skull* is probably 1953, not 1954; and the work *Growth*, described as “the kind of geometry presented in a field of growing corn”, is likely to be *Torque Upwards*.



Figure 19.

William Turnbull, *Small Head*, 1951, bronze, 3.5 cm. Private Collection. Digital image courtesy of The Estate of William Turnbull. All rights reserved, DACS 2021 (all rights reserved).

Compared to the younger Anthony Hatwell, both Paolozzi and Turnbull—Paolozzi in particular—were contemporary art stars. Metzger’s bombastic, impresario-like review published in the *Lynn News and Advertiser* makes plain his enthusiasms. Of the five lines given to Hatwell, it is his draughtsmanship “developed under the guidance of the genius Bomberg”, rather than his cast concrete sculpture on display, that is deemed “superior” to any sculptor under the age of fifty working in Britain (Fig. 20). The sculptures, *Reclining Figure* among them, are “astonishing for one so young”. As Metzger recalls, the other two questioned who this young sculptor was but were able to be convinced. Discussing the exhibition in 1997, Metzger explained that one impulse for exhibiting Hatwell was a way of “doing good” to Bomberg’s class after he’d withdrawn in 1953: “I wanted to give him a hand”. ³⁹



Figure 20.

Anthony Hatwell: Sculpture & Drawing, Talbot Rice Gallery, 16 March–4 May 2013, installation. Digital image courtesy of The Estate of Anthony Hatwell / Talbot Rice Gallery (all rights reserved).

Unlike Paolozzi and Turnbull, whose exhibition histories never feature *Sculpture at Thirty Queens*, the experience had a big impact for Hatwell, even though subsequently he showed very little and never shook off a monkish aspect inherited from Bomberg. As the art historian Bill Hare has suggested, writing on the occasion of Hatwell's first solo exhibition at age 82, through an intense process of visual and tactile exploration, he sought to translate Bomberg's ideals for modern painting into his own sculptural practice, particularly through the mediation of drawing: "Bomberg did not have much consciousness of how sculpture might be made, and did not teach sculpture. I attended his drawing and painting class and tried to interpret a drawing approach into sculpture, which I found very difficult."⁴⁰ Bomberg never visited *Sculpture Exhibition at Thirty Queens*. Is it possible Metzger was trying to demonstrate another way of practising for Hatwell?

Metzger's *Lynn News and Advertiser* piece makes the case for skilled, knowing, and intentional abstraction. "There is no doubt," he writes, "that should any of these artists decide to make a 'naturalistic head' it would make any work by an RA [Royal Academician] look as if made of pastry." Beginning with Auguste Rodin, he outlines a lineage for these modern sculptors that takes in Aristide Maillol, Jacob Epstein, Pablo Picasso, Henry Moore, and Alberto Giacometti—all of whom had broken with naturalism to distort the human form. In the work of Rodin, "Heads, lips and legs are left out or so badly mutilated as to become unrecognisable". Rodin, he writes, "breaks open the closed form, emphasises the touch of the sculptor on the clay".

“Unless one knows the work of the above-mentioned artists,” Metzger concludes, “it is almost impossible to assess the work of the three sculptors on view at 30 Queen Street, King’s Lynn.” ⁴¹

Here, Metzger, however programmatically, is also publicly working through his own understanding of human form in sculpture, a much broader conversation within contemporary art in Britain and on the Continent, particularly among a younger generation of artists and critics around art informel and the humanism of Michel Tapié and Jean Dubuffet. Metzger makes Paolozzi’s and Turnbull’s sculptures into contemporary devotional figures striving against a hostile technocratic environment. Melodramatic, existential, nearing nonsensical, Metzger ends the article: “These artists are possessed. Driven to surrender their volition, they gamble with life and with art—guided only by the knowledge that it is the extreme direction that leads out of chaos.” ⁴²

People came to the exhibition. Nothing sold. “They could have bought a Paolozzi for £60,” Metzger quipped years later: “If I had the money I would have bought one. Put it into auction.” ⁴³ Metzger lost money organising the exhibition—money that otherwise would have gone into the shop. If the exhibition was about positioning himself within a milieu, he never broke into the ranks of the Independent Group, despite carrying out studio visits. ⁴⁴ He had, of course, organised exhibitions with the Bottega, but nothing as ambitious and as focused as this. If it shattered his ambitions to become an art dealer, he would become increasingly hostile, not to galleries per se, but to the commercial gallery system—aligning himself with artist-led, non-institutional spaces.

This is Tomorrow at 30 Queen Street, King’s Lynn

On exactly the same date that *This is Tomorrow* opened at the Whitechapel Gallery, 9 August 1956, Gustav Metzger pasted up the posters advertising it, designed by the participants, in the window of 30 Queen Street, King’s Lynn. They remained in place for a month, until 9 September, when *This is Tomorrow* closed to the public. ⁴⁵ Among the thirty-six exhibitors, artists, architects, musicians, and designers, divided into twelve collaborative working groups, were William Turnbull and Eduardo Paolozzi, who had exhibited at Thirty Queens the previous month. Half of the exhibitors were associated with the Independent Group, of which Turnbull and Paolozzi were active, alongside Mary and Peter Reyner Banham, Magda and Frank Cordell, Lawrence Alloway, Toni del Renzio, Richard and Terry Hamilton, the Smithsons and Nigel Henderson (Figs. 21, 22, 23, and 24). ⁴⁶



Figure 21.

Theo Crosby, *This is Tomorrow*, poster, 1956, lithograph printed in red and black, 76.3 × 50.8 cm. Collection of Victoria and Albert Museum, London (E.183-1994). Digital image courtesy of The Estate of Theo Crosby / Victoria and Albert Museum, London (all rights reserved).

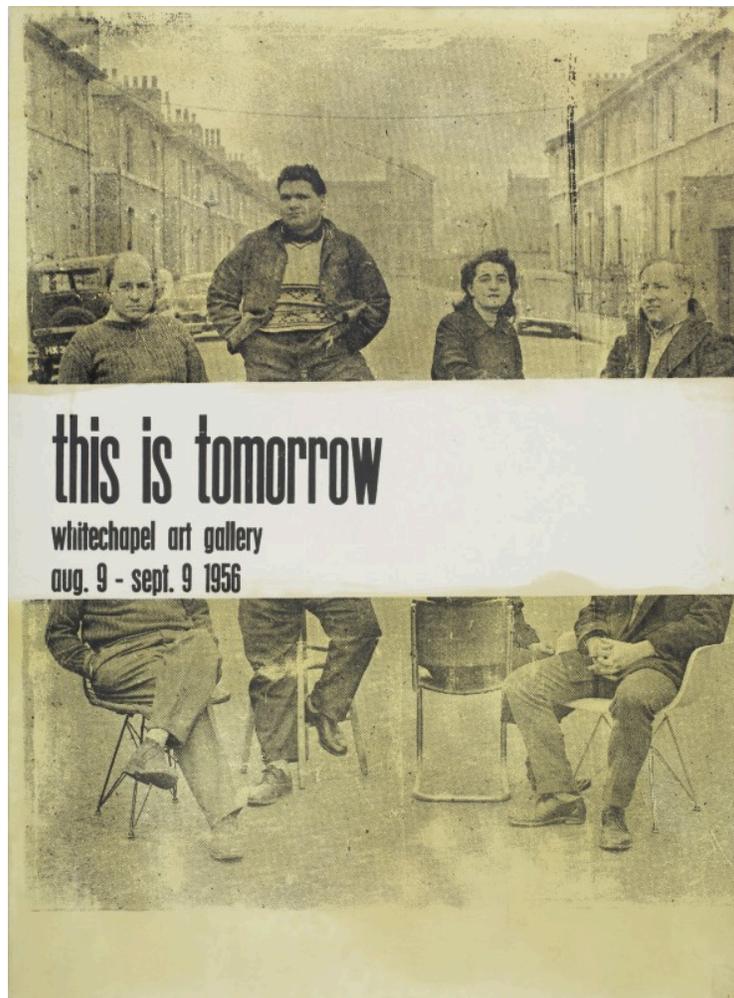


Figure 22.

Nigel Henderson, Independent Group, *This is Tomorrow*, poster, 1956, screenprint on paper partially stained yellow, 76.2 × 59.9 cm. Collection of Victoria and Albert Museum, London (E.179-1994). Digital image courtesy of The estate of Nigel Henderson / Victoria and Albert Museum, London (all rights reserved).

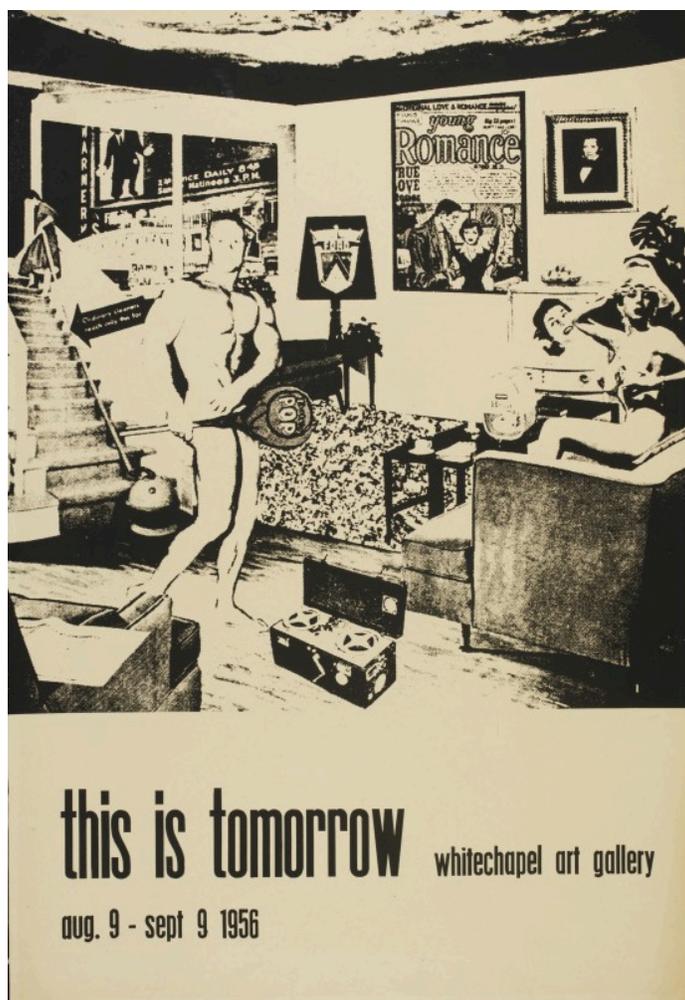


Figure 23.

Richard Hamilton, This is Tomorrow, poster, 1956, screenprint, 76.1 × 51.2 cm. Collection of Victoria and Albert Museum, London (E.176-1994). Digital image courtesy of R. Hamilton. All Rights Reserved, DACS 2021 / Victoria and Albert Museum, London (all rights reserved).

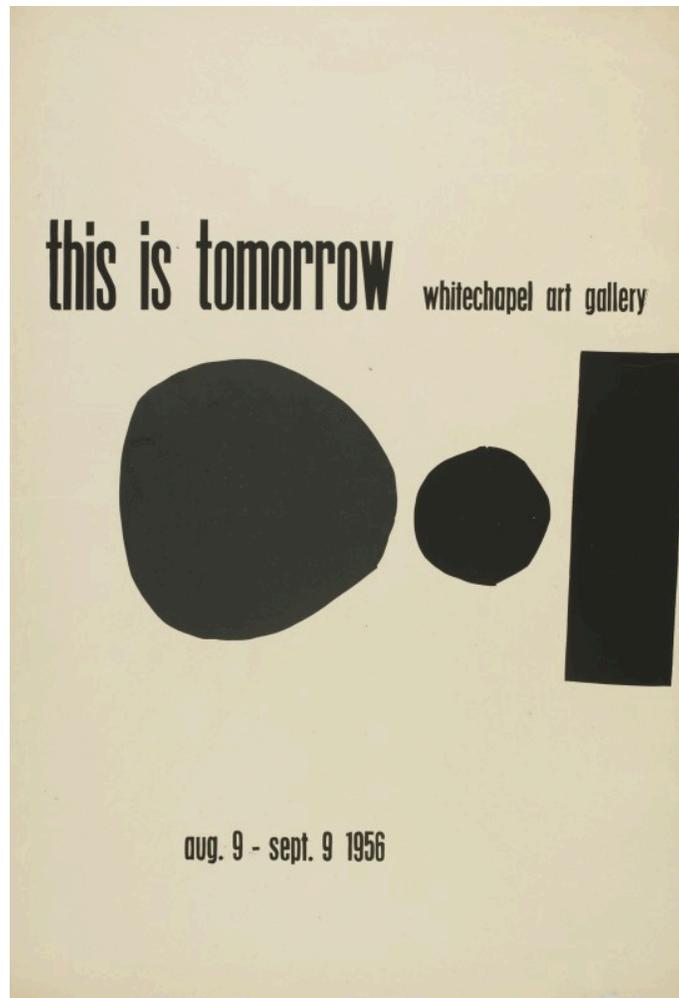


Figure 24.

Victor Pasmore, *This is Tomorrow*, poster, 1956, screenprint, 76 × 51 cm. Collection of Victoria and Albert Museum, London (E.184-1994). Digital image courtesy of The Estate of Victor Pasmore. All Rights Reserved, DACS 2021 / Victoria and Albert Museum, London (all rights reserved).

Each of the twelve groups, in addition to their exhibits, produced a poster. For the catalogue—designed by Edward Wright—groups also submitted a layout of their floor plan with an accompanying statement and a photograph of themselves. Details of posters were reproduced in some of the catalogue entries. Posters were pasted up on the exterior entrance walls of the gallery. The curator of the exhibition, Theo Crosby, a trained architect, also exhibited in a group. This was one of many collapses—designer-curator-artist—guiding the project, which, for Crosby, was an opportunity to address the limits imposed on the participants’ fields through specialist practices and to overcome the “purity of media, golden proportions, and unambiguous iconologies” that had separated them out. ⁴⁷

This is Tomorrow proved to be one of the most popular exhibitions at the Whitechapel that year, attracting 19,341 visitors.⁴⁸ Metzger himself made repeat visits, taking the train from King's Lynn into London. If 1956 was the year Metzger committed to being an artist, then he needed to be informed. His acquaintance with Turnbull and Paolozzi—whose work he admired in particular—would certainly have been a draw. “That was a time,” he remembered, “when I was very much in interaction with London and very interested in contemporary art through magazines.”⁴⁹ Metzger paid close attention to what the critics wrote and would have been aware of the cutting-edge technological discourse that informed *This is Tomorrow*.

It is not clear how Metzger obtained his poster set. Metzger told the curator Mathieu Copeland that he removed them from hoardings around the city. Discussing the display in 1997, Metzger doesn't state where he sourced them, but he certainly had a full set. Copeland's poetic image of Metzger tearing posters from hoardings—ragged, layered, and accreted with the grime of the city—and returning them by train to his King's Lynn shop for bootleg display is consistent with his later ideas, articulated in the manifestos, of the artistic value of paper cuttings and scraps of fabric deposited on the streets of Soho. These “as found” ephemeral media, Metzger writes, “are as worthy of preservation as any material that has come down from the past”. In an article of 1962, published in *ARK: Journal of the Royal College of Art*, titled “Machine, Auto-Creative, and Auto-Destructive Art”, he lists techniques that may be employed in the production of machine art:

2. So-called waste or rubbish is collected, usually from the street, and exhibited in the same condition as it is found. The artist may use adhesives or other means to hold the work together.
3. Posters are removed from hoardings and exhibited.⁵⁰

We know these techniques were employed in the early 1960s, by which time Metzger was seeking to push them further, but perhaps, and we can only speculate, this is a post-rationalisation of the act of displaying the posters in King's Lynn.

Metzger's recollection of the decision is far more prosaic. Already he had the lease for 30 Queen Street and it was empty. It was in the process of being decorated. He had wallpaper adhesive paste to hand. “I thought, well, I have these posters, so I put them in the window and inside. It was never an exhibition in the sense that people would come to look at the posters.”⁵¹ There was little reaction, he recalls, but people saw it—it must have stimulated discussion.

If this was not an exhibition then perhaps it might be more accurately described as a display. The posters had significance for Metzger: their disintegration as indifferent matter in the warp and weft of the city's visual environment was arrested by their display. Posters are mass-produced objects designed to circulate. Decontextualised, away from the city, these cutting-edge symbols of futurity—so many incursions—were afforded attention in the medieval old town. Metzger's gesture was certainly not a restaging of *This is Tomorrow*. It was the essential fanatical pop act: these posters were a way for Metzger to occupy space while identifying ideologically, and aligning himself. They promote a tomorrow to come. When Mathieu Copeland restaged Metzger's gesture—first in the window at David Roberts Art Foundation in 2011 and then on the street side at Circuit Lausanne in 2013—he elevated a display into an exhibition (Figs. 25 and 26).



Figure 25.

This is Tomorrow, posters in the window of the David Roberts Art Foundation, 2011; Restaging by Mathieu Copeland of Gustav Metzger's *This is Tomorrow* posters in the window of Thirty Queens, King's Lynn, 1956. Digital image courtesy of Mathieu Copeland (all rights reserved).

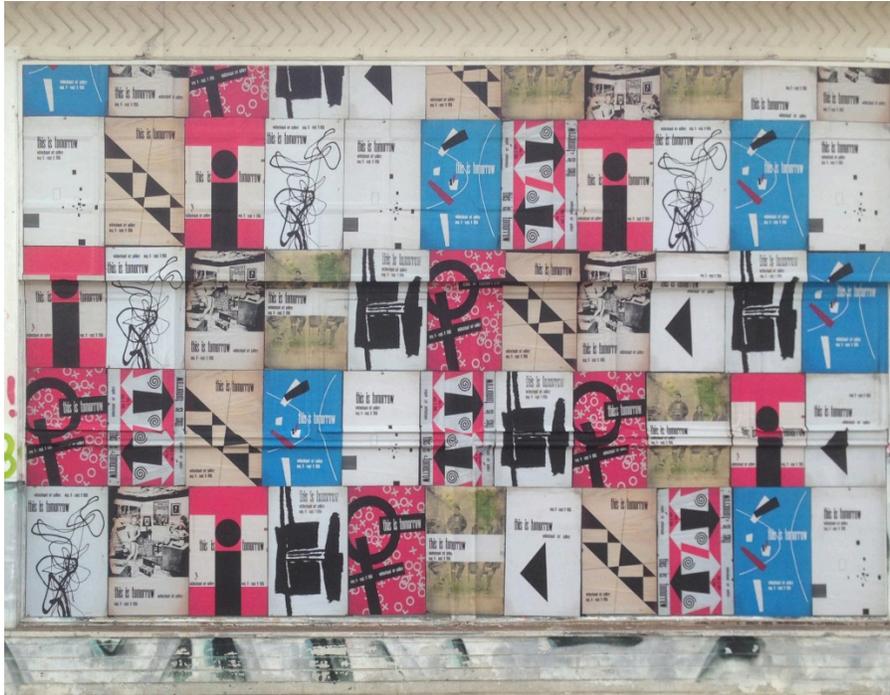


Figure 26.

This is Tomorrow, posters at Circuit Lausanne, 2013; Restaging by Mathieu Copeland of Gustav Metzger's *This is Tomorrow* posters in the window of Thirty Queens, King's Lynn, 1956. Digital image courtesy of Mathieu Copeland (all rights reserved).

Copeland's restaging reminds us that Metzger's first public demonstration of auto-destructive art was in itself a *re-creation*. In his "Second Manifesto" of March 1960, he states that "Auto-destructive art *re-enacts* the obsession with destruction, / the pummelling to which individuals and masses are subjected".⁵² A separation between event and representation is implicit in Metzger's thinking. As the posters and catalogue were the focal point for the Whitechapel's archival exhibition revisiting *This is Tomorrow* in 2011, so they are objects that narrate further exhibition histories building upon exhibition histories. Through these posters and Metzger's gesture, multiple displays are collected.

Monica English

Unlike other exhibitions organised by Gustav Metzger in King's Lynn—of artists with some profile, influence, or which map onto nascent themes in his practice—*Exhibition of Paintings by Monica English* at Thirty Queens in December 1956 is somewhat confounding (Fig. 27). There is little trace of English in archives or in collections of post-war contemporary art, no publications in specialist art bookshops, aside from a small lot of undated works sold by the Norfolk auction house Keys in 2011. Mystical, neo-primitive fantasy scenes of cavorting horses are rendered in chalk-tinted charcoal; a

glowering Palmer-esque moon lights an ancient grove (Figs. 28, 29, 30, 31, and 32). Similar to other exhibitions at Thirty Queens, there is no known photographic documentation of English's installation, nor catalogue of works, which makes it unclear whether the lot at Keys is characteristic. English's inclusion in the programme raises more questions than answers, disrupting a neat art-historical narrative. What drew Metzger to English's work?



Figure 27.

Monica English with Dogs and Painting, date not known. Digital image courtesy of Philip Heselton (all rights reserved).



Figure 28.

Monica English, Conflict Ahead for Paradise, date not known. Digital image courtesy of Philip Heselton (all rights reserved).



Figure 29.

Monica English, Saint George and the Dragon, date not known. Digital image courtesy of Philip Heselton (all rights reserved).



Figure 30.

Monica English, Gallopig Horses, date not known, mixed media, 24.5 × 19.5 cm. Digital image courtesy of Philip Heselton (all rights reserved).

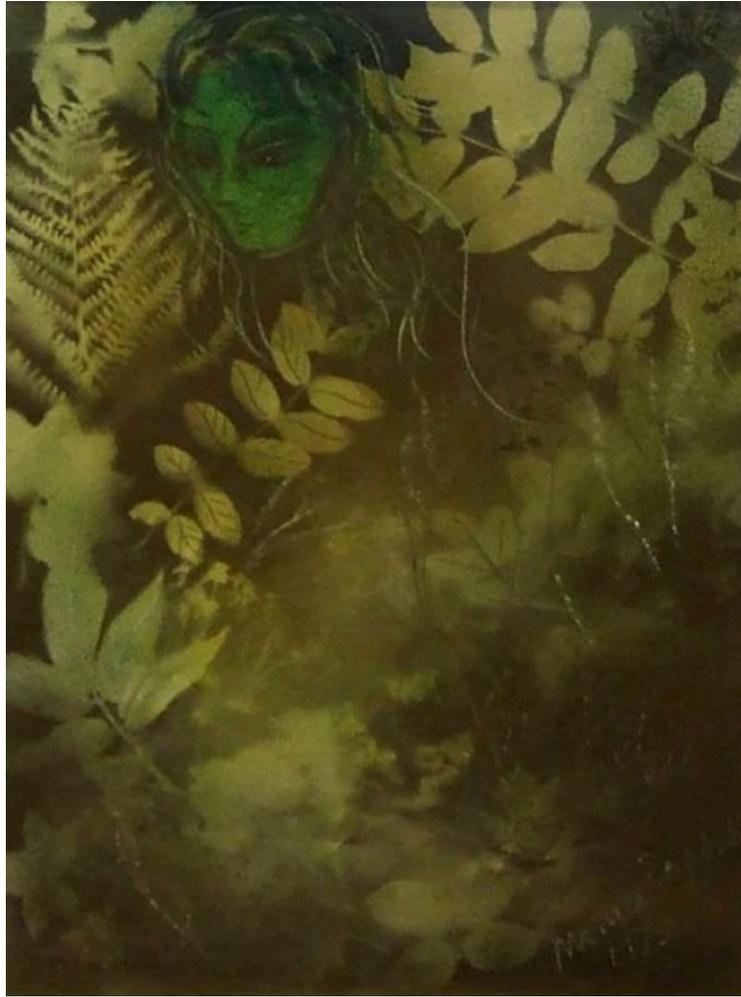


Figure 31.

Monica English, *The Dryad No. 1*, 1972. Digital image courtesy of Philip Heselton (all rights reserved).



Figure 32.

Monica English, *Wild Horses in Woodland by Moonlight*, date not known, mixed media, 20 × 30 cm. Digital image courtesy of Philip Heselton (all rights reserved).

Intriguingly, where English does show up is in the literature of modern pagan witchcraft, including sleuth-style websites and more academic sources. The fullest account is given by Michael Howard, a respected practitioner of ritual magic and author on esoteric topics. From 1976 until his death in 2015, Howard was editor of *The Cauldron*, an international magazine on witchcraft, Wicca, ancient and modern paganism, magic, and folklore.⁵³ Howard's 2004 article on English, titled "A Very English Witch", begins by noting that one of her pencil and charcoal drawings, of the Greek god Pan, was reproduced as a plate in Cottie A. Burland's 1966 study of "magical practice today", *The Magical Arts* (Fig. 33).⁵⁴ Burland is an intriguing character: employed as curator in the Department of Ethnography at the British Museum, he published widely on the pre-Hispanic culture of Latin America and so-called "primitive art". As well as being a member of the Royal Anthropological Institute, he was a member of the British Society of Aesthetics and was a regular contributor to *Art Review*.

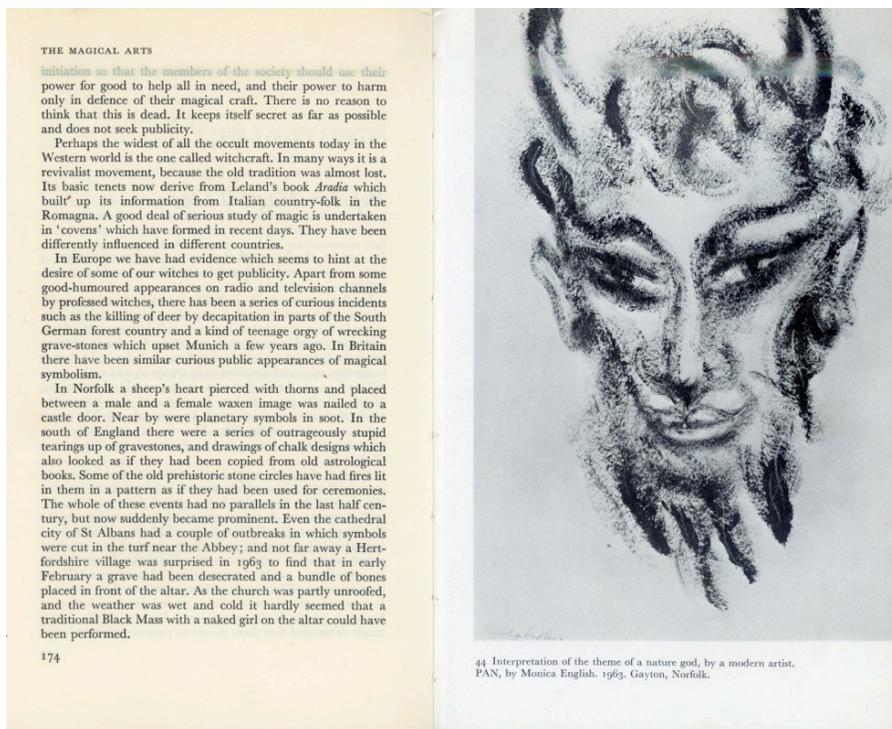


Figure 33.

Monica English, PAN, 1963, from Cottie Arthur Burland, *The Magical Arts: A Short History* (London: Arthur Barker, 1966). Digital image courtesy of Arthur Barker (all rights reserved).

Howard writes that in the late 1970s he'd seen Burland give a talk in which he referred again to the work of English. Burland, when Howard spoke to him after the talk, confirmed that he'd known English personally and that she'd been a member of Gerald Gardner's coven at Bricket Wood, Hertfordshire, in the early 1960s.⁵⁵ Other members of this infamous coven included Doreen Valiente, Lois Bourne, Patricia Crowther, and Eleanor Bone, who became semi-public figures associated with Gardner's popularising of Wiccan witchcraft. Gardner, whose family traded hardwood sourced throughout the British Empire, claimed to have been initiated into an ancient witch cult in the New Forest, in 1939. Their sacred text "Ye Bok of Ye Art Magical" became the basis for his *Wiccan Book of Shadows*.⁵⁶ English, Burland explained, also belonged to an old coven in Norfolk that met in each other's houses to dance and raise power before consuming cakes and wine to "ground" themselves.

Published in 1998, the autobiography of Lois Bourne of the Bricket Wood coven, *Dancing with Witches*, refers to Monica English as "Margo", "the aristocratic witch". English, allegedly "exuded a strong sexual attraction" and when she danced skyclad (i.e. naked) with the coven her wild vocal calls summoned the owls from miles around.⁵⁷ Strange shapes and shadows would appear in the circle in response to her calls. Bourne claims that English

admitted she had joined Bricket Wood because of her concern that Gardner's publicity would expose the old craft she engaged with in Norfolk. Bourne had visited English at her old manor house in Gayton, Norfolk—at the back of the house, she describes stables and kennels for a pack of hounds—and would eventually join her coven. The historian Ronald Hutton's account of events at the end of the 1950s in *The Triumph of the Moon* appears to affirm Bourne's story:

At the end of the decade [the Bricket Wood coven] was joined by a wealthy woman who claimed to be a member of a hereditary coven in East Anglia ... All that she told it of her own group's practices was that they were very different, often consisting of sitting in a circle, clad in robes, holding hands and concentrating upon what was to be done. ⁵⁸

Howard's article goes on to note that in a 1960s catalogue of East Anglian artists—Donald Newby's *Guide to Norfolk Art*—English is characterised as:

a painter of two worlds. One of these was a world of myth and legend peopled with the gods, warriors and ghosts of the past, and springs from her study of anthropology, folklore and primitive religions. The other world is the rural reality of landscape and animals, particularly horses, whose beauty and pride of movement fascinates her. ⁵⁹

English, according to this catalogue, was self-trained and had mounted seventeen exhibitions, including three at London art galleries. Further exhibitions were planned for galleries in Norwich. She had also appeared on television discussing her artwork and it had been reviewed in provincial and national newspapers and magazines. The catalogue states that she had her own gallery at home, which was open to the public. There is no mention of her participation in witchcraft. ⁶⁰ Ironically, it is her artwork that today is occluded.

Monica English may have been a charismatic artistic figure in the vicinity of King's Lynn. If she had ambitions to exhibit beyond the region, Metzger's previous *Sculpture Exhibition at Thirty Queens*, including his intense, learned review published in the *Lynn News and Advertiser*, would have made him an interesting contact. However, based on Metzger's own training and interest in painting, it is difficult to understand the appeal of English's paintings. Of course, we have no way of knowing whether Metzger was aware of English's East Anglian coven. If he had known, it is possible it would have appealed to

his own interest in antiquarianism, power, and the esoteric: witchcraft as a model of a counterculture proposes alternative systems of knowledge, often rooted in the desire to positively manifest futures. Or perhaps—we can only speculate—he was returning a favour to English, “the sensitive middle-class woman” who changed his fortunes in 1956?

Treasures from East Anglian Churches

The exhibition *Treasures from East Anglian Churches* opened on 27 July 1957 at the crypt of Clifton House, 17 Queen Street. Part of the sixth annual King’s Lynn Festival programme, it remained open until 10 August (Fig. 34). For this exhibition, Metzger assembled an antiquarian catalogue of thirty-six objects loaned by regional churches, institutes, museums, and private companies that had been damaged, removed, or displaced in the period between the Reformation and the end of the Commonwealth.



Figure 34. Clifton House, King's Lynn, March 2021. Digital image courtesy of Glen Jamieson (all rights reserved).

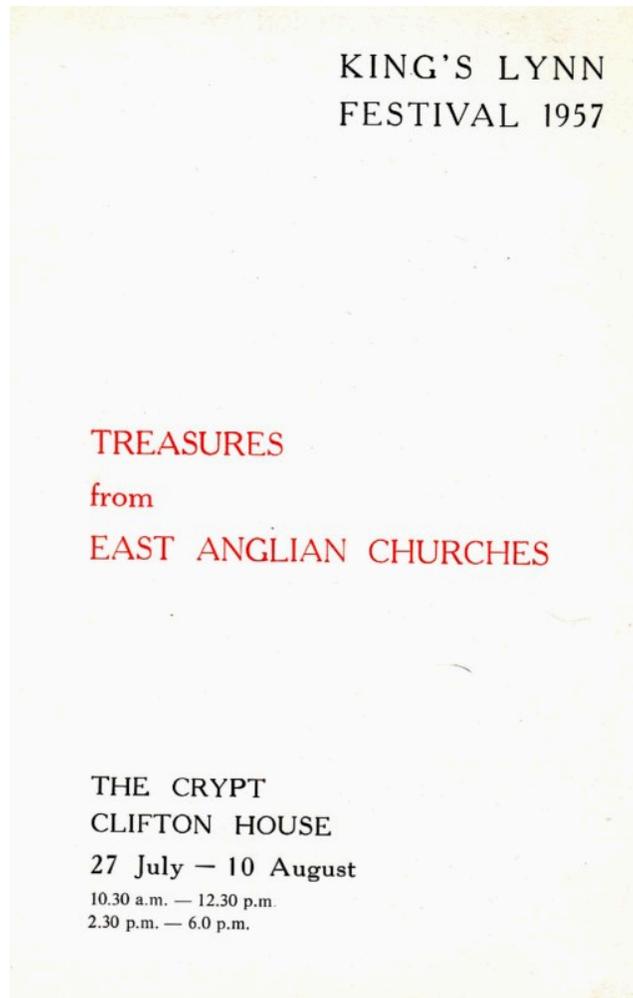


Figure 35.

Treasures from East Anglian Churches, pamphlet cover, King's Lynn Festival, 1957. Digital image courtesy of Mathieu Copeland (all rights reserved).

Although there is no known photographic documentation of this exhibition, we do know something of the objects' and Metzger's sources because the accompanying four-page gatefold catalogue survives (there is no formal King's Lynn Festival archive; sourced by Mathieu Copeland, the original is reproduced in *Gustav Metzger: Writings 1953-2016*) (Fig. 35).⁶¹ Dating mostly from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, with several objects of the late medieval era, there is a clear pretence to historiographical representativeness, including a range of media—from architectural fragment to statue to glass—that address divergent attitudes of idol breakers, preservationists, and later reformers alike.

"Much Church Art was destroyed," Metzger's elliptic introduction begins, "in the period between the Reformation and the end of the Commonwealth." Citing Norwich's Lord Bishop Hall in Christopher Woodforde's *The Norwich*

School of Glass-Painting in the Fifteenth Century (1950), the reader learns of his “painfully vivid” account of events at Norwich in May 1644: “‘Lord! what work was here! what clattering of glasses! what beating down of walls! what tearing up of monuments!’” Metzger associates Bishop Hall’s account with object number 21 in the catalogue, “broken from its figure by iconoclasts”: “Head, probably representing Christ. Stone; 14 3/4” high. Carving found in a garden at Spalding”. ⁶²

Jumping to the nineteenth century, Metzger notes how attitudes towards the plain Protestant interiors and glass of the previous two hundred years had shifted sufficiently so that “Religious works of art were bought, often from the continent, and placed in churches to enrich their appearance. An interesting example of this development can be seen in Wisbech St. Mary Church.” ⁶³ Objects number 3 and 4 in the catalogue illustrate this repopulation: “St Nicholas. About 1500; Wood; traces of original colour. 40” high” and “Kneeling Bishop. About 1500; Wood, painted. 32 1/2” high”. “This figure and No. 3,” the entry continues, “were bought at Christie’s and placed in the Church during this century.”

Objects linked to the Reformation and the dissolution of the monasteries were sourced by Metzger from the great abbeys of the eastern region. A 25 1/2 inch long stone “Cover of Heart Burial”, a loan of Wisbech Museum and Literary Institute, was the work of a mason from Crowland Abbey, legendary residence of Hereward the Wake, leader of the local resistance to the Norman Conquest, later fortified and garrisoned by Royalists but besieged and destroyed by Protestant forces. Objects number 20 and 22 came from the Abbey of Bury St Edmunds, once among the richest Benedictine monasteries in England: “Stained Glass Window ... constructed of fragments ... includes representations of Edmund as the Boy King and Martyr; one of the Magi (wearing turban...); St. Thomas à Becket (...with aureole and pierced by a sword) and other ecclesiastical and militant figures”. Accompanying it was “The Angel of St Matthew. Stone. 29 1/2” high. Possible one of the four symbols of the Evangelists which formed part of a doorway at the Abbey of St. Edmund about 1130-40.”

The use of the crypt at 17 Queen Street for display must have been an appealing opportunity. An architectural palimpsest, the earliest history of Clifton House is still not entirely agreed upon, but it is, as Pevsner put it, “the most remarkable catalogue of various building periods from the Middle Ages onwards”. ⁶⁴ The external view from the street is the result of rationalisation in 1708; inside, in the nineteenth century, Elizabethan panelling from two rooms was shipped to North America following minor modernisation; in the seventeenth century, major modernisation, thought to be inspired by the mercantile palazzi of Italy, was carried out by Lynn architect Henry Bell; earlier still, in the sixteenth century, drastic reconfigurations occurred,

including the addition of a warehouse and a five-storey watchtower. The crypt, however, is the oldest part of the building. Constructed from large, yellowish-pink brick thought to be imported from Holland, it would have opened directly to receive and distribute goods onto the River Ouse before silting redirected its course further west. ⁶⁵

Throughout its history, Clifton House has been a private residence, aside from a thirty-year period, beginning in 1951, when it was owned by King's Lynn Town Council and served as the offices of the borough architect, surveyor, and engineer. An opportunity, no doubt, to communicate more widely the crypt's historic interest, it was the council that granted Metzger access. Accompanying Metzger's notes in the exhibition catalogue is the speculative text of the borough engineer H.G. Ridler M.I.MUN.E. (Institution of Municipal Engineers), acting as a coda of sorts, who supposes the undercroft's central piers and brick vaulting in the perpendicular or late Gothic style date it to the fourteenth century. If latterly it had been used as a wine cellar by residents, Ridler admits "the origin and purpose of the building appear not to have been established". Its purposes could have been religious or secular. Shortly after Metzger's exhibition, in 1960, installation of council services in the crypt revealed even earlier features. It's now understood that the mouldings on the central piers carrying the vault date to around 1350. There is evidence, in the south wall, of an earlier thirteenth-century doorway. It seems almost certain that Clifton House was once two medieval tenements thrown together at some later date, probably the late sixteenth century. ⁶⁶

Metzger's exhibition was activated by this extraordinarily compacted historic site. It was, after all, predominantly medieval forms of worship that the iconoclasts faced up to in their revolutionary purging of affective and imaginative splendour. ⁶⁷ The intense zeal of clattering, beating, and tearing registered by the collection of *Treasures from East Anglian Churches* must have been in powerful tension with Clifton House's sedimentary accretion of the past. To describe these objects from East Anglian churches as "treasure"—a wealth of riches stored or accumulated—implies a positive value. Yet, Metzger ultimately resists forming a position on one side or the other of a simplified historic divide between Catholicism and Protestantism. While the unfortunate circumstances of Bishop Hall—a victim of Parliament, confined to the Tower of London, accused of Popish sympathies by Puritan parties, evicted from his palace—elicits sympathy, Metzger's historiographical approach broadens out the context. ⁶⁸

The great scholar of English iconoclasm Margaret Aston writes that broken idols are always admonitory, but were those in *Treasures from East Anglian Churches* lamentable losses of pre-defiled, banished objects, or rather lasting witnesses to revolutionary image reform? And while Metzger does refer to the collected objects as "church Art", the ambiguity of the show's framing

arguably raises questions around the status of art and non-art, and the commonly held assumption that iconoclastic barbarity “severely retarded the development of visual arts in England”.⁶⁹ Of course, what distinguishes *Treasures from East Anglian Churches* from, for example, the gallery of broken sculpture in the west end of St Cuthbert’s, Wells, is that it is an artist-curated exhibition. Today, we understand it in relation to Metzger’s own artistic and political concerns.

Its ambiguity also made *Treasures from East Anglian Churches* a subversive exhibition cloaked in antiquarianism in a town that had strong historical royalist sympathies. Lynn had changed its name from Bishop’s Lynn to King’s Lynn in 1537 as a demonstration of allegiance to Henry VIII and the crown. In 1957, the Festival took place—as it did for many years—under the patronage of Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother. Every year for many years, Agnew & Sons, Old Master dealers to the aristocracy, mounted a picture exhibition at the Fermoy Gallery, namesake of Baroness Fermoy. Only three years earlier, in 1954, the King’s Lynn Charter Pageant 1204–1954—of which the borough engineer Ridler himself was on the executive committee—had commemorated the town’s resistance to Cromwell and the Roundheads (Fig. 36).⁷⁰ Royalist feeling loomed large.



Figure 36.

King's Lynn Charter Pageant, film still, 1954. Collection of East Anglian Film Archive at the University of East Anglia. Digital image courtesy of East Anglian Film Archive at the University of East Anglia (all rights reserved).

The purging of imagery from worship that took place during the Reformation was, as David Brett has written, “both an index and an ancillary cause of a dramatic shift in the location of authority”. ⁷¹ Reformation iconoclasm was an ordinance towards the expansion of secular power out of the hands of bishops appointed by the Pope. Secularisation of the imagination preceded the secularisation of society. A revolution of the senses. The destruction of images—as Bishop Hall’s account tells us—was an essential, public, and immediately understood element in wider societal and political reconstruction. Many witnessed—seeing and hearing—large numbers of people participating in demonstrative spectacles of image-breaking. ⁷²

As Metzger’s first public engagement with destruction as a theme, which coincided with his gathering campaign for the preservation of the North End of King’s Lynn, discussed later, it is fascinating how it informs his later work. In the first manifesto, “Manifesto SDA Self Destructive Art” of November 1959—before the prefix “Auto-” was applied—Metzger urges that “Sda” “is primarily a form of public art for technological societys [*sic*]”. ⁷³ In the second manifesto of March 1960, he states that “auto-destructive art re-enacts the obsession with destruction, / the pummelling to which individuals and masses are subjected”. ⁷⁴ He continues by asserting that it “mirrors the compulsive perfectionism of arms / manufacture—polishing to destruction point”. Auto-destructive art, then, assimilating and mirroring the techniques and materials of advanced technologies, orchestrates an attack on the idols of Metzger’s time. Willing to reproduce their negative affect to change attitudes, it would affect a revolution of the senses comparable to that of the seventeenth century.

Auto-destructive art is expressly not concerned with ruins of a romantic kind associated with the picturesque. In his 1962 article for *ARK*, Metzger asserts that “Auto-destructive art is a radical irrevocable change of image”. It is a sort of cathartic conductor:

Technically elaborate and costly public works of auto-destructive art can have a deeply insidious and cumulative effect on many people—opening feelings, building up tensions, releasing ideas, arousing controversy. This can lead to a more realistic attitude to the productions of (auto-destructive) war materials and to other biologically damaging social activities. By providing a socially sanctioned outlet for destructive ideas and impulses, auto-destructive art can become a valuable instrument of mass psychotherapy in societies where the suppression of aggressive drives is a major factor in the collapse of social balance. ⁷⁵

In September 1966, the programme of the Destruction in Art Symposium (DIAS) would centre destruction in the course of political and religious protest and agitation as well as art or icon attack as demonstrative terrorism. To deny auto-destructive art's picturesque ruin value is to insist on its power to transform society, rather than to merely be a resting place for the eye.

Our intention to exactly restage *Treasures from East Anglian Churches* at LOWER.GREEN, Norwich to think through preservation and destruction in a space earmarked for demolition and a contested redevelopment was cooled when we began tracing the objects. Formal museums, including Moyse's Hall of Bury St Edmunds, Spalding Gentlemen's Society, and Wisbech and Fenland Museum, accounted for six objects—wood sculpture, stone carving, and glass—which could not be traced, based on descriptions or would not be traced due to lack of resources. While the fourteenth-century Effigy of a Knight, of wood, painted in stone colour, lent by Banham Church, Norfolk, remains in place; two years before our enquiries it had been locked into its bed with reinforced iron clips (Figs. 37 and 38). If this had not been case, Canon Steven Wright told us, "Sir Bardolf", as it is affectionately known in the parish, would have been loaned. Canon Wright had no knowledge of its 1957 trip to King's Lynn.



Figure 37.

Effigy of a Knight, St Mary the Virgin, Banham, Norfolk, March 2021.
Digital image courtesy of Glen Jamieson (all rights reserved).

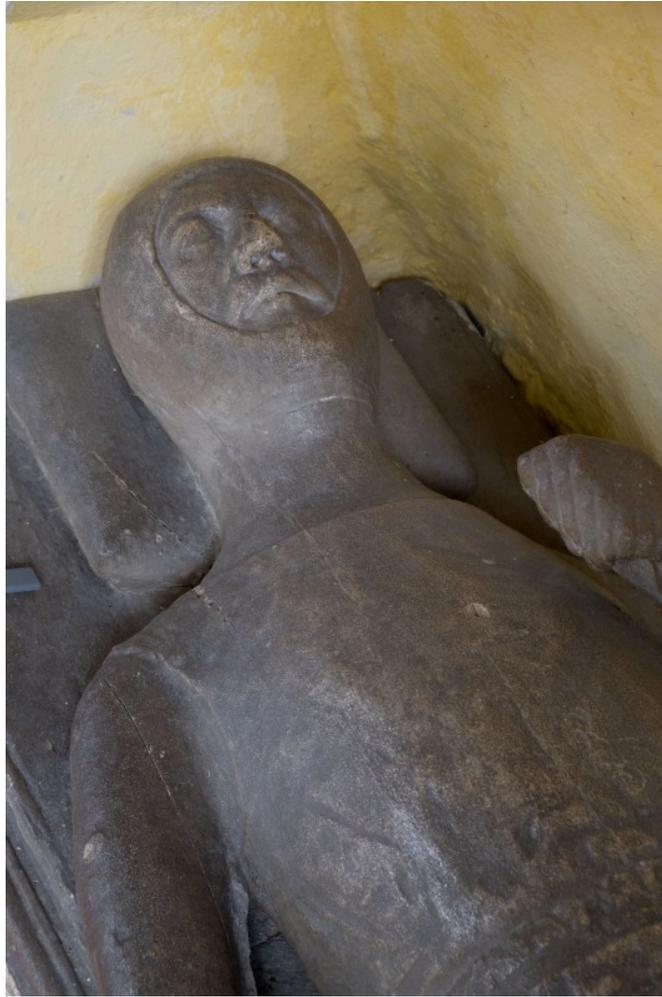


Figure 38.

Effigy of a Knight (detail), St Mary the Virgin, Banham, Norfolk, March 2021. Digital image courtesy of Glen Jamieson (all rights reserved).

Glass was loaned to Metzger by individual churches, Stratton Strawless, Norfolk and Banningham Church, Norfolk (incorrectly listed as Bannington in the original catalogue), and Norwich lead glaziers G. King & Son from a variety of locations (Figs. 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, and 45). The family firm of G. King & Son has not existed for some years now, but the son of its co-founder, Michael King, a medieval glass specialist, explained that Metzger's selection almost certainly would have consisted mostly of glass under restoration in the workshop at that time and would have been returned to the buildings they came from on completion of the work (which sometimes took a number of years). While Michael was unable to identify with certainty all of the pieces based on Metzger's description, he suspected that some were part of the collection his uncle was assembling in order to make the Erpingham window in Norwich Cathedral, completed in the early 1960s (Fig. 46). While glass was offered by Reverend Christopher Engelsen of Stratton

Strawless, the practicalities of employing a glazier to remove the fragments was beyond our means.⁷⁶ Likewise, the practicalities of borrowing the nine grotesque corbels Metzger had been loaned from Norwich Cathedral proved impossible (Figs. 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, and 52). However, viewing the objects, the librarian and curator at the cathedral noted that they were not subject to damage at the time of the Reformation as Metzger had supposed.



Figure 39.

Head of St Luke, Stratton Strawless Church, March 2021. Digital image courtesy of Mike Dixon (all rights reserved).



Figure 40.

Head of an Angel, Stratton Strawless Church, March 2021. Digital image courtesy of Mike Dixon (all rights reserved).



Figure 41.

Head of the Virgin, Stratton Strawless Church, March 2021. Digital image courtesy of Mike Dixon (all rights reserved).

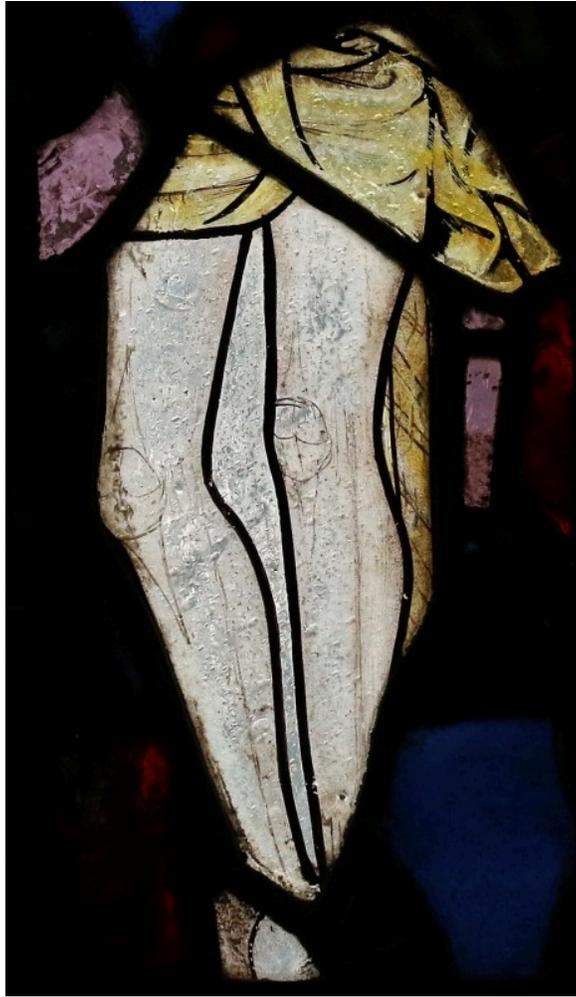


Figure 42.
Legs from a Crucifixion, Banningham Church,
March 2021. Digital image courtesy of Mike
Dixon (all rights reserved).



Figure 43.
Portion of Angels, Seraphim, Banningham Church,
March 2021. Digital image courtesy of Mike Dixon
(all rights reserved).

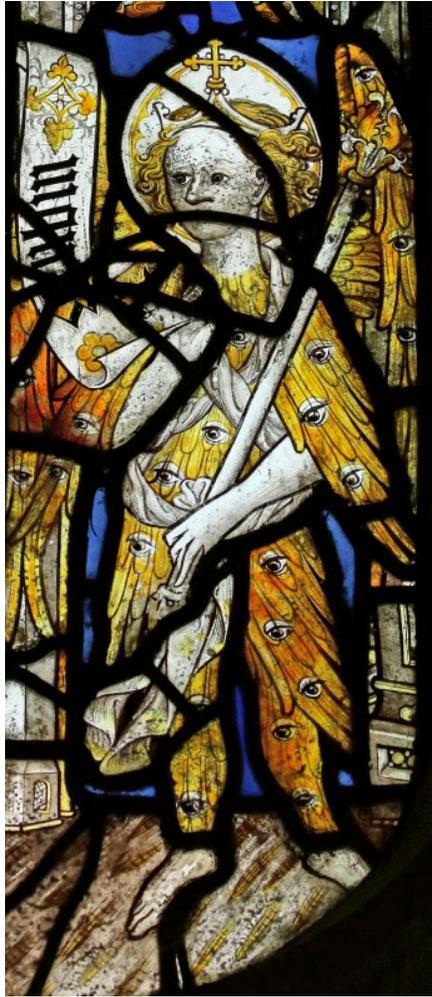


Figure 44.
Portion of Angels, Cherubim,
Banningham Church. Digital image
courtesy of Mike Dixon (all rights
reserved).

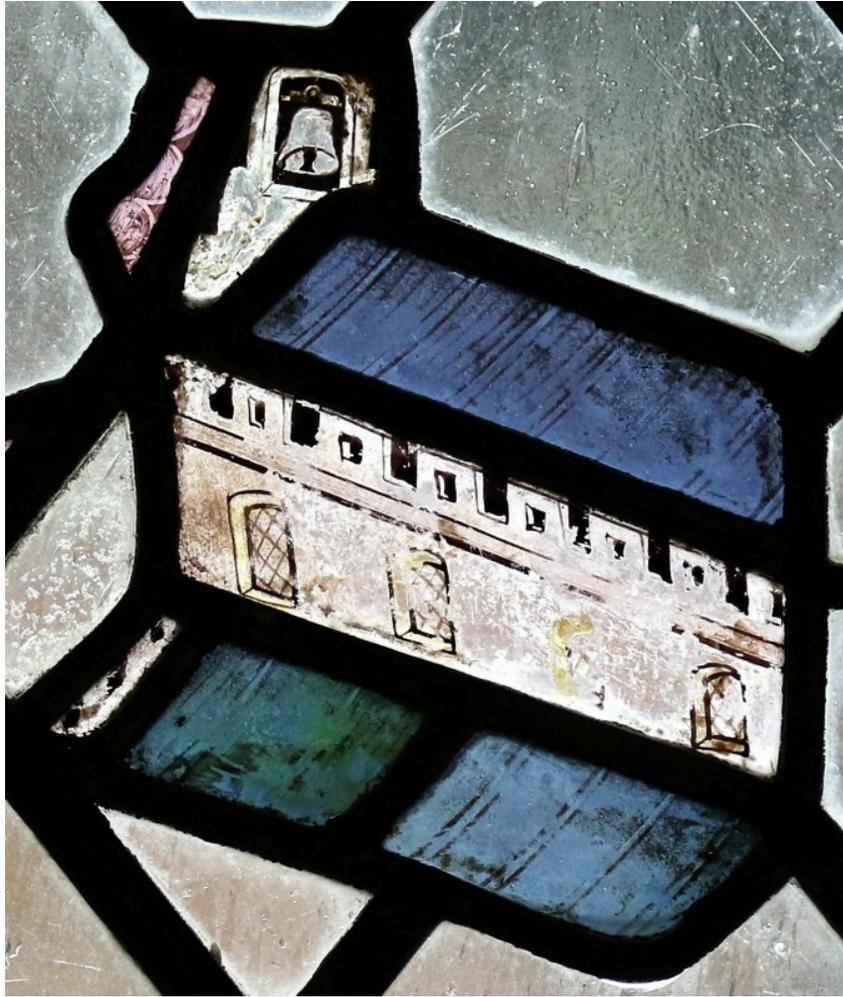


Figure 45.
Clerestory, Banningham Church. Digital image courtesy of Mike Dixon
(all rights reserved).

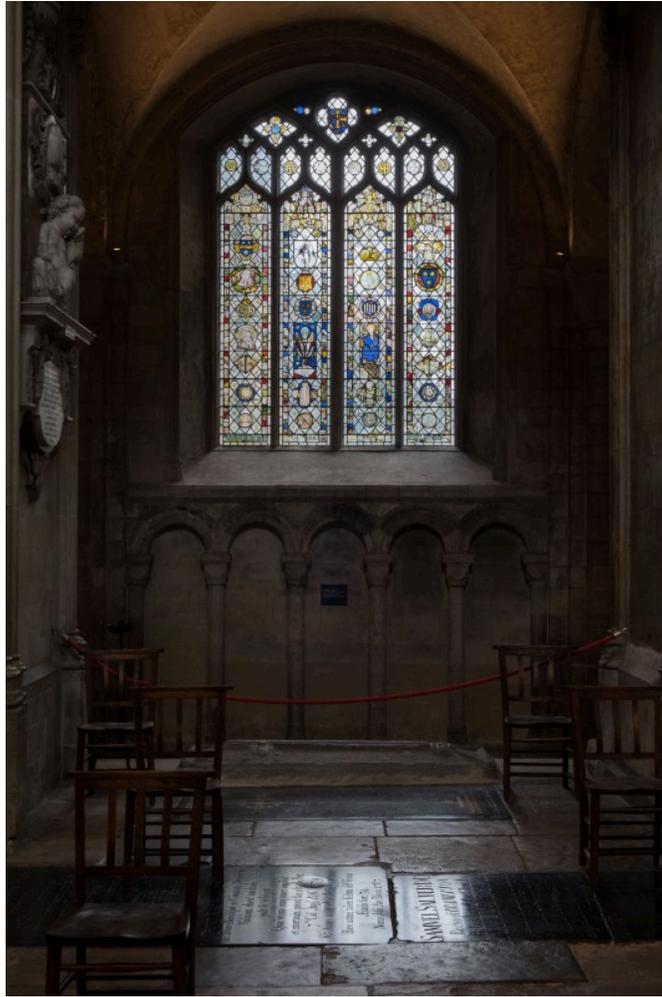


Figure 46.
Erpingham Window, Norwich Cathedral, March 2021.
Digital image courtesy of Glen Jamieson (all rights reserved).



Figure 47.

Grotesque corbel, Norwich Cathedral, March 2021.
Digital image courtesy of Glen Jamieson (all rights reserved).



Figure 48.

Grotesque corbel, Norwich Cathedral, March 2021.
Digital image courtesy of Glen Jamieson (all rights reserved).



Figure 49.
Grotesque corbel, Norwich Cathedral, March 2021.
Digital image courtesy of Glen Jamieson (all rights reserved).



Figure 50.

Grotesque corbel, Norwich Cathedral, March 2021. Digital image courtesy of Glen Jamieson (all rights reserved).



Figure 51.
Grotesque corbel, Norwich Cathedral, March 2021.
Digital image courtesy of Glen Jamieson (all rights reserved).



Figure 52.

Grotesque corbel, Norwich Cathedral, March 2021.
Digital image courtesy of Glen Jamieson (all rights reserved).

The remaining object loaned to us for our exhibition came from Fen Ditton Church, Cambridge and is listed in the *Treasures from East Anglian Churches* catalogue as: “Crowned Head. 13th Century: Stone; 7 1/4” high. Carving probably of the fabric of the Church—note direction of the moulding above crown”. The Reverend Dr Alun Ford of Fen Ditton, like Canon Wright, had no knowledge of its 1957 loan to Metzger. For years, it had been placed on a table in the aisle after an elderly member of the congregation found it among other fragments at the base of the bell tower (Fig. 53). In January 1643, it is recorded that William Dowsing, famously appointed by the Earl of Manchester as commissioner for the destruction of monuments of idolatry and superstition (Essex, Cambridgeshire, Norfolk, Suffolk and Hertfordshire, Huntingdonshire and Lincolnshire), had visited the church. In his

extraordinary inventory of destruction, he records how in Fen Ditton: “We beat down two crucifixes, and the 12 Apostles, and many other superstitious pictures”.⁷⁷ Was the Crowned Head among these?



Figure 53.

Crowned head, thirteenth century, stone; 18.4 cm high, carving of the fabric of the Church, St Mary the Virgin, Fen Ditton, March 2021. Digital image courtesy of Glen Jamieson (all rights reserved).

In the late 1950s, all of the objects loaned to *Treasures from East Anglian Churches* were mostly “loose parts”, untethered from their architecture and site, assembled for exhibition and then returned again to be fixed into place. Tracing the lives of the objects led us to the single remaining “loose part” at Fen Ditton. The loan of Crowned Head to LOWER.GREEN was done so under emergency measures by the Ely diocese in the understanding that it would be safer on display in our exhibition than to remain on the table in the church. Metzger’s exhibit brought together a series of objects in flux since returned to their (mostly) original surroundings; the loan of the corbel to the

LOWER.GREEN show demonstrated the last object to be fixed in its site, also enabling the partially restaged exhibition to take place (see Fig. 5). Its loan to the gallery—and the discovery of its earlier inclusion in Metzger’s *Treasures from East Anglian Churches*—would form the basis for a funding application to the preservation trust for the appropriate fixings to ensure it could be viewed in the church by visitors to come. Such artefacts become heritage objects when given curatorial recognition: an unintended consequence of Metzger’s prioritisation of raw materials “as found”, which became historically significant as material and visual culture when displayed.

Gustav Metzger: Artist, Dealer, Curator, Activist

It is impossible, as Andrew Wilson has noted, to isolate Metzger’s practice as an artist from his engagement in different kinds of political activism.⁷⁸ It is the lecture/demonstration form that Metzger’s first, and subsequent, presentation of auto-destructive art took, and it is the written manifesto that communicates his aims through successive re-draftings. Both seek to inform and persuade, with the “manifesto moment” as Mary Ann Caws calls it, positioned between “what has been done and what will be done, between the accomplished and the potential, in a radical and energizing division”.⁷⁹ Concerned with “nowness” and “newness”, the manifesto is a deliberate manipulation of the public view, a document of ideology, crafted to rouse, convince, and convert. These are ideal forms for Metzger because, as Wilson writes:

Auto-destructive art was conceived [...] as an intrinsically public art form, and its polemical purpose aimed at triggering specific responses in the viewer concerning particular issues to do with, for instance, nuclear weapons and nuclear power, pollution and the capitalist system.⁸⁰

Metzger’s activism in King’s Lynn formed in response to two destructive threats: on the one hand, the King’s Lynn mayor, chamber of trade and borough council’s post-war redevelopment plans and, on the other hand, nuclear technologies of mass destruction. If the latter had emerged in 1956 as a global threat in the Cold War stand-off between East and West, Khrushchev and Eisenhower, the former Metzger recognised it as a stand-off between preservation of characteristic forms of local cultural life and unilateral commercial interests affecting historic towns across the nation. I explore Metzger’s role in a well-documented activist anti-nuclear movement in the region and then his more localised actions in King’s Lynn. These things coincide but, because of the paucity of biographical information, it is impossible to know how they were experienced simultaneously.

As an eastern frontier of the Continent throughout the Second World War, as many as fifty-three airfields operated out of Norfolk shared by both the Royal Air Force and the “friendly invaders” of the United States Air Force (USAF). In the years following Armistice Day, many were repurposed or returned to farmland, but at RAF North Pickenham, three miles east of Swaffham, fifteen miles south of King’s Lynn, construction work began in 1958 to house PGM-17 Thor, the first rapid-launch operational ballistic missile of the USAF with thermonuclear heads (Strategic Air Command, responsible for the US Cold War strategic nuclear strike forces operated out of RAF Mildenhall on the Norfolk/Suffolk border, twenty-five miles further south).

Metzger was initially in a regional King’s Lynn branch of Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) but, by 1958, his support shifted to the Direct Action Committee (DAC) in their series of non-violent demonstrations at Swaffham and North Pickenham on 6 and 20 December. It was through a Dr Wells in Hunstanton, who organised the original CND group, that Metzger became acquainted with DAC. Together, they informed their CND branch of their intention to occupy nearby bases and appealed for support in local agitation and in the march.⁸¹ In Eric Bamford’s extraordinary film *Rocket Site Story*, produced for the Nuclear Disarmament Newsreel Committee, Metzger can clearly be seen among the demonstrators listening to the field secretary Pat Arrowsmith and chair Michael Randle, who exhorts that “genocide is incompatible with democracy” (Fig. 54).⁸²



Figure 54.

Rocket Site Story, film still, 1958. Collection of East Anglian Film Archive at the University of East Anglia. Digital image courtesy of East Anglian Film Archive at the University of East Anglia (all rights reserved).

Bamford's film of the first demonstration—documentation of the second lacks audio because the child's pram used to transport the sound recording equipment for the first was not available—shows the protestors marching along frosty, oak-lined country lanes before entering the site to lobby workers and disrupt construction. They return the following morning and are met with mixed responses, including violence from some of the workers. Metzger remembers his horror at the way protestors were treated:

We waited and it got dark. Dust fell. They came out smeared in concrete. They had been ducked in concrete by the workmen ... There was a painter, John Hoyland, who was a teacher at Chelsea and his eye had been damaged. Women were in a desperate state ... It was a reliving of Nazi Germany. When you see people treated like that. They could have been ejected but they were manhandled in a disgraceful manner. Violated. ⁸³

At the next march on 20 December arrests were made. Attendees were fewer this second time because, according to Christopher Driver in his account in *The Disarmers*, the police had threatened coach companies with prosecution if they bussed in marchers. A total of forty-five arrests were made; most were

refused bail. Thirty-seven protestors spent Christmas in Norwich prison. ⁸⁴ Widely covered by the media, photographs of limp demonstrators carried away by police made the front cover of national newspapers (Fig. 55).



Figure 55.

Members of the DAC protest at the Thor missile base in North Pickenham, 1958. Digital image courtesy of Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (all rights reserved).

Around this time, Metzger publicly proselytised about the nuclear threat and travelled to attend nationwide marches and meetings. One account of this comes from Pat Arrowsmith herself, whose report on the first lecture/ demonstration of auto-destructive art at Temple Gallery for *Peace News*, 22 July 1960, suggests his proximity to the DAC leadership (Fig. 56). Arrowsmith notes Metzger's activism as a necessary context for understanding his intentions:

I myself walked into London beside him at the end of last year's Aldermaston March. He took part in the Stevenage campaign against missile manufacture a year ago; and back in the early days of the campaign stood up on a soap box to address the stallholders of Watton Market. ⁸⁵

By the time Arrowsmith's article was published, Metzger had left King's Lynn, relocating to London, where he had attended meetings with dissatisfied DAC and CND allies in the basement of the New Left hangout, Partisan in Soho. Here, Metzger met the American Youth CND Executive Ralph Schoenman. Desperate to start a new anti-nuclear movement of civil disobedience, Schoenman called on Bertrand Russell as the public face of the campaign. Convinced that CND and DAC were no longer effective, Russell agreed to support what would be the Committee of 100 (Fig. 57). Both Schoenman and Metzger, at the time, were reading in the Italian Renaissance period, and, according to Driver's account, "they decided afterwards that the title 'Committee of 100' had been a subconscious reminiscence of the Guelphs and their 'Council of 100'." ⁸⁶ Its first march on 18 February 1961 gathered 20,000 protestors at Trafalgar Square, followed by a further 5,000 who marched on the Ministry of Defence at Whitehall to a sit-in. No arrests were made.

A FEW weeks ago I went to one of the most unusual "lectures" I have yet attended. It took place in a small art gallery in the basement of a dry cleaners' in Sloane Street, London.

The room was quite well filled with people, including one or two foreign press representatives. It was also full of a strange variety of other Gutsy Metzger's more fully realistic paintings (presumably the normal furnishings of the gallery) to a polythene bag full of multi-colored cast-off scraps of material from a milliner, and a floating heap of metal rod devices salvaged from some machine-tool factory.

This was the setting for Gustav Metzger's lecture-demonstration on auto-destructive art. To grasp the significance of his theories it is useful to know something about Gustav Metzger himself. For his political views and his artistic theories are related, and to some extent imprinted on each other.

Gustav Metzger is a Polish Jew whose parents were liquidated by the Germans during World War II. He was sent away to England in time to escape the same fate and is now, by choice, a "stateless" person. It is not perhaps surprising that someone with this background should be concerned with the problem of destruction and destructiveness.

Art with a message

He is also an active campaigner for nuclear disarmament. I myself met him at London beside him at the end of last year's Aldermaston March. He took part in the famous campaign against nuclear missiles during a year ago; and back in the early days of the campaign stood up at Wood Lane to address the stall-holders of Whitehall Market. Invariably the art of such a person carries a social message.

The lecture was prefaced by a brief description of the work of Joan Tingeloo, whose motto was "Homage to New York" was on show recently in the New York Museum of Modern Art. It was not a piece of sculpture in the ordinary sense of the word—it was an arrangement of mechanical devices, including flywheels, which, for extraneous and various reasons and financial instruments which, when set in motion, within a short space of time destroyed itself completely. It was "auto-destructive." Gustav Metzger is clearly one of the same school as Tingeloo, though perhaps he is less fundamentally destructive.

It was, I suppose, a very bad lecture—though someone this did not seem to mind. Gustav Metzger's rather limited incoherent delivery could not conceal the sincerity he felt about his subject. In fact, his occasional fits of mental aberration need to refer to his notes scattered in a various way to emphasize rather than detract from his sincerity.

His artistic theories should be of interest to anyone concerned about the problems of present day society. His aim, put concisely, is to be able to set up in a public place a piece of sculpture of abstract design composed of materials which are bound in time to decay or disintegrate.

If, for instance, the sculpture were made of some corrosive metal and set out-of-

Auto-destructive art

by PAT ARROWSMITH

Field Secretary of the Direct Action Committee Against Nuclear War

does the effect of wind and rain on its ultimate destruction. Alternatively, the sculpture might be constructed in such a way that periodically a portion of it could be removed, used in the end there was nothing left. In other words, the essential characteristics of auto-destructive art is that the artistic object created should eventually cease to exist.

Gustav Metzger may well be right when he says that the rest of art would shock the general public. For in a symbolic way it would demonstrate the current state of society—a society whose basic ingredients are such that it seems all too likely to end up by destroying itself. People do not like to be reminded of this sort of thing. They might not all consciously grasp the fundamental meaning of such an art form; but unconsciously they might be inclined to resist it. So in Gustav Metzger's opinion auto-destructive art would be "subversive"; it would be a way of challenging society, shaking people out of their complacency.

The general public would ask why such a sculpture had been set up, why so much time and trouble had been spent on something which was bound to disintegrate. The implicit response to such a question would, in Gustav Metzger's view, be: "Why is so much time and space spent on manufacturing bombs?"

Painting with acid

But Gustav Metzger is primarily an artist, not a political philosopher; and this became apparent during the second half of his lecture—the demonstration. Like a stage-set behind him, so he featured was a large pane of glass along from the ceiling, with a sheet of nylon stretched behind it. Metzger put on a pair of motor-cycling goggles, took out a paint brush and a pot of acid, and proceeded to "paint" a picture on the sheet of nylon.

The general effect was rather like a zoning performance. Then on a table in front of us were the various objects Metzger had used to illustrate his lecture: small component parts of machines, intricately designed pieces of cardboard and the model of his proposed sculpture made in miniature out of staples. Now we discerned his faintly as he moved about mysteriously behind the nylon screen collecting his materials together, then boldly painting his acid "pictures" with vigorous sweeping brush strokes. Anyone who had come in at that moment and not heard the first part of the lecture might have assumed that this was a demonstration of "action painting."

But this painting was only partly a

demonstration of auto-destructive art. For fabric to such an extent that soon little of the nylon was left, yet before the material disintegrated a painting indeed did appear for the time and holes made in the nylon imposed an ever-changing, interesting abstract design.

And this was where the logic of Metzger's theory faltered. Clearly he is not fully concerned with symbolism and with the ultimate destruction of the object created. He is also concerned with purely aesthetic values, some of them only tenuously linked with the idea of auto-destructive art. For instance, he is very interested in movement, and suggested setting up a sculpture which should comprise several forms that could constantly be moved about so that the viewer saw them standing as a

different relation to each other and catching the light at different angles.

He thinks it important that artists should try also to be technicians. (Of necessary going to work in factories for a time) so that they should have the skill to employ competently all the means and chemicals of modern technology when creating works of art.

None of this seems to have much direct connection with auto-destructive art—probably Gustav Metzger himself realised; for at one stage he referred to "anti-constructive" art and explained how closely related it was to auto-destructive art. He pointed out that as a metal sculpture decayed through corrosion it would be an ever-changing object, potentially beautiful at every stage of its disintegration. Such a sculpture might even be constructed with such technical skill that the sculptor would be able to guess the rate and pattern of corrosion and so ensure that his work of art was always aesthetically satisfying until it finally vanished.

So Gustav Metzger is not logical; a self-destructing society should not look beautiful in any stage. But not to be a nihilist—this is important. The value of his constructive ideas and positive approach outweigh the failure of logic. Society is all too full today of quibblers and despairing people whose only values are negative.

A. J. MUSTE

This is the record in a series of short profiles of American radicals and workers by Duncan Gowrie.

A. J. MUSTE was born in the Netherlands, 75 years ago at Zierikzee, in the Province of Zeeland. At the age of six he accompanied his family when they emigrated from their homeland, and settled in Michigan, at Grand Rapids.

He attended schools there and went to Hope College, a Dutch Reformed institution, and later the Dutch Reformed Seminary. His dedication to theology had always been taken for granted in his family. He soon went on to pastorate in New Jersey and Long Island. He recalled pastorate in various places until the First World War, when he resigned in order to prevent the breaking up of his church, near Boston, because of his pacifist views. Since that time he has been actively engaged in activities for the cause in other faroes.

Mr. Muste has always been profoundly radical in his attitude in the Christian faith. His first was influenced by a radical observation of the conditions which, as a young pastor, he was exposed to in New York City. Then, with the First World War, he felt impelled to take a direct and active part in the struggle for peace and to work for the abolition of war service. The following years were spent in Civil Liberties activities in their behalf.

RECONSTRUCTION

In the Thirties he took a Marxist position in that part of the Party opposed to the Socialist shift. Mr. Muste took this position because it seemed to him at the time that it represented the nearest approach to some of those principles which he had devoted his life. However, after leading the losing fight within the Party for these principles, he concluded that this would not be the best medium through which he could accomplish his personal ends.

In 1936 he experienced what he calls a re-conversion to his original Christian beliefs, and decided that in the Fellowship of Reconciliation he would find his best form of action. Since that time he has been the prime mover in the F.R.

Today his activities might be described as divided between the War Resisters League, formed to register those C.D.s without a Christian persuasion, the F.R., the mother organization, and the Congress of Racial Equality, formed as a direct arm in the integration struggle. Set up after the last war, CORE early had many brilliant adherents, including



George Houser, Clyde Foote, James Farmer, A. Philip Randolph, and Bayard Rustin.

Mr. Muste's unique position in the American radical scene cannot be over-emphasized. His devotion to the Christian pacifist conviction has carried him through all the myriad events which tumbled over one another from 1912, when he voted for Eugene V. Debs, through two world wars, reaction, liberalism, mass uprisings, Wobblies, Roosevelt, segregation, integration, the Communist Party, McCarthy, and, perhaps worst of all, Eisenhower. All these pressures and many more seem to have proved the validity of Muste's original convictions.

Today the CP looks enviously at the non-violent movement generally, and at the F.R., the W.R.L. and CORE in particular, as representing the active radical effort in America. Their members are constantly in action, whether it be the Civil Defense protest, Negro integration, or nuclear protest. All of these non-violent, pacifist houses are built on the rock of Muste's ethics. It is on this line that Americans, the most cowardly of all.

At the moment Mr. Muste feels that the English and American radicals are at a critical point. Supposing next year there were 75,000 nuclear protesters in New York, and 100,000 in Trafalgar Square in London? What happens then? Or will the recent frightening events reduce those ranks of their potential? The question seems to be, will events force more people to adopt a radical attitude, or fear?

The future of the Left? Read:

- Socialism and Nationalism, Hugh Gaitskell, M.P. 2s. 6d.
- Casualties of the Welfare State, Audrey Harvey 2s. 6d.
- The Race Against the H-Bomb, Denis Healey, M.P. 2s. 6d.
- The Irresponsible Society, Richard Titmuss 2s. 6d.
- Can Labour Win?, Anthony Crosland, M.P. 2s. 6d.
- Labour in the Affluent Society, R. H. S. Crossman, M.P. 2s. 6d.
- Britain's Role in a Changing World, Kenneth Younger 2s. 6d.
- The Socialist Imagination, Wayland and Elizabeth Young 2s. 6d.
- (Socialism in the Sixties) all from The Fabian Society, 11 Dartmouth Street, S.W.1

Figure 56.

Pat Arrowsmith, "Auto-Destructive Art", Peace News, 22 July 1960, 11 (London: Peace Pledge Union, 1960). University of Bradford Special Collections. Digital image courtesy of University of Bradford Special Collections (all rights reserved).

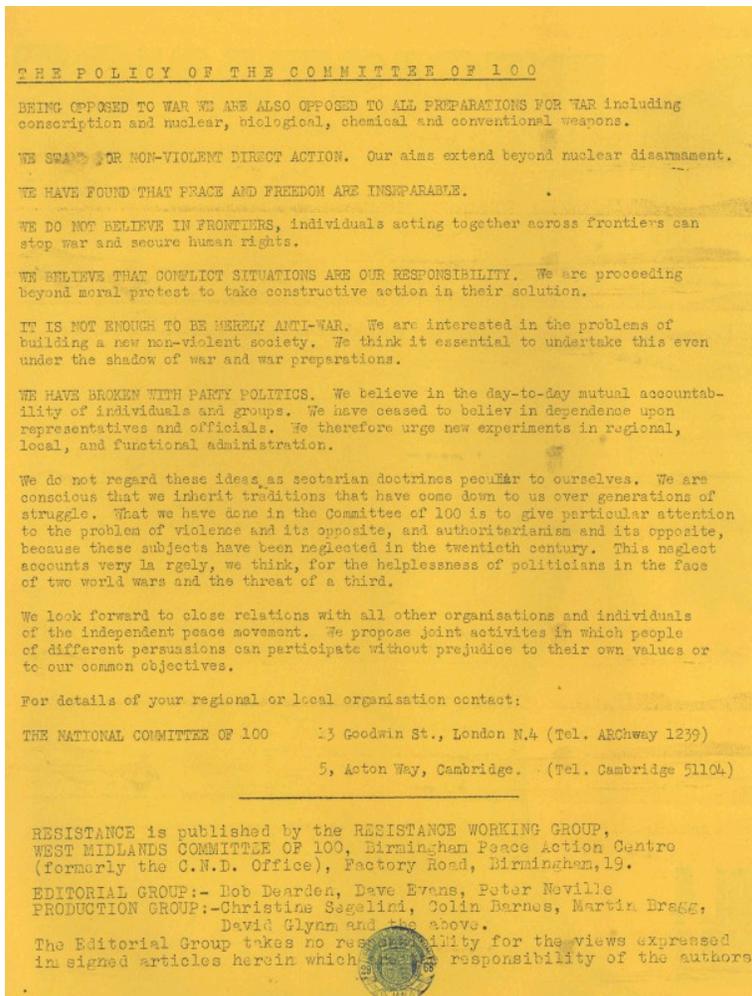


Figure 57.

The Policy of Committee of 100, (Birmingham: Resistance Working Group, West Midlands Committee of 100, 1964). University of Bradford Special Collections. Digital image courtesy of University of Bradford Special Collections (all rights reserved).

On 6 August, Hiroshima Day, the committee arranged to lay a wreath on the Cenotaph at Whitehall and in the afternoon meet at Speaker's Corner, Marble Arch. ⁸⁷ After being told not to use a loudhailer, a contravention of park rules, speakers persisted. The following month members of the committee received a court summons to Bow Street Magistrates Court for 12 September 1961. Russell's sentence of a month for inciting civil disobedience was commuted to a week due to ill health. "I felt," Russell recalls in his autobiography, undoubtedly speaking of Metzger, "some of the sentences to be quite unduly harsh, but I was outraged only by the words of the magistrate to one of us who happened to be a Jewish refugee from Germany" (Fig. 58). ⁸⁸

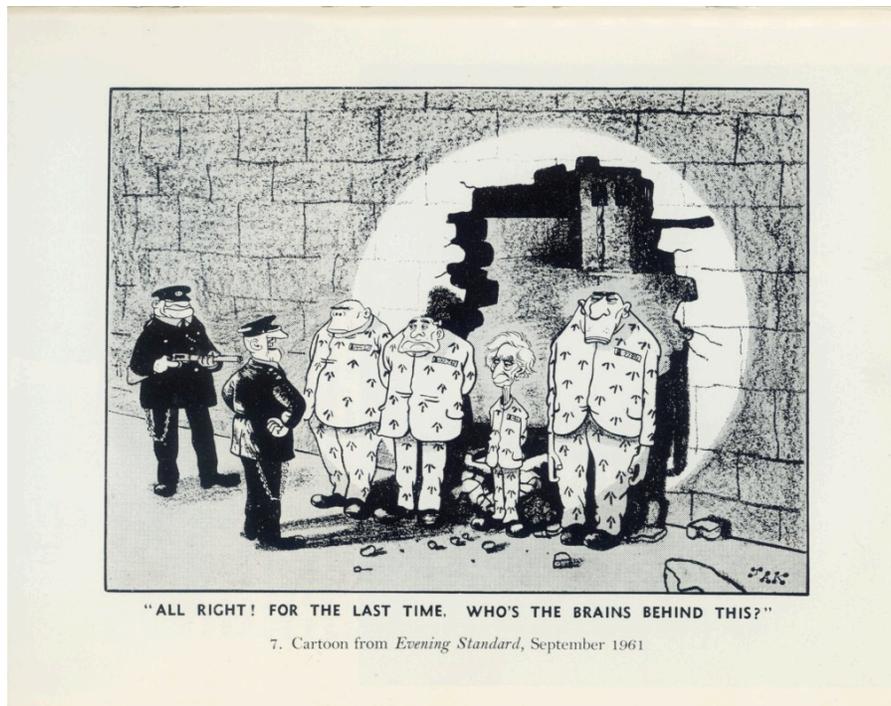


Figure 58.

Bertrand Russell, *Evening Standard*, cartoon, September 1961, reproduced in Bertrand Russell, *The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell*, Vol. 3, 1944–1967 (London: Simon & Schuster, 1969). Digital image courtesy of *Evening Standard*, Simon & Schuster (all rights reserved).

It is a powerful testament to the persistence of activism in Metzger’s practice that his 2016 retrospective at MUSAC, León, should be titled *Act or Perish* after *Act or Perish: A Call to Non-Violent Action* co-authored by Earl Russell and Rev. Michael Scott for the Committee of 100 (Fig. 59). Like the best polemics, the latter’s manifesto-like rhetoric was unwavering and direct:

Every day, and at every moment of every day, a trivial accident, a failure to distinguish a meteor from a bomber, a fit of temporary insanity in one single man, may cause a nuclear world war, which, in all likelihood, will put an end to man and to all higher forms of animal life. [...] To us, the vast scheme of mass murder which is being hatched—nominally for our protection, but in fact for universal extermination—is a horror and an abomination. [...] Our immediate purpose, in so far as it is political, is only to persuade Britain to abandon reliance upon the illusory protection of nuclear weapons [...] We appeal, as human beings to human beings: remember your humanity, and forget the rest. If you can do so, the way lies open to a new Paradise; if you cannot, nothing lies before you but universal death. ⁸⁹

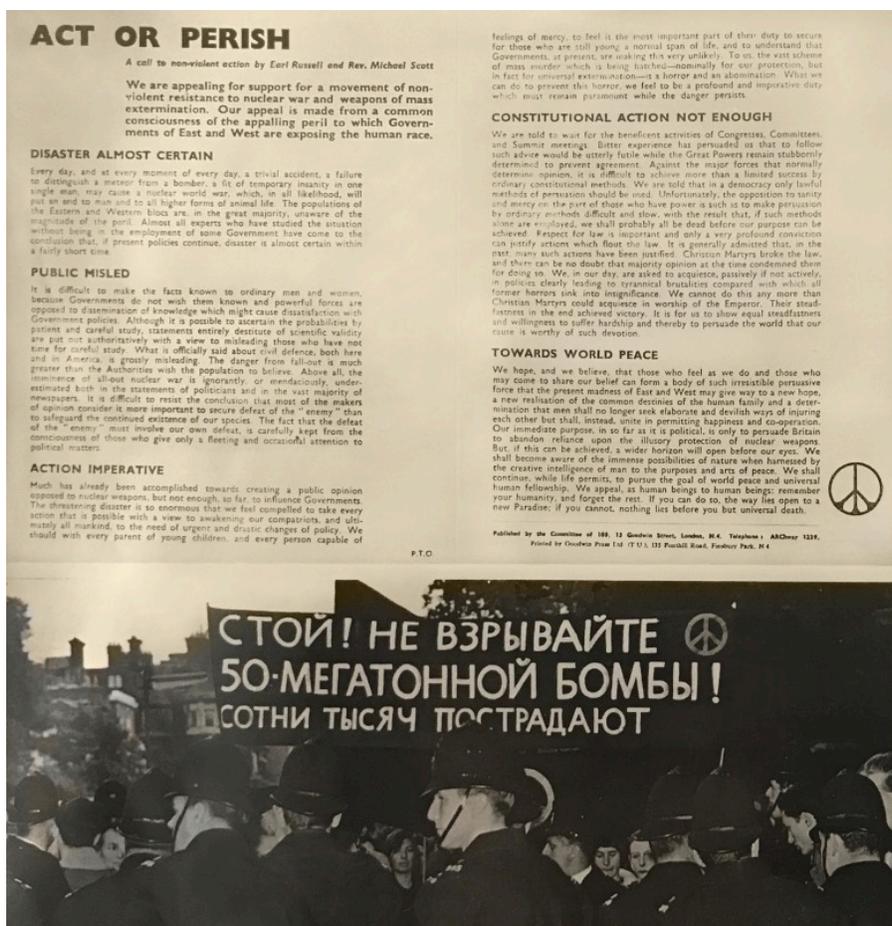


Figure 59. Earl Russell and Rev. Michael Scott, *Act or Perish: A Call to Non-Violent Action*, poster (London: Committee of 100, 1960), 1960. University of Bradford Special Collections. Digital image courtesy of University of Bradford Special Collections (all rights reserved).

In the penultimate chapter of Christopher Driver's *The Disarmers, "Art in a Cold Climate"*, he begins, echoing Herbert Read, by arguing that "nothing signifies the horizontal spread and vertical penetration" of bomb-consciousness in British society than the response to it of creative artists. And yet, paradoxically, he writes, "the significance of this response lies as much in eloquent silences and omissions as in direct utterances".⁹⁰ While the leading writers and artists aligned with Schoenman and the Committee of 100 were highly effective pamphleteers, in their professional work, they tended to approach the problems of nuclear weapons and their use only tangentially: "One senses a feeling not only of political helplessness before the fact of nuclear weapons but of imaginative helplessness also."⁹¹ The nuclear sublime—not unlike the Holocaust in Germany—is so obscene, so incomprehensibly destructive that, perhaps, the creative imagination cannot assimilate it.

While Driver, writing retrospectively, goes on to acknowledge a shift in attitudes to representing the bomb a decade later, it is instructive to return to Arrowsmith's *Peace News* article on Metzger's first lecture/demonstration of auto-destructive art. Auto-destructive art would, in a symbolic way, she writes, "demonstrate the current state of society: a society whose basic ingredients are such that it seems all too likely to end up by destroying itself".⁹² And yet, as she watches the nylon disintegrate, she cannot deny the beauty of the dynamic proliferation of images. Sensing a paradox between destruction and creation, Arrowsmith suggests that "Metzger is not logical: a self-destructing society should not look beautiful at this stage." "But," she continues, "nor is he a nihilist—and this is important. The value of his constructive ideas and positive approach outweigh the failure of logic. Society is all too full today of apathetic and despairing people whose only values are negative."⁹³

Arrowsmith's sensitive and intelligent analysis is willing to move beyond critical orthodoxy to admit a complexity at the very core of Metzger's practice. Indeed, in his third manifesto of 1961, "Auto-Creative Art", which he defines as "an art of change, growth, movement", enters his artistic idiom.⁹⁴ The tension between destruction and creation is by now a central aspect of Metzger's practice.

Metzger's intense activism around the bomb coincided with his North End Protest (1957) out of which formed the North End Society (1958) to protest the King's Lynn mayor, chamber of trade and borough council's post-war redevelopment scheme affecting historic fishing quarters. The lessons of persuasive rhetoric crafted to rouse, convince, and convert, strategies of distribution and publicity, and recruitment are instrumental in Metzger's letter to the editor of *Lynn News and Advertiser* of 20 December 1957, responding to a speech delivered by the mayor at the town's chamber of commerce addressing his prior criticisms.

In 1957, Metzger was living in St Nicholas House next to St Nicholas, a chapel of ease founded in 1146 to serve new fishermen's quarters forming around North Street and Pilot Street—the North End (Fig. 60). Following earlier slum clearances in the 1930s, it had come to Metzger's attention that the few remaining cottages would be lost to a road on a proposed redevelopment plan. "I was going home and I saw a poster saying that there was a hearing on the 15 August into the future of the North End," Metzger recalls.⁹⁵ He continues:

I saw this and I thought I had better look into this ... What is going to happen? I went to the town hall and looked at the programme and it horrified me ... I said this is totally unacceptable. If no one else is going to do anything I thought I have to do something immediately. ⁹⁶

Characterising the road as an “autobahn”, it would, he writes in the *Lynn News and Advertiser* letter, encircle St Nicholas: “Probably the greatest work of architecture in Lynn”, which would be “stripped of its deepest spiritual aesthetic meaning”. ⁹⁷



Figure 60.

St Nicholas Chapel, view from St Nicholas House, King's Lynn, March 2021. Digital image courtesy of Glen Jamieson (all rights reserved).

The *Lynn News and Advertiser* said they would photograph Metzger and the following issue of the newspaper featured him on the front page with the headline: “Gustav Metzger Protest Against Redevelopment of North End” (see Fig. 10). “I was flabbergasted,” Metzger recalls:

That was the start. It never stopped. It went on and on and on. People would then talk to me on the Tuesday Market stall. This became a little subversive focus. Within a few months I initiated a North End society. One man, a patriarch, whose house we would meet—in his seventies, white face or beard—a fisherman, old but powerful, he was agitating behind the scenes. We had a university-trained woman who became secretary. We had a programme, a constitution. ⁹⁸

As Metzger understood it, the rich people sitting in the town hall wanted to get rid of a lower, primitive way of life. This was not, as he put it, just about the economy or maintaining generational wealth, but an attack on another level of life. Interestingly, Metzger begins his letter stating that it is “the first official response to the national protest against subtopia next to St Nicholas’ Chapel which I am organizing”. ⁹⁹

In July 1955, “Subtopia” was a neologism coined by the architectural critic Ian Nairn in the *Architectural Review’s* “Outrage” issue. Having travelled the breadth of England by car, Nairn encountered such undifferentiated town planning that “the end of Southampton looks like the beginning of Carlisle and the parts in between look like the end of Carlisle or the beginning of Southampton”. “Subtopia” named this characterless landscape, where singularity of place had been scrubbed out and, with it, characteristic English consciousness—a “mass psychosis rooted in the fantastic acceptance of mediocrity”. ¹⁰⁰

The success of the “Outrage” issue led the *Architectural Review* to establish a “Counter-Attack Bureau” that functioned as a “service to monitor and guide the good visual character of England” for architects, planners, and citizens. A monthly “Counter-Attack” column in the journal monitored specific cases submitted by readers. In the spirit of attack, Metzger signs off his *Lynn News and Advertiser* letter to the editor by stating that:

it has been a long time since Lynn Borough Council has been faced with national opposition, but it happens to be in the national interest to maintain the old town of Lynn as an oasis, a kind of architectural lung, in an increasingly industrialized, spoilt England. ¹⁰¹

Indeed, in the North End Society's document of stated aims, published the following year in February 1958, support was confirmed by the *Architectural Review's* "Counter-Attack: Against Subtopia Unit [*sic*]", established by popular demand to combat its spread, the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, and the Norfolk branch of the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England. The story went to the regional *Eastern Daily Press*, which probably syndicated it to the national press. Taking aim at the council's appointment of Dr Thomas Sharp, a famous town planner who had been consulted on numerous post-war redevelopments, including in Durham (1945), Exeter (1946), Chester (1945), Merseyside (1945), Middlesbrough (1946), and Worcester (1946), the society's stated objectives were to protect North Street and Pilot Street from wholesale demolition by Lynn council and to work for the repair and improvement of property in these streets (Figs. 61, 62, and 63). ¹⁰² Should demolition be required to take place, the statement reads, rebuilding should be from a scheme prepared by an eminent architect, bearing in mind the historic character of the area, giving preference to houses for remaining fishermen and their families. ¹⁰³

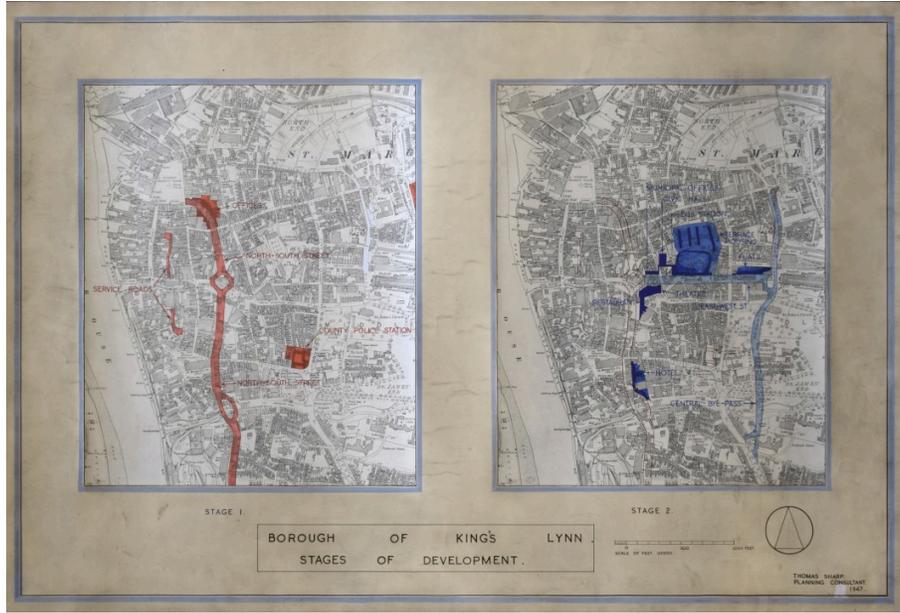


Figure 61.

Dr Sharp, Borough of King's Lynn Stages of Development, King's Lynn, Stages 1 and 2 , 1947. Collection of Norfolk Record Office. Digital image courtesy of Norfolk Record Office (all rights reserved).



Figure 62.

Dr Sharp, Borough of King's Lynn Stages of Development, King's Lynn, Stage 1, 1947. Collection of Norfolk Record Office. Digital image courtesy of Norfolk Record Office (all rights reserved).



Figure 63.

Dr Sharp, Borough of King's Lynn Stages of Development, King's Lynn, Stage 2, 1947. Collection of Norfolk Record Office. Digital image courtesy of Norfolk Record Office (all rights reserved).

Metzger, speaking in the late 1990s, recalled that he had gone as far as purchasing a house in North End—something simple, one up one down—for £10 from a dealer friend that he would squat in until the bitter end. Could this have been 26 Pilot Street (see Fig. 9)? Although the plans drawn up by Sharp were not instigated in town, others were, and Metzger felt they had lost. They saved some houses and modified the road. Ultimately, this was a factor that motivated his departure: “I felt, look if King's Lynn is a town that even thinks of that, even if there is a struggle and we lose, then why stay?”¹⁰⁴ The actions of the North End Society motivated the creation of King's Lynn Preservation Trust. In 1978, the trust restored 26 Pilot Street, alongside five other properties. It is possible that without Metzger's and the North End Society's intervention an autobahn would now span the medieval town.

Conclusion

Asked by Hans Ulrich Obrist in 2008 where his oeuvre would begin, Metzger periodised the early work according to that made under Bomberg, followed by “the King’s Lynn years”.¹⁰⁵ Undoubtedly, it was a significant period in the artist’s development: to have conserved works on paper from this time—and control their release in exhibitions later in his life—appears to be somewhat of a paradox given his later work’s preoccupation with the trauma of destruction. While Metzger’s life and later auto-destructive art, strikes, and ecological activism have received scholarly attention in retrospectives and monographs, little has been written of this remarkable time in King’s Lynn. Metzger’s “return” to this troubling early period coincided with Lynda Morris’ invitation in 2005.

Aside from EASTinternational, the extent of Metzger’s curatorial work is often understood as being limited to the important Destruction in Art Symposium of 1966. However, as this article has argued, Metzger actively programmed Thirty Queens alongside the re-emergence of his own art practice. In fact, it was in the catalogue of *Treasures from East Anglian Churches*, in his writing and curatorial practice—rather than his later paintings on steel—that Metzger first engages with the topic of destruction. Re-examining Metzger’s time in King’s Lynn, I have sought to extend the characterisation of his work to include that of artist-dealer, artist-curator, and artist-activist and to see this town as central to his conceptions of art, politics, and life.

Footnotes

- 1 Metzger cited by Mathieu Copeland in a personal conversation with me and Nell Croose Myhill in June 2018. This quote is frequently reproduced in print without citation and has taken on a mythical quality.
- 2 Gustav Metzger, *Gustav Metzger Interviewed by Clive Phillpot (Part 1)*, National Sound Archive (NSA), London, UK, Tape 10 (F5532, ARZZ), 1997.
- 3 See folders of letters to David Bomberg from miscellaneous correspondents, 1919–1957. Correspondence, writings, papers, photographs, printed material, and press cuttings of the English painter David Garshen Bomberg (1890–1957) and his second wife Lilian Bomberg, née Holt (1898–1983). Tate Archive. GB 70 TGA 878/2/3 and GB 70 TGA 878/3/11. The School of London is a contested group identity—typically with Michael Andrews, Frank Auerbach, Francis Bacon, Lucian Freud, and Leon Kossoff at its core. See Michael Peppiatt’s *The School of London: Six Figurative Painters* published in 1999 by The British Council Visual Arts Publications to accompany a touring exhibition of the same title. For a contemporary rereading, see Elena Crippa and Catherine Lampert, *London Calling: Bacon, Freud, Kossoff, Andrews, Auerbach, and Kitaj* (Los Angeles, CA: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2016).
- 4 Lynda Morris, ed., *EASTinternational Catalogue: Selector Gustav Metzger, 2 July–20 August 2005* (Norwich: Norwich Gallery, 2005), 11.
- 5 Morris, *EASTinternational Catalogue*, 11.
- 6 Nikolaus Pevsner and Bill Wilson, *Norfolk 2: North-West and South* (London: Penguin Books, 1999), 495.
- 7 Hans Ulrich Obrist, *Gustav Metzger: The Conversation Series* (Cologne: Verlag Der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2008), 118. Lynda Morris has noted how in the mid-1970s Metzger was interested “in withdrawal as a means of renewal”. See Morris, *EASTinternational Catalogue*, 7.
- 8 Lynda Morris, “The International Provincial”, Artquest Keynote Speech, Cecil Sharp House, Camden, 2013. For a sound recording of the lecture: <https://soundcloud.com/artquest/sets/for-the-love-of-it>.
- 9 Morris, *EASTinternational Catalogue*, 11.
- 10 “1951–1961: From Painting to Spraying with Acid. Sketch of a Development”, leaflet, London, 1961, reproduced in Mathieu Copeland, ed., *Gustav Metzger: Writings (1953–2016)* (Zurich: JPR Ringier, 2019), 61.

- 11 Morris, *EASTinternational Catalogue*, 11.
- 12 *dOCUMENTA (13), The Book of Books*, exhibition catalogue 1/3, Kassel, 9 June–16 September 2012 (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2012), 287–289.
- 13 Mathieu Copeland, ed., *Gustav Metzger: Writings (1953–2016)* (Zurich: JPR Ringier, 2019).
- 14 Gustav Metzger, *Gustav Metzger Interviewed by Clive Phillpot (Part 1)*, National Sound Archive (NSA), London, UK, Tape 9 (F531, AQZZ), 1997.
- 15 Vanessa Parker, *The Making of Kings Lynn: Secular Buildings from the 11th to the 17th Centuries* (London: Phillimore, 1971), 112.
- 16 Parker, *The Making of King's Lynn*, 63.
- 17 Taking inflation into account, this is equivalent to around £21 today.
- 18 Metzger, *Gustav Metzger Interviewed by Clive Phillpot (Part 1)*, Tape 9.
- 19 Pevsner and Wilson, *Norfolk 2*, 497–498.
- 20 Metzger, *Gustav Metzger Interviewed by Clive Phillpot (Part 1)*, Tape 9.
- 21 Metzger, *Gustav Metzger Interviewed by Clive Phillpot (Part 1)*, Tape 9.
- 22 Metzger, *Gustav Metzger Interviewed by Clive Phillpot (Part 1)*, Tape 9.
- 23 Metzger, *Gustav Metzger Interviewed by Clive Phillpot (Part 1)*, Tape 9.
- 24 Metzger, *Gustav Metzger Interviewed by Clive Phillpot (Part 1)*, Tape 9.
- 25 Metzger, *Gustav Metzger Interviewed by Clive Phillpot (Part 1)*, Tape 9.
- 26 Pevsner and Wilson, *Norfolk 2*, 459.
- 27 Metzger, *Gustav Metzger Interviewed by Clive Phillpot (Part 1)*, Tape 10.
- 28 Metzger, *Gustav Metzger Interviewed by Clive Phillpot (Part 1)*, Tape 9.
- 29 Gustav Metzger, *Gustav Metzger Interviewed by Clive Phillpot (Part 1)*, National Sound Archive (NSA), London, UK, Tape 12 (F5534, AUZZ), 1997.
- 30 Metzger, *Gustav Metzger Interviewed by Clive Phillpot (Part 1)*, Tape 10.
- 31 Toni del Renzio, *Polemic 8: A Magazine of Philosophy, Psychology, and Aesthetics*, edited by Humphrey Slater (London: Rodney Phillips and Company, 1950).
- 32 By 1955 he taught textiles at the Central School of Art (Turnbull taught on the experimental design course) and had followed the Hendersons to Landemere Quarry near Thorpe-le-Soken in rural Essex to co-direct Hammer Prints Ltd.
- 33 According to Michelle Cotton, from the inception of Hammer Prints in August 1954 to December 1958, Paolozzi had over twenty-five exhibitions while also teaching one or two days per week, see Michelle Cotton, *Nigel Henderson and Eduardo Paolozzi: Hammer Prints Ltd. 1954–75*, exhibition catalogue (Colchester: Firstsite, 2013), 28.
- 34 Metzger, *Gustav Metzger Interviewed by Clive Phillpot (Part 1)*, Tape 10.
- 35 Gustav Metzger, “These Artists are Possessed: They Gamble with Life”, *Lynn News and Advertiser*, 27 July 1956, reproduced in Mathieu Copeland, ed., *Gustav Metzger: Writings (1953–2016)* (Zurich: JPR Ringier, 2019), 37.
- 36 Frank Whitford, *Eduardo Paolozzi*, exhibition catalogue: Tate, 22 September–31 October 1971 (London: Tate Gallery, 1971), 68–69.
- 37 See Anne Massey and Gregor Muir, *Institute of Contemporary Arts, London 1946–1968* (Arnhem: Roma Publications, 2014), 128.
- 38 Metzger, “These Artists are Possessed”, in Copeland, *Gustav Metzger*, 37.
- 39 Metzger, *Gustav Metzger Interviewed by Clive Phillpot (Part 1)*, Tape 10.
- 40 Anthony Hatwell, Bill Hare, and Talbot Rice Gallery, *Anthony Hatwell: Sculpture & Drawing* (Edinburgh: Talbot Rice Gallery, 2013), 5.
- 41 Metzger, “These Artists are Possessed”, in Copeland, *Gustav Metzger*, 36.
- 42 Metzger, “These Artists are Possessed”, in Copeland, *Gustav Metzger*, 38.
- 43 Metzger, *Gustav Metzger Interviewed by Clive Phillpot (Part 1)*, Tape 10.
- 44 It was Crosby, curator of *This is Tomorrow*, who invited Metzger to present at the International Union of Architects, or perhaps it did something for him.
- 45 See Clive Phillpot’s “Gustav Metzger Chronology and Bibliography”, in Gustav Metzger and Andrew Wilson, *Gustav Metzger: Damaged Nature, Auto-Destructive Art* (London: Coracle @ workfortheeyetodo, 1996).
- 46 Metzger admired the Smithsons’ school at Hunstanton, ten miles from King’s Lynn, completed in 1954, an exemplary for Banham of new brutalism in architecture. Three years later, in 1957, the Smithsons would write that “Brutalism tries to face up to a mass-produced society, and drag a rough poetry out of the confused and powerful forces which are at work.” See Alison and Peter Smithson, “The New Brutalism”, *Architectural Design* 27 (April 1957), 113.

- 47 Here I'm citing Fraser Muggeridge Studio's 2014 facsimile of the *This is Tomorrow* catalogue reproduced for the 2010 Whitechapel Gallery archival exhibition.
- 48 Anne Massey, *The Independent Group: Modernism and Mass Culture in Britain, 1945-59* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008), 97.
- 49 Metzger, *Gustav Metzger Interviewed by Clive Phillpot (Part 1)*, Tape 9.
- 50 Gustav Metzger, "Machine, Auto-Creative and Auto-Destructive Art", *ARK: Journal of the Royal College of Art*, London, no. 32 (Summer 1962), reproduced in Mathieu Copeland, ed., *Gustav Metzger: Writings (1953-2016)* (Zurich: JPR Ringier, 2019), 82.
- 51 Metzger, *Gustav Metzger Interviewed by Clive Phillpot (Part 1)*, Tape 10.
- 52 Gustav Metzger, "Manifesto Auto-Destructive Art (Second Manifesto)", March 1960, reproduced in Mathieu Copeland, ed., *Gustav Metzger: Writings (1953-2016)* (Zurich: JPR Ringier, 2019), 66.
- 53 Ronald Hutton, *The Triumph of the Moon: A History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 371.
- 54 Michael Howard, "A Very English Witch", *The Cauldron* 111 (2004). See Cottie Arthur Burland, *The Magical Arts: A Short History* (London: Barker, 1966).
- 55 This was confirmed in personal email correspondence, dated October 2020, with Gardner's biographer Philip Heselton whose unpublished article "Monica English—A Remarkable Norfolk Artist and Witch" builds on the work of Lois Bourne, Fred Lamond, and Michael Howard.
- 56 For a broader context, see Owen Davies, *The Oxford Illustrated History of Witchcraft and Magic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).
- 57 Lois Bourne, *Dancing with Witches* (London: Robert Hale, 1998). Once this source is accessible after the current COVID-19 restrictions pass, this footnote will be updated with the page number.
- 58 Hutton, *The Triumph of the Moon*, 289.
- 59 Newby is quoted in Howard, "A Very English Witch". Once this source is accessible after the current COVID-19 restrictions pass, this footnote will be updated with the page number.
- 60 Howard, "A Very English Witch". Once this source is accessible after the current COVID-19 restrictions pass, this footnote will be updated with the page number.
- 61 *Treasures from East Anglian Churches* exhibition catalogue with an introduction by Gustav Metzger and afterword by H. G. Ridler, King's Lynn Festival, 1957.
- 62 Christopher Woodforde, *The Norwich School of Glass-Painting in the Fifteenth Century* (London: Oxford University Press, 1950). Metzger also cites Woodforde's later *English Stained and Painted Glass* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954), as well H.M. Cautley's compendious works *Suffolk Churches and their Treasures* (London: B.T. Batsford, 1937) and *Norfolk Churches* (Ipswich: Norman Adlard, 1949).
- 63 Gustav Metzger, "Introduction", *Treasures from East Anglian Churches*, exhibition catalogue with afterword by H.G. Ridler (King's Lynn: King's Lynn Festival, 1957).
- 64 Pevsner and Wilson, *Norfolk 2*, 486.
- 65 Parker, *The Making of Kings Lynn*, 67.
- 66 Parker, *The Making of Kings Lynn*, 89.
- 67 Margaret Aston, *Broken Idols of the English Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 6.
- 68 For an account of Hall's circumstances see Robert Wyndham Ketton-Cremer, *Norfolk in the Civil War: A Portrait of a Society in Conflict* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1970). Hall also recorded his impeachment of high crimes for defending the Church of England in *Bishop Hall's Hard Measure*; see Joseph Hall, *Bishop Hall's Hard Measure, Written by Himself upon his Impeachment of High Crimes and Misdemeanours for Defending the Church of England. Being a Case Something Parallel to Dr. S—I* (London: 1710).
- 69 Keith Thomas, "Art and Iconoclasm in Early Modern England", in *Religious Politics in Post-Reformation England*, edited by Kenneth Fincham and Peter Lake (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2006), 16.
- 70 See "King's Lynn Charter Pageant 1204-1954 | Historical Pageants", 2016, [Historicalpageants.ac.uk](https://www.historicalpageants.ac.uk). <https://www.historicalpageants.ac.uk/pageants/1384/>; Documentation of the Pageant can be viewed here: "East Anglian Film Archive: King's Lynn Charter Pageant, 1954", n.d. www.eafa.org.uk. <http://www.eafa.org.uk/catalogue/841>.
- 71 David Brett, *The Plain Style* (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 2004), 11.
- 72 Brett, *The Plain Style*, 20.
- 73 Gustav Metzger, "Manifesto SDA SELF DESTRUCTIVE ART [Draft]", November 1959, reproduced in Mathieu Copeland, ed., *Gustav Metzger: Writings (1953-2016)* (Zurich: JPR Ringier, 2019), 57.
- 74 Metzger, "Manifesto Auto-Destructive Art (Second Manifesto)", in Copeland, *Gustav Metzger*, 66.
- 75 Metzger, "Machine, Auto-Creative and Auto-Destructive Art", in Copeland, *Gustav Metzger*, 85.

- 76 Eamon Duffy evokes this church's fifteenth-century splendour: "In 1488 the Norfolk country church of Stratton Strawless had lamps burning not only before the Rood with Mary and John, and an image of the Trinity, but before a separate statue of the Virgin, and images of Sts Margaret, Anne, Nicholas, John the Baptist, Thomas Becket, Christopher, Erasmus, James the Great, Katherine, Petronella, Sythe, and Michael the Archangel." See Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, c.1400-c.1580* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005), 155.
- 77 William Dowsing, *The Journal of William Dowsing: Iconoclasm in East Anglia during the English Civil War*, edited by Trevor Cooper (Woodbridge: The Ecclesiological Society with Boydell, 2001).
- 78 Andrew Wilson, "Gustav Metzger's Auto-Destructive/Auto-Creative Art: An Art of Manifesto, 1959-69", *Third Text* 22, no. 2 (March 2008), 177.
- 79 Mary Ann Caws, ed., *Manifesto: A Century of Isms* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), xxi.
- 80 Wilson, "Gustav Metzger's Auto-Destructive/Auto-Creative Art", 178.
- 81 Metzger, *Gustav Metzger Interviewed by Clive Phillpot (Part 1)*, Tape 10.
- 82 East Anglian Film Archive, "Rocket Site Story, 1958 Swaffham, Norfolk", December 1958, catalogue no. 665, <http://www.eafa.org.uk/catalogue/665>.
- 83 Metzger, *Gustav Metzger Interviewed by Clive Phillpot (Part 1)*, Tape 10.
- 84 Christopher Driver, *The Disarmers: A Study in Protest* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1964), 107.
- 85 Pat Arrowsmith, "Auto-Destructive Art", *Peace News*, 22 July 1960, 11.
- 86 A medieval Italian papal faction in conflict with the Holy Roman Empire, the Guelphs had died as Christian martyrs for refusing to worship the Emperor: their steadfastness and willingness to suffer achieved a final victory. Driver, *The Disarmers*, 112.
- 87 This laying of the wreath was a contested gesture: British lives were lost in the Pacific and Burma campaigns against Japan.
- 88 Russell, *The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell*, 116.
- 89 From a flyer published by the Committee of 100, Goodwin Press, London.
- 90 Driver, *The Disarmers*, 218.
- 91 Russell, *The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell*, 219.
- 92 Arrowsmith, "Auto-Destructive Art", 11.
- 93 Arrowsmith, "Auto-Destructive Art", 11.
- 94 Gustav Metzger, "Auto-Destructive Art, Machine Art, Auto-Creative Art (Third Manifesto)", 1961, reproduced in Mathieu Copeland, ed., *Gustav Metzger: Writings (1953-2016)* (Zurich: JPR Ringier, 2019), 76.
- 95 Metzger, *Gustav Metzger Interviewed by Clive Phillpot (Part 1)*, Tape 10.
- 96 Metzger, *Gustav Metzger Interviewed by Clive Phillpot (Part 1)*, Tape 10.
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