

5-17-2008

## Metamorphosis of Rubbish: Eduardo Paolozzi's General Dynamic F.U.N.

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### Recommended Citation

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*MALS Final Projects, 1995-2019*. 53.  
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**Metamorphosis of Rubbish:**  
**Eduardo Paolozzi's *General Dynamic F.U.N.***

by

Michelle L. Paquette

FINAL PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF ARTS IN LIBERAL STUDIES

SKIDMORE COLLEGE  
February 2008  
Advisors: Jay Rogoff, John Weber

### Abstract

This project incorporates the production of written materials that support a proposed art exhibit of curated selections from Eduardo Paolozzi's *General Dynamic F.U.N.* print series, a holding in the Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery's permanent collection. Included in this project are reproductions of the curated artwork, a catalog introduction, introductory wall text and exhibit labels, and four creative essays.

Eduardo Paolozzi was a forceful proponent in the 1950s-1960s of the appropriation of American pop cultural iconography for works of art. His work bridged formal Surrealism and the inception of the Pop Art movement in Britain. The exhibit labels and catalog introduction examine the historical, psychological, cultural, and philosophical contexts in which Paolozzi's art developed. The essays were conceived as a means to lessen the distance between viewer and art by adding another layer of meaning to the exhibited prints.

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## [Introductory Wall Text]

*All human experience is one big collage.* Eduardo Paolozzi

Almost three decades before Andy Warhol had immortalized the soup can, Eduardo Paolozzi (1924-2005) was crowding childhood scrapbooks with symbols of American popular culture he found in old magazines, newspapers, and comic strips. Paolozzi first came to notoriety in England in 1952 with the debut of *Bunk*, his landmark improvisational slide show of scrapbook imagery, significant for its anticipation of the sensory overload of our current information age. Renowned as a founder of the British Pop Art movement for his prints of collaged pulp images, Paolozzi hijacked familiar icons like Mr. Peanut, the Chiquita banana, and Cary Grant in drag for his visual biographies of modern life.

Recalling *Bunk*, Paolozzi's *General Dynamic F.U.N.* print series, created between 1965 and 1970, captured the dizzying eclecticism of the earlier work in a series of fifty numbered but looseleaf screenprints and photolithographs boxed in acrylic resin. The artist conceived of the project as a kind of unbound art book, for which the viewer could act as editor by examining the prints in any order, rather than as a rigid sequence. The subversive nature of the series is underscored by the invitation to violate the artist's sequential print order.

Paolozzi pioneered the use of commercial silkscreen methods in the production of fine art—his 1965 suite of prints, *As Is When*, is often considered the first masterpiece of the medium. By adopting a mechanized means of reproduction, Paolozzi both exploited

technology to make art and satirized the exploitation of imagery in our technology-driven culture. In *General Dynamic F.U.N.* reside mirror images of the visual detritus that litters modern life, what he called his “metamorphosis of rubbish.” The selections exhibited here, part of the Tang Teaching Museum’s permanent collection, distill Paolozzi’s central motifs and aesthetic into a provocative discourse on the emblems that shape modern culture. As the novelist J.G. Ballard noted in his introduction to *General Dynamic F.U.N.*, “Here the familiar materials of our everyday lives, the jostling iconographies of mass advertising and consumer goods, are manipulated to reveal their true identities.”

In Paolozzi’s work nothing is as it seems and irony abounds. Lady Godiva rides a motorcycle; Christ’s image is profaned as a paint-by-number; flesh turns green and lettuce grows blue. His prints personalize the impersonal; Paolozzi reconfigures unrelated images to form a tangle of references and connections leading the viewer in as many directions as there are ideas.

—Michelle Paquette, Curator

[Wall Label]



#707 Cary Grant as a male war bride  
 Eduardo Paolozzi (1924-2005)  
*General Dynamic F.U.N.*  
 c. 1965-70  
 photolithograph  
 15" x 10"  
 Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art  
 Gallery [Permanent Collection]

The British Pop Art movement reflected the breach of reality between the heady materialism of America and the economic recession of post-war Britain. But by 1971 Paolozzi declared, "The American dream is over." Viewed in that light, Paolozzi's *Cary Grant as a male war bride* resembles parody, in which the movie idol costars with composer Igor Stravinsky, a parrot, and cartoonish abstractions. Paolozzi presented the effeminized caricature of the dashing leading man as if poking fun at the glamorized culture Cary Grant epitomized. Igor Stavinsky, although of European descent, is similarly satirized with matching purple skin, possibly for having sold Walt Disney the rights to his ballet score *The Rite of Spring* for the animated movie *Fantasia*. The print

embodies the disdain of British Pop Art for the American consumer propensity to parrot capitalistic ideals.

However, in Paolozzi's work meaning is a nebulous notion, and such a glibly politicized read fails to capture the artist's eclecticism and the intended open-ended quality of the imagery. Random associations concerned Paolozzi more than pat ideological assumptions. According to Robin Spencer, Paolozzi said he was "interested, above all, in investigating the golden ability of the artist to achieve a metamorphosis of quite ordinary things into something wonderful and extraordinary that is neither nonsensical nor morally edifying."



[Wall Label]



#749 Watch out for Miracles...New hope for  
better babies

Eduardo Paolozzi (1924-2005)

*General Dynamic F.U.N.*

c. 1965-70

screenprint

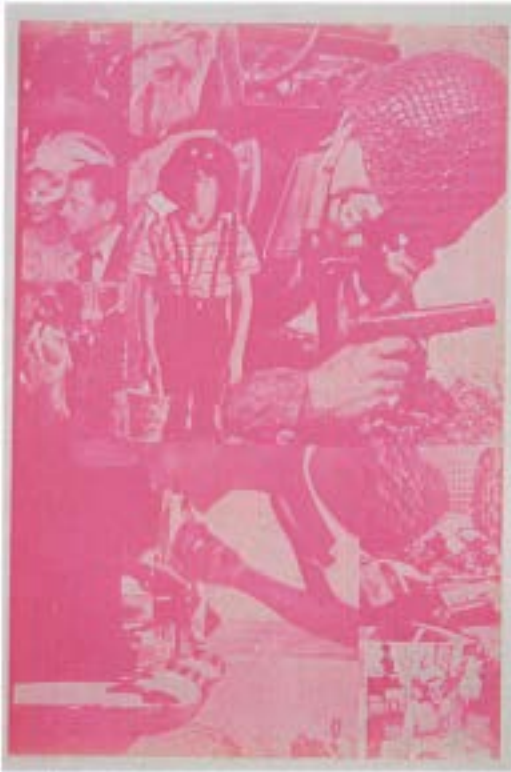
15" x 10"

Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art  
Gallery [Permanent Collection]

Paolozzi's titles at times pertain to his images but just as often appear nonsensical. Here, in *Watch out for Miracles...New hope for better babies*, scientific advancements such as robots and super-babies are undercut by the title's warning against miracles, against what appears too good to be true. Yet the tension is lessened by the print's saturated blueness which emphasizes the work as art rather than documentary.

Such calculated ambiguity is a hallmark of Paolozzi's artistic vision, as evidenced in the print series title, *General Dynamic F.U.N.* The allusion to the General Dynamics Corporation, manufacturer of the F-111 fighter flown during the Vietnam War, in combination with the puzzling acronym F.U.N., transforms an armaments manufacturer into an amusement. The title could also be no more than a tease. The combination not only challenges preconceptions but also epitomizes the satiric tone throughout his work.

[Wall Label]



#733 Pig or Person, it's the same, Fortune plays  
a funny game

Eduardo Paolozzi (1924-2005)

*General Dynamic F.U.N.*

c. 1965-70

photolithograph

15" x 10"

Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art  
Gallery [Permanent Collection]

*Pig or Person, it's the same, Fortune plays a funny game* ambivalently reveals the human propensity for war and the ways the media portray it. The photolithograph juxtaposes reality with fantasy, a combat soldier with a young boy playing dress-up in a several-sizes-too-big helmet. In his right hand the boy clutches a child's pail as if off to a day at the beach, in stark contrast to the pistol and portable phone the soldier grips in a possible mayday call. Paolozzi underscores the irony by framing the man/boy soldiers with frothy images of couples at a gala, a woman applying lipstick in a car's reflective bumper, a fashion model—frivolities and a way of life the soldier fights to protect. An eerily unpeopled multiple car pile-up punctuates the gaiety as a reminder of Fortune's upper hand, despite the soldier's best efforts. The print's magenta color audaciously makes the absurdities and atrocities palatable as if seen through rose-colored glasses.

Images of war—uniformed soldiers, a helmeted boy in combat drag, the monuments we erect to fallen heroes—recur often in the series and refer to Paolozzi's own history as

well as the conflicting implications of war. In war, patriotism and heroism commingle with imperialism and brutality, opposing forces that fed Paolozzi's fascination with contradiction. War was personal for Paolozzi, who was sixteen at the outbreak of World War II. He and his family were arrested in Scotland and interned as enemy aliens; Paolozzi spent three months in prison while his father and grandfather were deported to Canada, perishing en route when the Germans torpedoed their transport ship, the *Arandora Star*. As an artist, Paolozzi learned the process of acceptance was as important as that of rejection. According to Robin Spencer, Paolozzi once remarked, "I don't want to make prints that will help people escape from the terrible world. I want to remind them."

[Wall Label]



#746 Smash Hit, Good Loving, plus Like a  
Rolling Stone, Slow Down, etc.

Eduardo Paolozzi (1924-2005)

*General Dynamic F.U.N.*

c. 1965-70

screenprint

15" x 10"

Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art  
Gallery [Permanent Collection]

In *Smash Hit, Good Loving, plus Like a Rolling Stone, Slow Down etc.*, Paolozzi replicates the projection of disparate images and stimuli on the modern psyche and the subsequent associative domino effect. Paolozzi conceived his image collages of the 1950s and 1960s at a time when iconic imagery in advertising was just burgeoning as a dominant presence in daily life. How might we view an assembly line's worth of plastic dolls in proximity with a Michelangelo? Is the astronaut's trajectory a metaphor for the title's hit singles from the 1960s, songs that rocketed to the top of the charts? Do these disjointed images share similar social contexts, or are they contradictory, or both? For Paolozzi, as Frank Whitford has noted, "the interesting ideas in a picture...are always the unexpected missing links." Paolozzi's exacting balance between frivolity and gravity imbues the *General Dynamic F.U.N.* series with an enigmatic, tilt-a-whirl aesthetic that provokes more questions than answers.

[Wall Label]



#739 No Heroes Developed  
Eduardo Paolozzi (1924-2005)  
*General Dynamic F.U.N.*  
c. 1965-70  
screenprint  
15" x 10"  
Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art  
Gallery [Permanent Collection]

In *No Heroes Developed*, a robot holds a light bulb in his left hand, a downward-pointing gun in his right. Our technological inventions, our bright ideas, come with inherent dangers: of over-reliance, of overproduction, of the machine run amok. In this print, we face the possibility of shooting ourselves in the foot with a gaping-mouthed robot of our own making.

Paolozzi's preoccupation with what he called "the pattern of progress" tethers together the diverse subject matter of his print work. Astronauts prepare for missions; robots expose their mechanical brains; a hopped-up motorcycle foregrounds the Statue of Liberty—man-made testaments to a techno Promised Land.

Paolozzi recognized the shimmering hubris in the human urge to mechanize. On the one hand, a heady intoxication with technology underscores *General Dynamic F.U.N.*, in the delicate architecture of woven metal hair curlers, the mesmerizing appeal of a television

screen, accident-reducing crash test dummies, Technicolor computer grid formations. Yet Paolozzi, although a willing exploiter of new technologies, seems to have sensed the dangers of overexposure, of machine turning against man.

[Wall Label]



#730 Fifty Nine Varieties of Paradise

Eduardo Paolozzi (1924-2005)

*General Dynamic F.U.N.*

c. 1965-70

photolithograph

15" x 10"

Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art  
Gallery [Permanent Collection]

A glinting motorcycle symbolizes a better life in *Fifty Nine Varieties of Paradise*. The print suggests both Paolozzi's mounting disillusionment with the American Dream and the cultural shift from nostalgic ideal to material desire. It is tempting to interpret the boy in the Statue's crown as Paolozzi's youthful idealization of the America of film and advertisement, and the man with his back to her as Paolozzi's adult disenchantment with the American Dream. Freedom from political and economic oppression segues to a freedom of the open road that isn't truly free, since only money can buy it. Like the screws and nuts that join both statue and bike, each is a construct we have made in the pursuit of progress, in pursuit of our own variety of paradise.

Paolozzi repurposed disposable imagery into metaphors for human nature and modern culture. His collage printmaking techniques of silk-screen, screenprinting, and photolithography facilitated the mutation of the actual object from a trash heap fate to immortality as art. Paolozzi captured commercial images like, as he put it, "exotic and

rare butterflies mounted in the Natural History Museum.” The use of silk-screen for art departed radically from establishment norms in Britain, where silk-screening was primarily used in commercial printing.



[Wall Label]



#744 A Single Series, consisting of twenty choices

Eduardo Paolozzi (1924-2005)

*General Dynamic F.U.N.*

c. 1965-70

screenprint

15" x 10"

Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery [Permanent Collection]

*A Single Series, consisting of twenty choices* is one of only six *General Dynamic F.U.N.* prints that consist largely of text. Resembling a page in a newspaper more than a traditional collage of images, the work displays a three-column format. The left- and right-hand columns contain only text; the center column features three images and a brief block of text. The print's title originates from the left column's first line that cites behavioral tests performed on laboratory animals, and refers visually to the image of a dissected rat atop the middle column. The center image depicts a somewhat obscured urban event; the bottom shows three combat soldiers. The text reads as a disjointed yet visually seamless collage with paragraphs taken from wildly different articles, meant to both disorient and provoke. Random contextual and stylistic shifts repeatedly confound the notion of beginning and end. Words and information bleed into one another like the conversations on a crowded subway car, a cacophonous fusion of sound. Paolozzi appropriated language, as he had imagery, to form a new syntax—what he called “a

vocabulary of now”—in which seemingly disparate elements spark expansive, spontaneous associations and reactions.

## [Catalog Introduction]

*History of Man/Written in Objects*

A jotting in one of Eduardo Paolozzi's journals may best sum up his print series *General Dynamic F.U.N.*: "History of Man/Written in Objects." A boxed series of fifty screenprints and photolithographs produced in a limited-edition set of 350, *General Dynamic F.U.N.* captured in mixed-media collage the heady landscape of 1950s-1960s American popular advertising and kitsch. Otherwise known for his machine-part monolithic sculptures and his British Library monument to Sir Isaac Newton, Paolozzi instigated the British Pop Art movement with his chock-a-block collage reproductions of appropriated American comic book and magazine imagery. Perhaps surprisingly, Paolozzi couldn't have been more displeased at being labeled a founder of Pop. "If I'm called a Pop artist then people expect to see soup tins," he once remarked. "Pop to me means something vulgar—the world of cheap stores."<sup>1</sup>

Born in Leith, Scotland, during the Depression to Italian immigrants who ran an ice cream parlor, Paolozzi grew up among Scotland's working poor.<sup>2</sup> Raised "speaking Italian at home, summering in Italy, courtesy of the Bellelli, Mussolini's youth movement,"<sup>3</sup> Paolozzi may have felt as if he straddled two cultures but intrinsically belonged to neither. "The world I lived in as a child," he explained to a reporter in 2002, "was poor in space and lacking in most of those items considered essential in today's

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<sup>1</sup> Robin Spencer, *Eduardo Paolozzi: Writings and Interviews* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 219.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Lawson, "Bunk: Eduardo Paolozzi and the Legacy of the Independent Group," in *Modern Dreams: The Rise and Fall and Rise of Pop*, Lawrence Alloway et al. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1988), 19.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

young—yet it contained other riches.”<sup>4</sup> Movie houses and magazines offered gleaming oases of the American Dream for young Paolozzi, marooned by poverty and a sense of cultural estrangement.

*General Dynamic F.U.N.* spotlights many of Paolozzi’s preoccupations and pastimes, and recurrent motifs such as sci-fi fantasy, consumerism, war, and technology have personal connotations that surely refer to Paolozzi’s childhood. For the “toughie from Leith”<sup>5</sup> the images of bounty he encountered on movie screens and between the pages of sci-fi novels, *Scientific American*, and *Time* must have seemed like missives from a promised land. Compounding the topsy-turvy of Paolozzi’s world was the declaration of World War II when he was sixteen. Paolozzi’s father, Rudolfo, was a Mussolini-sympathizer; he and his family were arrested and interned in Scotland as enemy aliens under the Emergency Powers (Defense) Act. Paolozzi’s father and grandfather were deported to Canada, perishing en route when the Germans torpedoed their transport ship, the *Arandora Star*. Following a three-month jail term, the Pioneer Corps conscripted Paolozzi in 1943 for one year of service.<sup>6</sup>

Paolozzi came of artistic age in post-World War II England, where a new breed of young and free-thinking artists, architects, and critics, labeled the Independent Group, dedicated themselves to elaborating Dadaist and Surrealist preoccupations with modernity and technology in visually new ways. For the group, which included Paolozzi and fellow

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<sup>4</sup> Alan Taylor, “Pop Idol; A new exhibition by Eduardo Paolozzi.” *Sunday Herald of Scotland* 10 Feb. 2002: 1.

<sup>5</sup> Whitford, Frank and Eduardo Paolozzi, *Eduardo Paolozzi: The Tate Gallery, 22 September - 31 October 1971* (London: Tate Gallery, 1971), 7.

<sup>6</sup> Lawson, *Modern Dreams*, 20.

artist Richard Hamilton, architects Peter and Alison Smithson, and critic Lawrence Alloway, “‘America’ represented the future and the unprecedented opportunities and problems presented by a new global mass culture.”<sup>7</sup>

At the 1952 inaugural meeting of the Independent Group at London’s Institute of Contemporary Arts, Paolozzi concocted a spectacle that would make his name synonymous with British Pop Art and later inspire *General Dynamic F.U.N.* The artist screened a visual slide montage called *Bunk*, consisting of images culled from the staggering scrapbook collections of clippings from American “commercial art, advertisements, horror films, comic strips and magazines”<sup>8</sup> he’d amassed since childhood. Projected on a large screen with Paolozzi reading at intervals from accompanying text, it was described as “the first time images had been shown – Blam, blam, blam – with no order or link.”<sup>9</sup> Groundbreaking as a visual stream-of-consciousness, *Bunk* became the stuff of lore, according to art critic Thomas Lawson, “a microcosm of the intrusive reality of pop culture. The sacrosanct space of art was violated by the vulgar future-world of America.”<sup>10</sup> Perhaps owing to his personal identification as a quasi-Surrealist, Paolozzi chose not to capitalize on his innovation in the Madison Avenue-style of his subject matter as did Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein, and Jasper Johns. As Paolozzi would later recall, “It’s easier for me to identify with that tradition [Surrealism] than to allow myself to be described by some term, invented by others, called ‘Pop,’ which immediately means that you dive into a barrel of Coca-Cola

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<sup>7</sup> Jacquelynn Baas, forward to *The Independent Group: Postwar Britain and the Aesthetics of Plenty*, ed. David Robbins (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990), 6.

<sup>8</sup> Uwe M. Schneede, *Paolozzi* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1970), 5.

<sup>9</sup> Whitford, *Eduardo Paolozzi*, 46.

<sup>10</sup> Lawson, *Modern Dreams*, 24.

bottles. What I like to think I'm doing is an extension of radical Surrealism."<sup>11</sup> To the contrary, Paolozzi's preoccupation with the media's projection of imagery on the modern psyche reverberates more with Pop art concerns than it does with Surrealism's expression of unconventional, subconscious thought. Moreover, while Paolozzi's work parodied the rise of global capitalism that Surrealism opposed, he ironically seemed never to quite shake his youthful fascination with consumer imagery—a very Pop preoccupation.

That is not to say that Paolozzi turned his back on *Bunk*. His image-lecture bridged a gulch that had previously separated high from low art, and art from technology.<sup>12</sup> *Bunk* espoused the very ethos of the Independent Group in its cognizance of mass communication's potential as art. *Bunk* effectively proposed a new aesthetic language based not on rejecting profit-driven iconography, but rather acknowledging the proliferating and titillating grasp mass media had on modern life. As Lawrence Alloway recollected, "We felt none of the dislike of contemporary culture standard among intellectuals, but accepted it as a fact, discussed it in detail, and consumed it enthusiastically.... We assumed an anthropological definition of culture in which all types of human activity were the subject of aesthetic judgment and attention."<sup>13</sup>

Paolozzi would continue to exploit the imagery of mass communication as metaphor for the historical moment. *General Dynamic F.U.N.*, executed some fifteen years after *Bunk*, in many ways mined themes and sources similar to those of the image-lecture. War was personal for Paolozzi, as was the allure of life in a far off place—the fantastical America

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<sup>11</sup> Spencer, *Eduardo Paolozzi*, 199.

<sup>12</sup> Whitford, *Eduardo Paolozzi*, 11.

<sup>13</sup> Baas, *The Independent Group*, 6.

of print and movie screen. Indeed, Paolozzi's background made him a decidedly easy mark for the lure of American iconography as fantasy ideal. Yet as an artist he sought to conduct more universal inquiry, to locate the "fragment[s] of an autobiography"<sup>14</sup> of modern civilization, by magnifying the iconography that Madison Avenue proposed we worship. Images of robots gone awry and monuments of war temper the idealistic frivolity of cartoon characters and beachside leisure. Paolozzi's subsequent disillusionment with American materialism and technological hubris imbues the series with a satiric tone that waxes worshipful as often as it pokes fun or portends danger.

Paolozzi conceived *General Dynamic F.U.N.* as a second volume to a previous print series, *Moonstrips Empire News*, in which he explored "the darker side"<sup>15</sup> of modern existence. At first glance, *General Dynamic F.U.N.* reads like an American propaganda how-to manual in pictures. Mr. Universe gets the girl by simply flexing an engorged bicep, absurdly surrounded by suspended Snickers and Milky Way bars. Mr. Peanut presides over the erection of Felix DeWeldon's Iwo Jima Monument. A woman takes time to smell the roses and is enraptured, as easy as that. Imagery repeats throughout the series: astronauts reappear, robots are reborn, and automobiles cruise about. The novelist J.G. Ballard wrote in his introduction to *Dynamic F.U.N.*, "The mood is idyllic....Customised motorcycles and automobile radiator grills show an amiable technology on its vacation day."<sup>16</sup> Yet among the Beach Boys-style froth of Ballard's interpretation reside more sinister denizens that foreshadow potential dangers. In *No Heroes Developed*, a gun-toting robot forewarns of innovation gone awry. In *Ready to*

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<sup>14</sup> Diane Kirkpatrick, *Eduardo Paolozzi* (Greenwich, CT: New York Graphic Society, 1969), 76.

<sup>15</sup> J.G. Ballard, Introduction to *General Dynamic F.U.N.* (London: Editions Alecto, 1965-70).

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

*Sparkle Fashions* a woman appears bound and gagged by the mod herringbone pattern that tattoos her flesh. Such exacting balance between cotton-candy sublime and futuristic perversion suffuses *General Dynamic F.U.N.* with an enigmatic, tilt-a-whirl aesthetic.

Paolozzi's titles are as ambiguously loaded as the imagery he juxtaposes, *General Dynamic F.U.N.* included. The General Dynamics Corporation, formerly Electric Boat, manufactured the F-111, a dual-purpose variable-wing airplane flown during the Vietnam War. The acronym F.U.N., according to Paolozzi scholar Robin Spencer, "was Paolozzi's own invention....a bit of an ironic twist to the tail."<sup>17</sup> The outlandish juxtaposition calls attention not only to the artist's penchant for challenging viewer preconceptions but also epitomizes the satiric tone throughout his work. The acronym, while fake, gives the appearance of meaning, wherein Paolozzi dares the viewer to make sense of the nonsensical combination.

In the intervening years between *Bunk* and *General Dynamic F.U.N.*, the airbrushed glow had begun to fade on Paolozzi's American Dream. According to Diane Kirkpatrick, who corresponded at length with Paolozzi while writing her 1969 doctoral dissertation on the artist, *General Dynamic F.U.N.* was "intended to be an almost ironic critique of certain aspects of American materialism."<sup>18</sup> Paolozzi seems to wink at us with each unexpected amalgamation of found imagery. A circus elephant squashes a Fiat. The image of Jesus is transformed into a gaudy color-by-number. Even Minnie Mouse has devolved into a boxy computer graphic. Each print articulates neither an endorsement nor an indictment,

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<sup>17</sup> Robin Spencer, email message to the author, August 11, 2007.

<sup>18</sup> Kirkpatrick, *Eduardo Paolozzi*, 114.



but an open-ended question regarding the relevance of modern emblems and consumption-driven culture.

The very production methods of *General Dynamic F.U.N.* corroborate the irony that characterizes the prints. Paolozzi translated the tenets of mass production into his own artistic means, “to develop a lasting form which starts from everyday commodities but which resists their normal depreciation process.”<sup>19</sup> By reproducing the original collage as a screenprint or photolithograph, Paolozzi’s collage reproductions transcended their Dadaist and Surrealist predecessors, left exposed to tarnish or fade with time. Paolozzi granted ephemeral imagery the paper-pulp equivalent of the fountain of youth.

Happy to exploit technology in both the mechanical process of his work and in its subject matter, Paolozzi has been touted as most likely “the first artist anywhere to use the commercial silk-screen method for fine art and to increase its potential by the addition of photographic techniques.”<sup>20</sup> He produced his first full scale screenprint of collaged material, *Conjectures to Identity*, in 1963.<sup>21</sup> The process of screenprinting gained widespread use during World War I for the industrial fabrication of flags and banners. Created by applying a stencil to a screen that is placed atop a substrate, the technique allowed Paolozzi unprecedented artistic freedom via mechanical means. In an interview with Richard Hamilton, Paolozzi recounted, “After the [silk]screen is made up, certain geometrical ingredients, such as variations on the square or the curve, the stripe, the

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<sup>19</sup> Schneede, *Paolozzi*, 19.

<sup>20</sup> Whitford, *Eduardo Paolozzi*, 12.

<sup>21</sup> The British Council, “As Is When: A Boom in British Printmaking 1961-1972,” The British Council, <http://collection.britishcouncil.org/html/work/work.aspx?e=15312&id=45108&section=/exhibition/>.

circle, could be applied by the transfer process .... so that you have geometry on two levels.”<sup>22</sup> The techniques of screenprinting and photolithography imposed both the separation of artist from artwork and the possibility for mass-production of a work that paradoxically also stood as an original. The photolithographs were printed at Richard Davis, London; the screenprints by Lyndon Haywood at the Alecto Studios, also in London. A lifelong “idea-collector,”<sup>23</sup> Paolozzi remained unfazed by the notion of physical distance between art and artist at the production stage; on the contrary, he believed such printing added a layer of meaning and creative interpretation to his work. In production, the assisting technician became another tool in his artistic arsenal. “In the construction of his machine-style works, Paolozzi acts as head ideas-man and contractor....The artist becomes the generating catalyst for the action of a team of technically trained men. The designer-artist considers the germinating idea the essential core of his work of art.”<sup>24</sup> Just as Thomas Edison is credited as the lightbulb’s creator, not the assembly line workers who replicate it, Paolozzi construed the *idea* and its primary execution as the artistic creation. Yet mass production wasn’t simply his mode of production; Paolozzi made the collusion between art and technology his subject matter. In the prints, animated robots and fantasy hotrods held their own against the innovative presses that printed them.

In his unremitting quest for new means of visual engagement, Paolozzi conceived of *General Dynamic F.U.N.* as inclusive rather than dogmatic in nature. The fifty titled and numbered prints come loose in an acrylic resin box. The artist conceived of the project as

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<sup>22</sup> Whitford, *Eduardo Paolozzi*, 37.

<sup>23</sup> Kirkpatrick, *Eduardo Paolozzi*, 84.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, 55.

a kind of unbound art book, for which the viewer could act as editor by examining the prints in any order, rather than as a rigid sequence. This potential for the viewer to coauthor the print series with the artist affords a heightened engagement with the work. Yet this method of arrangement subverts Paolozzi's sequential numbering of the prints, provoking reactions by emphasizing the contradictory nature of the series. The variable ways in which the prints can be viewed mimic the incongruous encounters throughout his imagery and reflect the very nature of modern culture. According to Paolozzi, life was indeed stranger than any fiction he might collage; he believed "a multitude of experiences, of simultaneous happenings often of very disparate kinds, is a very 20<sup>th</sup> century thing. You watch Apollo taking off on a TV in a bar in San Francisco then go round the corner to have your shoes shined by a topless shoe-shine girl. These kinds of ironical juxtapositions happen in life all the time."<sup>25</sup> The disparate imagery that clutters his collages mirrors the media strobe-effect that saturates modern consciousness.

Intermittently throughout the series, the pastiche of popular imagery is counterbalanced by text-collages, some of them lengthy narratives, others simply captions. Paolozzi had become entranced by the power of language as a visual medium by the early 1960s.<sup>26</sup> The artist assembled complex and at times convoluted fragments of language into both titles and text collages as a means to explore the idiosyncratic relationship between words and meaning, as well as the notion of language as visual artifact. Weighty as that might sound, the inherent lightness of his word collages mitigates his seriousness, creating

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<sup>25</sup> Eduardo Paolozzi et al., "Speculative Illustrations: Eduardo Paolozzi in conversation with J. G. Ballard and Frank Whitford," *Studio International*, no. 182 (1971), <http://www.studio-international.co.uk/archive/Paolozzi-1971-182.asp>.

<sup>26</sup> Kirkpatrick, *Eduardo Paolozzi*, 57.

“ambiguous syntax and meaning by playing both with word order and with word appearance.... As a reader scans passages...the ‘messages’ he picks will vary with both his linguistic background, his education, and his interests and experiences in general.”<sup>27</sup> By using text-collages as an analogy to his unrelated visual materials, Paolozzi devised a second point of both perceptual and conceptual entry into the work.

*A Single Series, consisting of twenty choices* is one of only six *General Dynamic F.U.N.* prints that consist largely of text. Resembling a page in a newspaper more than a traditional collage of images, the work displays a three-column format. The left- and right-hand columns contain only text; the center column features three images and a brief block of text. The print’s title originates from the left column’s first line that cites behavioral tests performed on laboratory animals, and refers visually to the image of a dissected rat atop the middle column. The center image depicts a somewhat obscured urban event; the bottom shows three combat soldiers. The text reads not as a contiguous whole but as a disjointed yet visually seamless text-collage, meant to both disorient and provoke. Random contextual and stylistic shifts repeatedly confound the notion of beginning and end. Words and information bleed into one another like conversations on a crowded subway car, a cacophonous fusion of sound. Paolozzi appropriated language, as he had imagery, to form a new syntax—what he called “a vocabulary of now”<sup>28</sup>—in which seemingly disparate elements spark expansive, spontaneous associations and reactions in the viewer.

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<sup>27</sup> Kirkpatrick, *Eduardo Paolozzi*, 104.

<sup>28</sup> Spencer, *Eduardo Paolozzi*, 151.

Paolozzi's iconic and verbal idea fragments collide in discordant symmetry, like simultaneous jazz riffs.<sup>29</sup> Circuit boards corral pin-up girls and futuristic monsters; a monochrome wash of pink tints combat soldiers and gala-goers alike. In the opinion of art critic Frank Whitford, "Paolozzi's graphics broke new ground, but their popularity revealed a weakness. Paolozzi has always had a tendency to overproduce and to repeat himself. Many of the individual prints of this period are repetitive almost to the point of self-parody."<sup>30</sup> Repetition dwells at the core of *General Dynamic F.U.N.* His various color-blocked grids seem on some level related; model after model hawks nondescript wares with an identical "my life is now perfect" smile. Yet Whitford's criticism underestimates repetition as the hallmark of learning any new language—like children practicing ABCs, like the diligent would-be traveler parroting a Berlitz tape. In his quest to originate "a vocabulary of now," Paolozzi risked self-parody for the sake of the viewer's fluency in his language of ideas.

The present exhibition's selection of nineteen prints from the series reflects the range of the artist's concerns and demonstrates a synthesis of his more prevalent themes and visual devices. Paolozzi printed on various materials, including propylene film, and coated and uncoated art board; several of the acetates have been omitted because they are difficult to view from certain angles. The repetition that characterizes Paolozzi's work prompts the recurrence of themes such as space, technology, war, and celebrity throughout the series. In addition, repetition of color, imagery, and visual format—for

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<sup>29</sup> Kirkpatrick, *Eduardo Paolozzi*, 24.

<sup>30</sup> Whitford, *Eduardo Paolozzi*, 13.

example, gridded imagery versus a single image—was also considered in selecting an overall cross-section of content and aesthetics that represent the entire series.

Paolozzi's early recognition of the iconic power of mass media and, consequently, the subconscious associations and references in the human psyche to the strobe of modern popular culture, provides the thread that pulls taut the thematic disparity of *General Dynamic F.U.N.* In the teeming, scattershot quality of his "idea-collages," Paolozzi appears like a prophet of today's Information Superhighway. His ephemeral, throw-away images resemble modern screen-grabs; the scanning required to parse his conjoined imagery mirrors the labyrinthine process of Internet hyperlinks. In mass-produced popular iconography, Eduardo Paolozzi recognized a potent visual language that spoke to modern culture by both overt and subliminal means. Paolozzi's translation of pop imagery into mass-produced art called attention to the often contradictory messages such imagery imposed then as it does today, and provocatively contributed to a new artistic dialect based on appropriation, repetition, and incongruous juxtapositions.

*Eduardo Paolozzi died on April 22, 2005, at the age of 81.*

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[Essay: *You Are What You Eat*]



#704 Calling Radio Free America  
 Eduardo Paolozzi (1924-2005)  
*General Dynamic F.U.N.*  
 c. 1965-70  
 photolithograph  
 15" x 10"  
 Tang Teaching Museum Permanent Collection

*Calling Radio Free America* raises the question, “What are we being fed?” Not only literally, in the aberrantly-hued salad on the tip of the fork, but everywhere we look, from the television screen to our kitchen’s trend-driven décor. News, sports, and entertainment—the media equivalent of the three square meals a day—punctuate the newsroom-esque array of TV monitors. The visual appeal of each is heightened by its stop-motion permanence. Dr. Walter Heller, the Vietnam-era Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers, leans into his convictions and is caught proselytizing mid-word, intent on changing our minds.

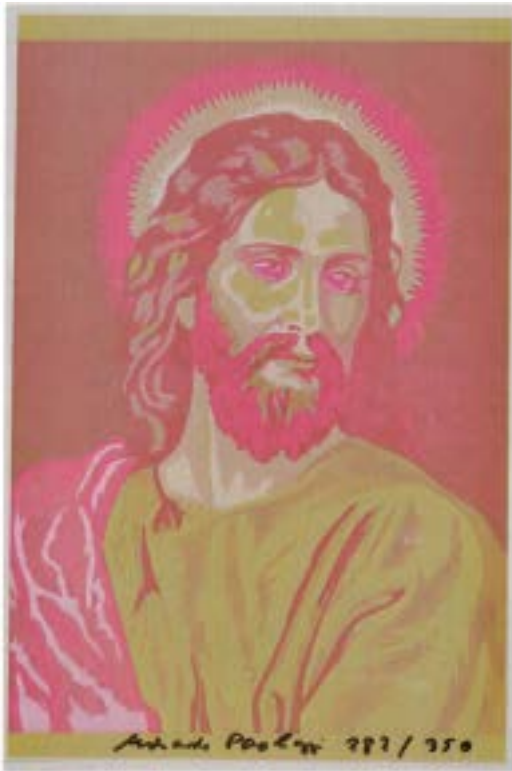
Like the promise of dessert, the football game airing to the left of Heller distracts us, awash in backsides and the freeze-frame absurdity of men caught with their hands up one another's asses, helmeted from concussion for the sake of men like Nielsen. For the sake of throwing and catching a ball to yield a higher number than the opponent. Ever the omnivore, our appetite makes us wander to the voyeur lurking behind the tantalizing ingénue, and we must know: Is she the object of his craving? The intrigue of the simulated moment becomes *our* intrigue for a moment in our less riveting lives.

Mundane existence makes us susceptible to the gourmet thrills of news, sports, and entertainment. Cataclysmic world events animate our nine-to-five lives. Elite gamesmanship incites the armchair athlete in us. Fictionalized lives speak to desires we dare not utter let alone consummate. *Calling Radio Free America* colorizes the allure of hyper-reality in an increasingly radio-free America, in which a pundit is green as the Grinch, green as greed. Television, media's new main course, whets our appetites with talking heads, sports figures, and entertainers who outshine us—more so when they fall from the rarefied heights—and we can't look away.

We are hungry, but Paolozzi spotlights in Technicolor a warning to choose our meals wisely. Flanking sweeps of pink and blue cabinets part like a Rockette line to reveal a kitchen similar to our own. The food and the hand feeding us, to the contrary, are unlike any we've seen. Fingernails sprout aqua, pink, and yellow. If we look long enough, we might begin to believe in blue lettuce. The direct feed of television dictates what we see; gone is the freedom of radio days to envision our own backstory. *Calling Radio Free*

*America* concedes the future to television as it cautions against reflex consumption; after all, we are what we eat.

[Essay: *Visitation*]



#727 Jesus colour by numbers  
Eduardo Paolozzi (1924-2005)  
*General Dynamic F.U.N.*  
c. 1965-70  
photolithograph  
15" x 10"  
Tang Teaching Museum Permanent Collection

*It is the function of art to renew our perception.  
What we are familiar with we cease to see.* Anais Nin

Growing up I sat with Jesus in my grandmother's living room every Saturday afternoon. Visitation began at noon when my father would reclaim my sister and me from our mother's house in his relic of a Volvo and drive the half mile to his parents' apartment abutting the Erie Canal. Once there, my sister and I would get a quarter to give him backrubs as he flirted with a nap while watching the (fill-in-the-blank) game. Jesus hung squarely in the crotch of the television antenna.

I knew Jesus the way a commuter registers an exit sign after the hundredth pass. Familiarity breeds the mindless encounter; had my Jesus the lime-tinged hair and brimming bubble gum eyes of Paolozzi's, surely I'd have taken better notice. As it was, my Jesus looked watery as a Victorian postcard: tinged with color rather than saturated, his skin as pale as his hair, framed in vintage cream and gold. He appeared bloodless, his cheeks so ashen that surely his feet had never skimmed earth. His innocuous presence faded to the farthest edge of my consciousness as afternoons of ballgames and backrubs yielded to trips to the mall and pubescent snits, finally dwindling to a yearly pilgrimage on Christmas Eve.

Then I met Paolozzi's Jesus. The print's paint-by-number, cotton-candy-colored brashness was irresistible, as profane as if Abraham Lincoln sported a Mohawk. The unfamiliar irreverence of *Jesus colour by numbers* skinned raw the contempt I secretly harbored for slices of my past. Jesus served no use for my ten-year-old self, an admission as blasphemous as Paolozzi's pink and puce doppelganger. I'd resented everything attached to those Saturdays, from the stench of canal and mildewing plaster to the reminder that my parents were no longer together. For five hours each week I smudged out the features of my surroundings by wishing I was someplace else.

This past spring, Jesus reappeared in my grandmother's new room at the nursing home. The sole vestige of her former life that we'd liquidated the week before, Jesus rose again to take his place above the television set. Yet so much has changed. The railroad apartment on the canal was abandoned for a shared hospital room overlooking rooftop

HVAC units. Day after day, my grandmother, at one time so vivid, slumps under her Christ's watchful eye as he absorbs the life force that once pinked her cheeks and straightened her spine. Now, while she naps and I again sit with Jesus, he has the faintest glow of neon.



[Essay: *Hijacked by Fashion*]



#701 Ready to Sparkle Fashions  
 Eduardo Paolozzi (1924-2005)  
*General Dynamic F.U.N.*  
 c. 1965-70  
 photolithograph  
 15" x 10"  
 Tang Teaching Museum Permanent Collection

She is behind bars—bars of brown, flax, orange, and umber herringbone that straitjacket her bare flesh. She is nude, her attempt to cover herself with crisscrossed arms annulled by the pattern. She is unclothed but dressed, stripped yet striped as brazenly as nudity. The design usurps not only her flesh but her speech, stifling her mouth like a bandit's bandana. From the nose up she is white as talc, eyeing us with orange-rimmed alarm from the frightful, milky expanse. Suspended in mute paralysis, she has been captured mid-curl, hijacked by fashion. The curlers betray a lesson learned too late: the disguise of beauty too easily blurs what it covers.

Was she on her way to the office? Primping for a new lover? Gala bound? So seductive is the pattern, her character recedes to white noise. Her name is irrelevant; her markings

define her. She no longer exists to cry, laugh, shout, hope, muse. She is merely the padding inside the herringbone sweater. The appeal of the motif disguises her capture, but she is no less constrained than if outfitted in prison stripes. As in the case of a uniformed inmate, fashion blends her with the masses. Her voice no longer carries, quelled by a pattern that speaks for her. Longing to stand out, she instead becomes the design, like a cartoon imprint on Silly Putty. She is nobody. She has been stamped out by fashion.

[Essay: *Looking Good*]



#720 Mumbling & Munching to Muzak  
 Eduardo Paolozzi (1924-2005)  
*General Dynamic F.U.N.*  
 c. 1965-70  
 photolithograph  
 15" x 10"  
 Tang Teaching Museum Permanent Collection

Never has the lowly cabbage looked so good. Festooned like a beauty queen or dog show poodle with bows and garnish galore, the garden's slug-magnet is here transformed into kitschy high cuisine. Each leafy orb is altered to showcase its meaty beauty like a pageant contestant. *Miss Maine*, let's call her, chastely flaunts a seafood slaw, her tomato-scalloped circumference echoing the saucy hem of a Downeasterner's apron. By contrast, *Miss California* appears brash but casual with an orange-rind bow to accentuate her citrus-y talents. *Miss Iowa*'s cleavage reveals a cottage cheese delight, adorned with prim foliage, ever the All-American girl-next-door. Each has become a receptacle of the hollowed out and trussed ideal. Each cabbage *looks good*.

Trimmed with gingham and rickrack, they achieve mannequin status on a par with their model foils. In fact, the models may as well be cabbages, so similarly are they shellacked. *Miss California* lets peek mini-marshmallows like the culinary equivalent of a strand of pearls; her human counterpart flashes mod white go-go boots. *Miss Maine's* girth is edged by ripe, red tomato slices; a belt of red-white-and-blue accentuates a model's tomato-red dress.

In *Mumbling & Munching to Muzak*, an unadorned woman is as banal as a garden row cabbage. Only accessorizing makes either noteworthy. The cabbage that cradles the savviest salad gets eaten. The contestant with the most expertly-applied mascara is crowned beauty queen. Like toe-tapping muzak that drowns out the dentist's drill, ornamentation attracts while it distracts. A cleverly stashed bow or hankie rivets the onlooker like a cardinal's plumage, diverting attention from the discolored leaf or the hooked nose. Plainness spells doom up and down the food chain. She who juliennes the sexiest slaw wins.

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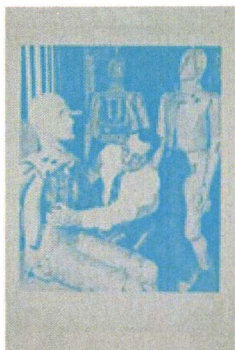
#709: An Empire of Silly Statistics...A Fake War for Public Relations



#704: Calling Radio Free America



#721 Comparative Research in Inexperienced Types



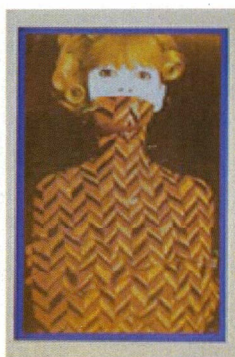
#749 Watch out for Miracles...New hope for better babies



#706 Astute sizing up perfume trends



#711 The Impossible Dream...It's all the same



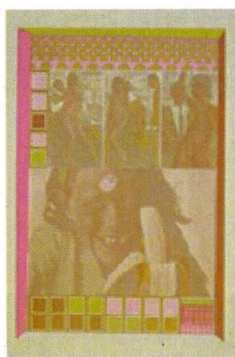
#701 Ready to Sparkle Fashions



#707 Cary Grant as a male war bride



#720 Mumbling & Munching to Muzak



#703 Early mental traits of 300 geniuses



#715 Part One, Frozen Terror...Part Two, Fangs of Death

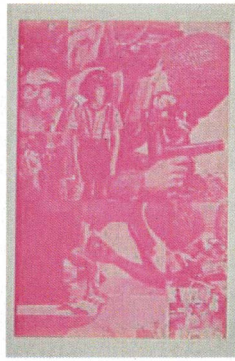


#722 Lalla Pallooza...Image fades but memory lingers on

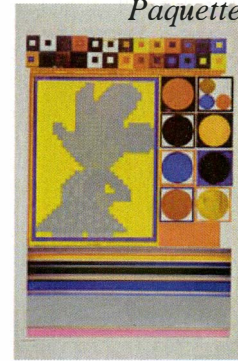




#724 *Decency and Decorum in Production*



#733 *Pig or Person, it's the same, Fortune plays a funny game*



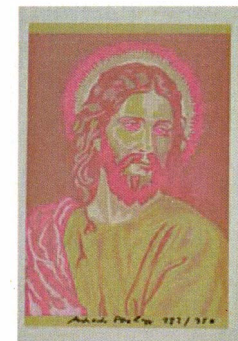
#714 *Inside Down Under... What are the building blocks of structuralism?*



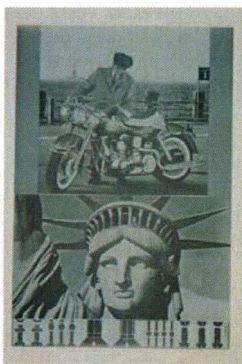
#729 *Hermaphroditic Children from Transvestite Parents*



#744 *A single series, consisting of twenty choices*



#727 *Jesus colour by numbers*



#730 *Fifty Nine Varieties of Paradise*



#746 *Smash hit, Good Loving, plus Like a Rolling Stone, Slow Down etc.*