The Fun Palace
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The Fun Palace

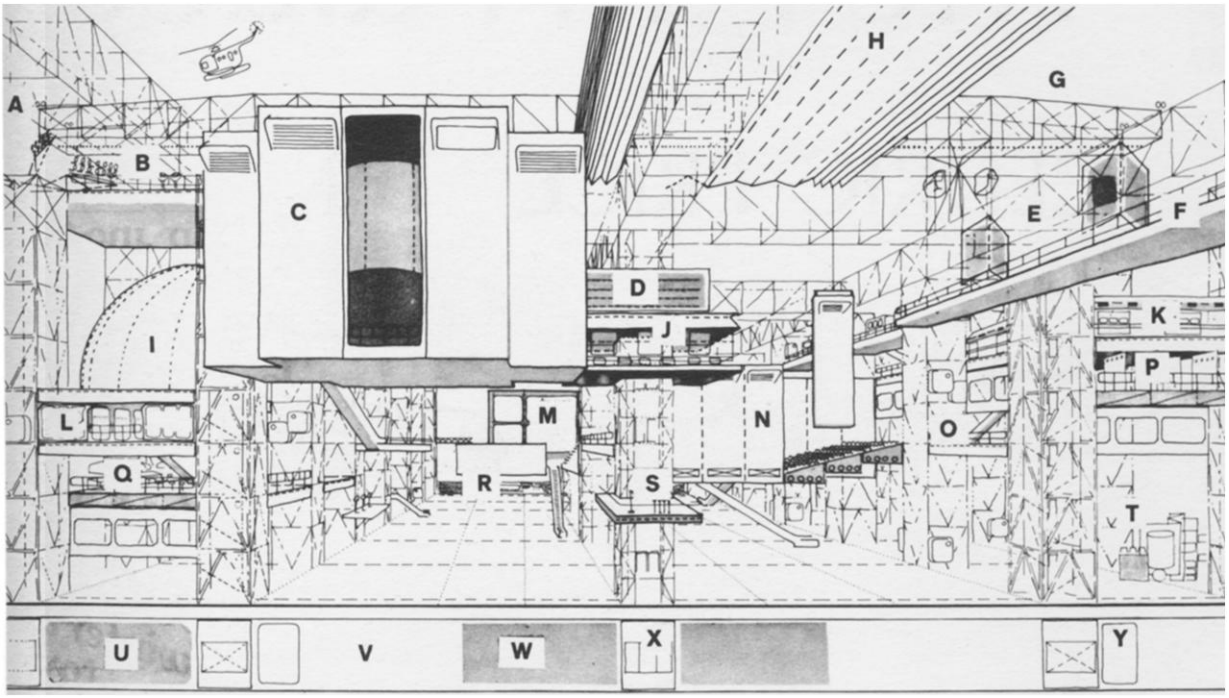
CEDRIC PRICE

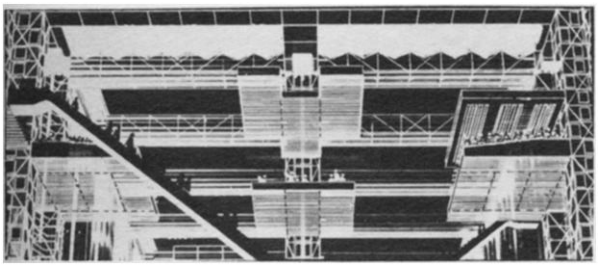
Instant Genius
Chat
Kunst
Dabbling
Cinema
Nights
Gala Days
&
Fireworks
Theatre
Clownery

Juke Box Information
Adult toys
Star Gazing
Science Gadgetry

Rallies
Battles of flowers
Concerts
Learning Machines

for your delight





Three semi-enclosed audience-decks around common "stage." High level "sky blinds." CARLETON

A. High-level sight lighting
B. Long-distance observation deck
C. Circular theatre—part enclosed
D. News panel
E. Long-distance information screens
F. Moving catwalk
G. Gantry crane
H. Adjustable 'sky' blind over rally area
I. Inflatable conference hall
J. Public observation and control
K. Restaurant
L. Workshops, etc.
M. Open 6-screen cinema
N. Auditorium—under construction
O. Observation
P. Open exhibition
Q. Eating and drinking
R. River-craft access
S. Rally platform
T. Children's town
U. Sewage purification plant
V. Service
W. Storage
X. Vertical Service
Y. Heating and ventilating track

Argument

The division between work and leisure has never been more than a convenient generalization used in summarizing conscious human activity—voluntary and imposed.

Both the nature and scale of conditions causing or requiring imposed activity have changed to such a great extent over the past 25 years that even the convenience of such a division is no longer acceptable.

The present socio/political talk of increased leisure makes both a slovenly and dangerous assumption that people on the one hand are still sufficiently numb or servile to accept that the period during which they earn money can be little more than made mentally hygienically bearable and that a new mentality is awakened during periods of self-willed activity.

Increase in wealth, increasing personal mobility, flexibility of labor and decreasing essential social interdependence are some of the constituents of the change rather than the cause.

The increasingly obvious reduction of the permanence of many institutions—obvious within a decade rather than, as previously, from generation to generation—allied with the mass availability of all means of communication, have demanded an almost subconscious awareness of the vast range of influences and experiences open to all at all times.

This dimension of awareness enables a questioning by all of existing facilities available in, say, a metropolis—not merely an assessment of physical or measurable limitations. The city today works in a constipated way, in spite of its physical and architectural limitations. The legacy of redundant buildings and the resultant use patterns acts as a straitjacket to total use and enjoyment.

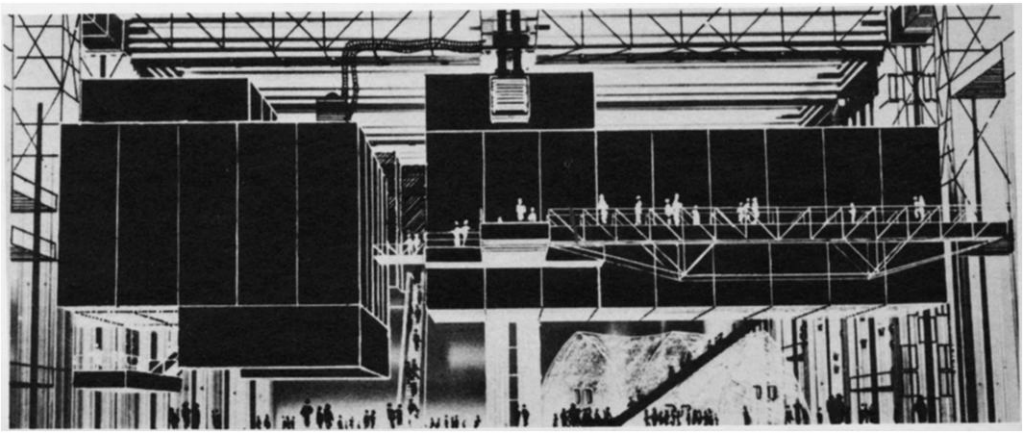
A problem of replanning the city is one of scrapping or adapting the existing forms to enable this fuller, more random and sophisticated use of urban facilities, while ensuring that any new work will not in its turn create an inappropriate physical discipline in the future.

Not all buildings or roadways can be built to collapse or disintegrate by the end of the period for which a reasonable assessment of needs and appetites can be made, and therefore it is essential that beyond the period of social predictability the existing buildings only suggest order and not direction. (Flexibility and adaptability are only two of the required constituents.)

A short-life toy of dimensions and organizations not limited by or to a particular site is one good way of trying, in physical terms, to catch up with the mental dexterity and mobility exercised by all today.

Its stated and designed limited life will in itself enable the palace to be used in the particular mental behavior pitch reserved for immensely important impermanent objects of cherished social immediacy.

Two linked, totally enclosed and conditioned auditoria with escalator access and air-structure beyond. CARLTON



Non-Program

A Laboratory of Fun

by JOAN LITTLEWOOD
Head of Project Committee

Those who at present work in factories, mines and offices will quite soon be able to live as only a few people now can: choosing their own congenial work, doing as little of it as they like, and filling their leisure with whatever delights them. Those people who like fiddling with machinery and pressing buttons can service and press buttons in the robot-manned factories.

In London we are going to create a university of the streets—not a "gracious" park but a foretaste of the pleasures of 1984. It will be a laboratory of pleasure, providing room for many kinds of action.

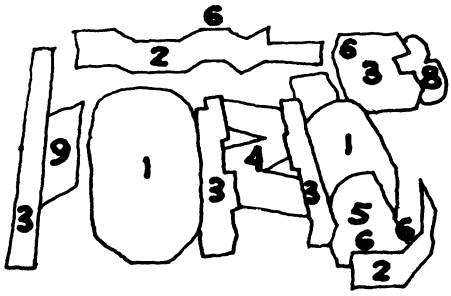
For example, the "fun arcade" will be full of the games and tests that psychologists and electronics engineers now devise for the service of industry or war—knowledge will be piped through jukeboxes. In the music area we shall have, by day, instruments available, free instruction, recordings for anyone, classical, folk, jazz, and pop disc libraries; by night, jam sessions, jazz festivals, poetry and dance—every sort of popular dancing, formal or spontaneous.

There will be a "science playground" where visitors can attend lecture-demonstrations supported by teaching films, closed-circuit television and working models; by night, the area will become an agora or *kaffeeklatsch* where the Socrates, the Abelards, the Mermaid poets, the wandering scholars of the future, the mystics, the sceptics and the sophists can dispute till dawn. An acting area will afford the therapy of theatre for everyone: men and women from factories, shops, and offices, bored with their daily routine, will be able to re-enact incidents from their own experience in burlesque and mime and gossip, so that they no longer accept passively whatever happens to them but wake to a critical awareness of reality, act out their subconscious fears and taboos, and perhaps are stimulated to social research.

A plastic area will be a place for uninhibited dabbling in wood, metal, paint, clay, stone, or textiles, for the rediscovery of the childhood experience of touching and handling, for constructing anything (useless or useful, to taste) from a giant crane to a bird cage.

But the essence of the place will be its informality: nothing is obligatory, anything goes. There will be no permanent structures. Nothing is to last for more than ten years, some things not even ten days: no concrete stadia, stained and cracking; no legacy of noble contemporary architecture, quickly dating; no municipal geranium-beds or fixed teak benches.

With informality goes flexibility. The "areas" that have been listed are not segregated enclosures. The whole plan is open, but on many levels. So the greatest pleasure of traditional parks is preserved—the pleasure of strolling casually, looking in at one or another of these areas or (if this is preferred) settling down for several hours of work-play.



1. Large controlled volumes for assembly, exhibitions, etc. Inflatable structure totally or partially enclosed, opaque or transluscent. Free-area or containing sub-enclosures.

2. External screens providing adjustable lighting, acoustic and partial temperature control. Triodetic space frame (al.) self-supporting, capable of adjustment and re-assembly and containing heat, light and sound reflectors and baffles.

3. Varied enclosures forming rooms, galleries, shelters, walkways, balconies, etc. Box units with wall, floor, stair, screen, etc. Infill panels arranged as required.

4. Tent roofs and awnings. Plasticized nylon tensioned sheets.

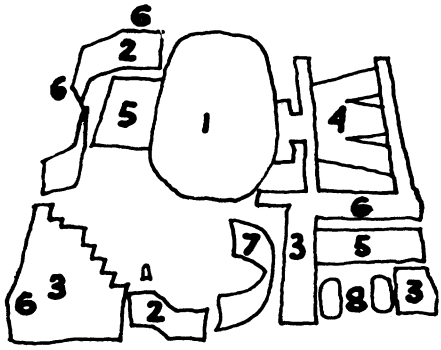
5. Flooring for particular use e.g. dancing. Flooring panels direct on site surface—internal and external.

6. External flood and spot lighting. Fittings capable of manual and remote control.

7. External screens for film and other projections. Weather resistant braced and tensioned screen—direct and back projection.

8. Mobile kitchen or other highly equipped contained services. Vans and trucks with leveling jacks.

9. Horizontal or inclined barriers as 2. Capable of control by pneumatic jacks.



Besides the activities already briefly outlined, there will be plenty to engage imagination and enlarge experience. At various points, sheltered or open, there will be screens on which closed-circuit television will show, without editing or art, whatever is going on at a number of places in and out of London, and in the complex itself: it will be possible to see coal-mines, woodmen and dockers actually at work; Monkey Hill, the aquarium or the insect house at the Zoo; the comings-and-goings outside a local authority rest-center, a Salvation Army hostel, the casualty ward of a hospital, or a West End club; newspanels will bring world and local news.

The curiosity that many people feel about their neighbors' lives can be satisfied instructively, and with greater immediacy than in any documentary film ... and an occasion of major popular interest—a Cup Final, happenings of international interest, or a royal funeral—would be presented on screens of maximum size. The visitor can enjoy a sense of identity with the world about him.

Many who start by wandering half-attentively, or even sceptically, through the complex will be drawn into these and other elementary exercises in social observation. In what has been called the acting area, for instance, there will be no rigid division between performers and audience—a generalization of the technique used in Theatre Workshop for many years.

As I have described it, it may seem very busy, yet the general atmosphere will be one of relaxation and—equally important and now technically possible—there will be zones of quiet for those who don't feel like listening to music or taking part actively in all that is going on. Here they can watch, lounge about and find enjoyment in wasting time.

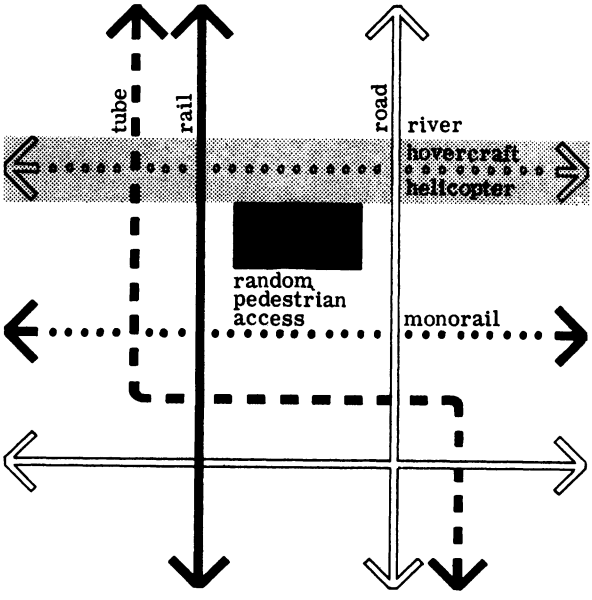
The activities designed for the site should be experimental, the place itself expendable and changeable. The organization of space and the objects occupying it should, on the

one hand, challenge the participants' mental and physical dexterity and, on the other, allow for a flow of space and time, in which passive and active pleasure is provoked. A maximum range of physical organizational and operational arrangements was prepared on the basis of a design analysis of the preliminary structural, component and servicing design. (Throughout, the shortcomings of using, by name, activities already in existence was realized.) Therefore the next stage consisted of breaking down a wide range of desirable activities into their constituent demands. The resulting activity affinity information was then rehabilitated by a developed structural, component, and servicing kit. The final store of such possibilities was handed over to the cyberneticians with specific requests for threshold conditioning, visiting patterns etc., to be investigated at an early stage. Once satisfactory feedback was achieved then previous hunches on, say, the desirable periods of transformation from one total configuration to another could be tested.

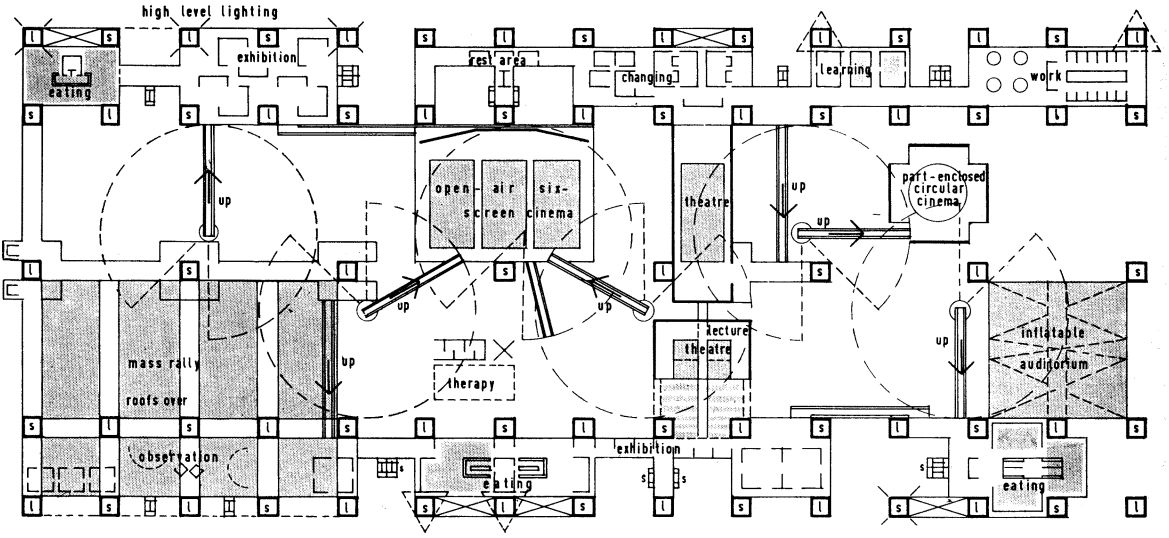
The ephemeral nature of the architecture is a major element in the design, making possible the use of materials and techniques normally excluded from the building industry. Charged static-vapor zones, optical barriers, warm-air curtains and fog-dispersal plants are some of the methods employed, together with vertical and horizontal lightweight blinds.

Within the complex, the public moves about, above the largely unobstructed ground-level deck, on ramps, moving walkways, catwalks and radial escalators. All such equipment is capable of rearrangement—allowing multi-directional movement and random pedestrian grouping, yet capable of programming. The complex itself, having no doorways, enables one to choose one's own route and degree of involvement with the activities. Although the framework will remain a constant size, the total volume in use may vary, thus presenting a changing scene even to the frequent user. While individual enclosures such as theatre areas, workshops, or restaurants have their own particular controlled environment, the total volume is capable of resisting or modifying adverse climatic conditions.

The nature of the enclosures and the degree of control required for these activities are so varied—including as they do large-volume activities such as rallies, concerts, con-



Ideal site.



ferences, theatre and screenings—that each is built up of separate units ("walls," "floors," "ceilings") as required. Inflatable enclosures are also used. The smaller enclosures are more likely to be self-contained: these are built-up standard-unit "boxes" of reinforced plastic and aluminum, set on and serviced from open "decks." The construction and arrangement of such enclosures, together with the movement and positioning of fittings and equipment, are achieved by a permanent travelling gantry crane spanning the whole structure.

The movement of staff, piped services and escape routes are provided for within the open-frame, protected-steel stanchions of the superstructure and cross-connected at service basement level, where service access and parking are located, together with the necessary plant.

The whole complex provides valuable site-testing conditions for a wide range of materials, equipment and constructional techniques.

The Site

This complex can only work—and then only for a finite time—if it is not only accessible to those living and working in the immediate neighborhood but also accessible as a regional and national amenity.

The siting exploits existing communication networks and gives a clue to the potential enrichment of life through increasing mobility at present unrealized in large urban communities. It is essential that a radial-fed focus site be avoided. Such a site acts as a terminal to communication links, reduces random usage and encourages eventual particular use. The "occasion" and "event" would become the inevitable uses of the site.

The Fun Palace must also be sited so as to allow random time-usage. Thus, the varied communication routes must be those of a metropolitan or regional network *passing* the site. This condition enables the use and degree of attention afforded by the public to the activities of the site to vary according to the changing scale and intensity of use of a metropolitan region during the life-span of the Palace.

Immediate transportation feeds would have to be provided. Their design should draw on the existing or proposed conditions adjacent to the site as well as the nature of the form of transit. This design task is eased by the short life of the complex.

Existing derelict property and waste ground should be used as observation aprons. "As found" urban landscape is illuminated or obscured to extend the visual limits of the site. On-site activity is measured and visually displayed for long distance approach viewing.

Vehicular parking pyramids may be constructed. They require skills and attention not normally demanded in urban driving. This demand on the driver increases his awareness of the car as an enjoyable exten-

sion of himself. Waterborne, airborne and air-cushioned vehicles are variants on a pair of walking shoes.

Chronology

1961-63: Project designed and programmed.

1962-64: Feasibility studies undertaken, considering various, large metropolitan sites.

1964: Fun Palace included in Civic Trust's Lea Valley Development Plan (East London).

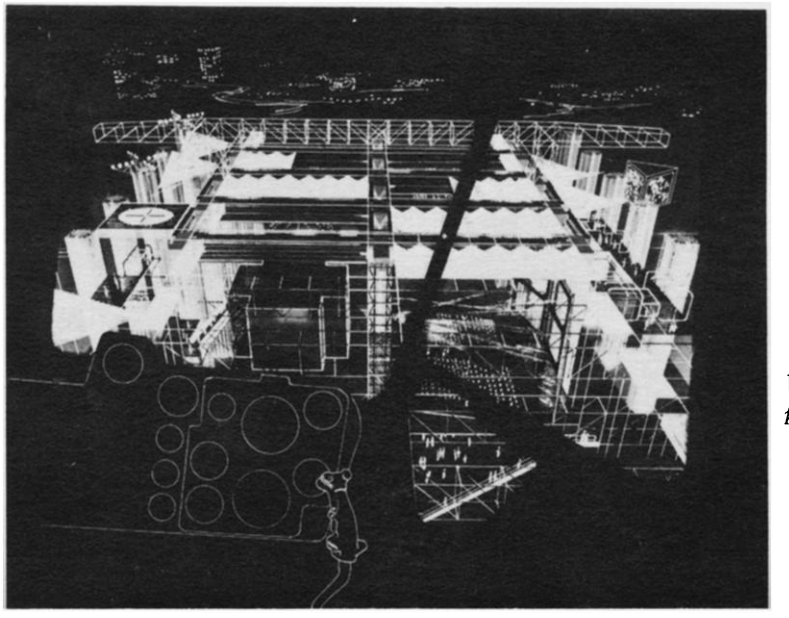
1966: Fun Palace Foundation registered as Charitable Trust.

1966: withdrawal of Fun Palace from Lea Valley site due to strongly contested variation in the extent of particular site.

There is at present no scheduled construction date, since there is no site. As the Fun Palace was designed as a short-term toy (10-15 years), its decreasing validity is being kept under constant review by the Trustees, who meet twice a year.

TRUSTEES:

Yehudi Menuhin
R. Buckminster Fuller
Joan Littlewood
Lord Ritchie Calder
The Earl of Harewood



View of Fun Palace from approaching helicopter.