CHAPTER 6

‘Swinging London’ and the ‘long front of culture’

‘Swinging London’, changing fashions

Britain’s capital city stood as an emblem of national self-confidence and cultural renaissance during the high sixties. ‘Swinging London’ was a mythical fusion of design, architecture, boutique fashion and pop culture, the seal being set – at least as far as one part of the UK was concerned – by England’s World Cup victory at Wembley in July 1966, the focal celebrations for which spilled out westwards from Trafalgar Square to the players’ post-match party at the Royal Garden Hotel. London was seen to be at the heart of the wider social and cultural loosenings of the sixties, soaking up influences from the provinces and abroad and morphing them into an exotic motif of hedonism, modernity and affluent liberation. This newly-fashioned identity was then transmitted for wider national and international consumption via a range of media. The *Daily Telegraph* read the signs earlier than most, labelling London ‘the most exciting city in the world’ in a weekend edition in April 1965. Here, American journalist John Crosby name-checked the capital’s main night spots – Annabel’s in Berkeley Square, the Ad Lib Club and Ronnie Scott’s jazz den in Soho, the Marquee on Wardour Street, the Scene on Great Windmill Street – and performed a roll-call of the fashionable glitterati, dukes and duchesses, designers and media darlings, whose presence had made London ‘the gayest, most uninhibited, and – in a wholly new, very modern sense – most wholly elegant city in the world’. A more powerful

piece of myth-making came exactly one year later, when the US magazine *Time* carried a front-page feature on 'London: The Swinging City', focusing on how the capital had reinvented itself from being the centre of a once-mighty empire into a city that now set the social and cultural markers for the rest of the world. As one of the female editors who worked on it recalled, the article also gave a licence to indulge 'the fascination among the senior editors for mini-skirts' (Green 1998a: 86). Central to both of these commentaries was the idea of a newly apparent 'classlessness', based on the observation that many of the leading 'swinging London' celebrities came from working-class or lower-middle class backgrounds. Photographers such as David Bailey, Brian Duffy and Terence Donovan were East-End working class – the press was delighted when the 'unstuffy' Bailey wore a light blue sweater and green corduroy trousers for his wedding to actress Catherine Deneuve in August 1965 – while actors such as Michael Caine and Terence Stamp were drawn from a similar social milieu. Now they could afford to drive Rolls-Royces and mix easily with the youthful offspring of Britain's major titled families, whose acquiescence in the development of classless relations was seen as crucial to the 'swinging London' phenomenon. When the Beatles were awarded their MBEs at Buckingham Palace in October 1965 it was taken as proof positive that a new classless age had truly arrived.

Of course 'swinging London' was always a highly selective composite, based predominantly on the fashionable western districts of Soho, Chelsea, Mayfair and South Kensington. It ignored the council housing estates, corner shops and greasy cafés that typified most of the city. It also sat uncomfortably alongside alternative narratives of the 'state of the nation', such as the rediscovery of poverty by social researchers in late 1965 (see chapter 9), or people's absorbtion in the horrific details of the Moors Murderers' trial in April–May 1966. But, as with all mythical constructions, it corresponded to an important imaginative reality, and the myth had a cultural resonance which transcended the tiny cliques who made up London's interconnected 'scenes'. By 1962 London already employed more than one-fifth of the country's working population (Rycroft 2002: 578). As the *Time* article noted, some 30 per cent of its total population was in the 15-to-34-year-old age bracket, and an influx of post-colonial immigrants meant that London had a more cosmopolitan ethnic mix than anywhere else in the country. Between 1965 and 1967 all

of these factors helped to make the congested capital city an important gathering point for creative expression across a range of cultural forms, the combination of which produced a new aesthetic that was widely shared throughout the rest of Britain. Fashion was at the leading edge of this phenomenon, pushed forward by design pioneers like Mary Quant and John Stephen, and continued by art-school graduates who had spent their time at college studying fine arts and graphic design as well as fashion. Indeed, as fashion rose to high prominence during the era of 'swinging London', so its status as an academic discipline within the art colleges also gradually improved. A prime force here was Mary Quant, who gained a national profile after she opened Bazaar, her first shop, in the King's Road in 1955, designing and selling 'sexy' clothes such as brightly coloured mini-skirts and skinny-ribbed sweaters to the young Chelsea set. The store was a magnet for those who wanted entry into the fashionable scene. Before he became the Rolling Stones' manager, Andrew Loog Oldham was employed to dress the Bazaar windows – a job he likened to an apprenticeship for designing record covers (Oldham 2000: 94). Quant's ability to conceive and implement new design ideas almost daily ensured that there was a constant turnover of new stock in her store. Ten years later she was being described as 'the major fashion force in the world outside Paris' (cited in Booker 1969: 22). Quant and the art-school-trained 'fashion girls' who followed her lead absorbed Pop Art and pop music references into their design and retail strategies, making *haute couture* and luxury fashion look out-of-date in comparison with their own off-the-peg clothes (McRobbie 1998: 35–6). The mini-skirt was integral to the new look, designed as a symbol of sexual freedom and modelled by the catwalk icons Twiggy and Jean Shrimpton, whose tiny waistlines were an ironic counterpoint to the post-austerity abundance of the sixties. Barbara Hulanicki, whose Biba boutique had a clientele that included *Ready, Steady, Go!* presenter Cathy MacGowan, offered her own explanation for the new style. 'The postwar babies had been deprived of nourishing protein in childhood and grew up into beautiful skinny people. A designer's dream. It didn't take much for them to look outstanding' (1983: 79). The infantile 'dolly bird' look became the dominant style represented in fashion magazines like *Petticoat* and *Nova* which in turn fed the public appetite for the uniform. As Angela Carter commented in a piece for *New Society* in 1967, clothes such as this had

a significant social and psychological function as 'disguises' which 'give a relaxation from one's own personality'. More constructively, she suggested: 'Style means the presentation of the self as a three-dimensional art object, to be wondered at and handled. And this involves a new attitude to the self which is thus adorned' (Carter 1967: 866). It was important, therefore, that boutiques selling the latest style spread from the capital to other towns and cities, modelled on stores like Bazaar and Biba which became, as Angela McRobbie observed, focal points for youth culture as well as a place in which to adorn the self.

> *The boutiques were as innovative in design as the clothes they stocked. They didn't look like any other shops. The items were not priced beyond the budget of the working-class girls who spent substantial sums each week, while the fast turnover of stock as well as the reputation these shops got from the publicity they attracted in the fashion magazines and the daily press (in particular the Sunday newspaper colour supplements), meant that they came to represent the ultimate consumer fantasy for ordinary girls and young women up and down the country.*
>
> (McRobbie 1998: 37)

Those who lived too far away to visit the most fashionable boutiques were not left behind entirely. Since 1963 Quant had mass-produced new fashions and sold them wholesale to the mass market. But it was not only women who gained from this explosion in high-street fashion. Men's clothes similarly benefited from an injection of creative energy at this time. John Stephen was a pioneer who had moved from Glasgow to London in the fifties and established himself as the high priest of 'Mod' fashion with his four Carnaby Street stores: His, Mod Male, Domino Male and Male W.1. By the time of 'swinging London', Carnaby Street was fast becoming a tacky tourist trap, but a new sensibility about men's fashion had become a permanent feature of popular culture. Coloured shirts and boldly patterned ties – if ties were worn at all – replaced the dominant grey-and-white look of the fifties. Denim jeans and T-shirts (which often carried names and slogans) became ubiquitous among the young and not so young, signalling a new informality in dress. Elasticated 'Chelsea' boots and collarless jackets benefited from their association with the Beatles, as did the trend towards longer hair which was accompanied by

the increased production of cosmetics and dressings for male hair (Byrde 1979: 171).

Fashion was now big business, and it matched perfectly the other descriptors for Pop Art which the artist Richard Hamilton had set out in 1957: it was popular, transient, expendable, low-cost, mass-produced, young, witty, sexy, gimmicky and glamorous (McRobbie 1998: 36). Fashion retail strategies also had an impact beyond the rag trade, inspiring the designer Terence Conran who opened his first Habitat furnishings shop in the Fulham Road in 1964. Conran, who had designed the Knightsbridge branch of Mary Quant's Bazaar, made Habitat more of a boutique than a traditional furniture store and he later went on to offer a highly stylised catalogue and mail order service. 'Swinging London' was the hippest place in the world to buy a lifestyle. For those who lived beyond its immediate reach, there was always at least the opportunity to absorb some of its influences via the style magazines and weekend colour newspaper supplements.

The cultural power of the capital was further accentuated by television and film producers. *Adam Adamant Lives*! (1966–7), for example, was a BBC fantasy series in which Gerald Harper played an Edwardian gentleman-adventurer who was drugged and frozen alive in 1902, only to thaw out intact and perfectly preserved in mid-sixties London. More importantly, 'swinging London' became the dominant motif of mid-sixties British cinema, displacing the northern industrial towns and black-and-white social realism of the early-sixties 'New Wave'. In line with the more optimistic sensibility that they depicted almost all films were now shot in colour, often with a *mise-en-scène* that emphasised bright primary colours (Silvio Narizano's 1966 film *Georgy Girl* was the last 'swinging London' picture to be shot in black and white). Although directors handled the subject matter in a variety of ways, adopting differing moral approaches to metropolitan permissiveness, all were inspired by London's relatively short-lived reputation as the world's most fashionable city. As well as the thematic interest there was a commercial imperative behind the production of such pictures. At a time when the average age of cinema audiences was falling, these films, with their references to pop, fashion and pre-marital sex, had an obvious youthful appeal. Pop-group movies which married British R&B, youth culture and Pop Art aesthetics were precursors of the genre. *A Hard Day's Night*

(1964) and *Help*! (1965), both of which featured the Beatles, and *Catch Us if You Can* (1965) starring the Dave Clark Five, signposted the direction to take to capture the target demographic and featured some of what became the visual clichés of 'swinging London' films – E-type Jaguars, red buses, mini-skirts. By 1965 the genre was fast becoming established. In this year Dick Lester (who had directed *A Hard Day's Night*) released *The Knack*, a film which examined the differences between physical sexual attraction and more profound emotional love. It showed how a shy schoolteacher named Colin (played by Michael Crawford) could win the love of Nancy (Rita Tushingham), a country girl who had been drawn to London's glitz. In order to do so, Colin had to compete against the attentions of his more sexually experienced and confident rival, Tolen (Ray Brooks). *Darling*, which was also released in 1965, starred Julie Christie as Diana Scott, an amoral but spontaneous girl who wanted to have it all (sex, wealth, celebrity) but who found only emptiness once her dreams came true. Despite its 'swinging' backdrop *Darling* was in essence a traditional morality tale, full of cautionary portrayals of how relationships that were built on fantasy rather than truth led only to pain and failure. A similar moral grounding can be seen in Lewis Gilbert's *Alfie* (1966), one of the most emblematic of all 'swinging London' films in which Michael Caine played a 'working-class Don Juan' (French 1966, cited in Murphy 1992: 143). Alfie's amorous wanderings leave behind a string of hurt females, including the abandoned mother of his child and a married woman who has to resort to an (illegal) abortion in his seedy London flat after a casual sexual liaison. But there is at least a trajectory of developing self-awareness sketched out in the film, at the end of which Alfie shows some genuine remorse and attempts to settle down in a monogamous relationship. As Alfie explains in his final address straight to camera, despite having 'a bob or two, some decent clothes, a car' to his name his life choices have not given him 'peace of mind'. And as he says 'if you ain't got that, you ain't got nothing'. Michelangelo Antonioni's film *Blow Up* (1966), scripted by the playwright Edward Bond and adapted from '*Las babas del diabolo*', a short story by the Argentinian modernist Julio Cortazar, signalled a deeper sense of unease at mid-sixties London permissiveness. David Hemmings plays Thomas, a fashion photographer (in the mould of Bailey and Donovan) who believes he has witnessed a murder as he shoots off film casually in a London

park. He pursues the beautiful suspected murderess (Vanessa Redgrave), but all the while seems interested in the murder primarily as the inspiration to make a piece of art. Thus the film meditates on issues of artifice, affluent decadence and moral relativism. Antonioni trains a wearily cynical eye on the fantasy he perceives to be at the centre of 'swinging London', but whether his audience responded to depictions of a pot-smoking party in Chelsea, casual sex in the photographer's studio and a guitar-smashing performance by the Yardbirds in quite the way he intended is another matter. MGM's press release for the film left to one side Antonioni's philosophical ruminations and emphasised instead the youth appeal of the modern London setting, 'where teenage pop singing groups have their records sold in shops owned by people their own age, and photographers who have barely started shaving drive Rolls-Royces with radio telephones' (cited in Lev 1989: 135).

By the time that the genre's final batch of films was released – *Here We Go Round the Mulberry Bush, I'll Never Forget What's 'Is Name, Smashing Time* (all 1967) – signs of exhaustion were all too apparent. More importantly in 1967 'swinging London' was about to surrender its *zeitgeist* status to the counter-culture and the 'summer of love', imaginative constructions which were largely reactions against the excessive materialism of the London scene of the previous two years. As Simon Rycroft observes, however, 'swinging' and 'underground' London were not completely antithetical ideologically. Their cultural politics sprang from similarly abstract notions of the relationships between society, nature and technology (2002: 581). They were both based around counter-hegemonic strategies which allowed people (if only in their heads) to resist more traditional, and still dominant, moral and cultural values. In that sense both also occupied space that was opened up by the 'democratisation' of culture, a long process whose impact was most apparent in the mid-sixties.

Pop Art and the 'long front of culture'

Art was fashionable by the mid-sixties, and fashion was art. It was a productive symbiosis. Clothes designers and poster artists lifted patterns and imagery from fine art works. In the other direction, artists trained in the country's leading academies sought inspiration from the urban pop

culture of retail design, brand advertising and new media. The result was an increasingly influential interface between art and commerce, which turned fashionable galleries into thriving businesses and made gallery owners such as John Dunbar and Robert Fraser into 'swinging London' celebrities. Dunbar opened the Indica Gallery in Mason's Yard, London, in 1966, the year after he had married Marianne Faithfull while he was still a student at Cambridge. Fraser's in-crowd credentials were confirmed for a wider public when he was charged alongside Mick Jagger and Keith Richards of the Rolling Stones following a drugs raid on Richards' house in February 1967 (he was sentenced to six months in jail for possessing heroin). The Beatles recruited artists Peter Blake and Richard Hamilton to design their album covers (for *Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* and *The Beatles* – more usually known as the *White Album* – respectively). The Rolling Stones were to use Andy Warhol to design the *Sticky Fingers* album cover. And fashion photographers like David Bailey found that their work could be treated and exhibited as fine art. *David Bailey's Box of Pin-ups* (1965) helped elevate him to the position of first iconic photographer of the new age. The box – with accompanying text by journalist Francis Wyndham – contained thirty-six black-and-white studio portraits of the high-sixties 'New Aristocracy', ranging from hairdressers (Vidal Sassoon), interior decorators (David Hicks), models (Jean Shrimpton) and villains (the Kray twins), to artists (David Hockney), actors (Michael Caine) and photographers (Bailey himself, photographed by Mick Jagger). Thus, formerly rigid distinctions between high and popular culture melted to some extent, and a cultural pyramid in which layers were organised according to aesthetic or critical benchmarks gave way to a 'long front of culture' which dispensed with the need for hierarchies of value. This evolution was identified and indeed promoted by art critics like Lawrence Alloway (whose article 'Long Front of Culture' had appeared back in 1959), by the commentators Marshall McLuhan and T.R. Fyvel, and by the artist Richard Hamilton (a key figure in British Pop Art). The Arts Council – the body that had emerged from wartime as the main state agency for promoting the arts – was also sanguine about this levelling effect. In the 1965 White Paper, *A Policy for the Arts*, Britain's first Minister for the Arts, Jennie Lee, acknowledged that the traditional cultural hierarchy was breaking down:

> *. . . [D]iffusion of culture is now so much a part of life that there is no precise point at which it stops. Advertisements, buildings, books, motor cars, radio and television, magazines, records, all can carry a cultural aspect and affect our lives for good or ill . . . It is partly a question of bridging the gap between what have come to be called the 'higher' forms of entertainment and the traditional sources – the brass band, the amateur concert party, the entertainer, the music hall and pop group – and to challenge the fact that a gap exists. In the world of jazz the process has already happened; highbrow and lowbrow have met.*
>
> (1965: 15–16)

The Arts Council's agenda here mattered, not least because of its rising profile and status in the sixties – whereas, for example, its budget had been static in the fifties, between 1960 and 1964 Arts Council funding more than doubled. Labour's return to power in 1964 ushered in a further period of funding growth, thereby endorsing Anthony Crosland's view in *The Future of Socialism* that with poverty and unemployment seemingly under control, legislators should turn their attention to the 'spheres of personal freedom, happiness and cultural endeavour' (1956: 520). The Arts Council's grant rose steadily from £3,205,000 in 1964–5 to £3,910,000 in 1965–6, £5,700,000 in 1966–7, £7,200,000 in 1967–8 and £9,300,000 in 1970–1 (Hewison 1986: 58). True, most of this money was spent on the metropolitan (usually London) centres of elite culture. The Royal Opera House, Sadler's Wells Opera, the National Theatre, the Royal Shakespeare Company and the major art galleries all drew heavily on the Council's coffers. But some of the funding went to artists and writers, smaller theatre companies and orchestras. Regional arts associations benefited, so too did art forms which had previously been ineligible for grants – jazz, for example, was supported in 1967 when Graham Collier was given a small award – and a fraction was spent on encouraging 'experimental' projects. As Robert Hutchison recognised, here was the real source of the Arts Council's power: its official capacity to conceptualise and identify the arts and the artistic. By giving approval to some artists and withholding it from others, the Council legitimised some kinds of creativity and ignored the rest (1982: 13–14). It was therefore significant that the Council preferred to promote contemporary work in the visual arts, often produced by graduates from the art colleges that

had proliferated in the wake of the 1944 Education Act and the 1960 Coldstream Report. Whether or not this new generation of contemporary artists produced work of high merit was in some respects less important than the fact that there were wider opportunities for people to study, experience, practise and exhibit art. Art colleges had a cross-class social role:

> *Art schools were a haven for imaginative people otherwise neglected by the educational system. Few would become commercially successful artists, but the relative freedom of the art schools encouraged experiments with style. For working class students they were an escape from the factory, for middle-class students they were the entry to bohemia.*
>
> (Hewison 1986: 63)

Art school graduates brought their aesthetic sensibilities to bear on a number of cultural forms in the sixties. Nowhere was this more evident than in popular music, where the roll-call of musicians who came from an art school background includes some of the key names in sixties rock: Lennon and McCartney, Eric Clapton, Pete Townsend, Keith Richards, Ray Davies, Jeff Beck, Eric Burdon, David Bowie and all of Pink Floyd. Unlike their fifties counterparts, this generation of musicians demanded extensive artistic control over writing, production, album cover design, marketing and the lighting and staging of live shows. When Pete Townsend smashed his guitar into an amp at the end of a show he was at least aware that he was drawing on a tradition of 'destructive' art. Pop music was one important medium which helped to filter some fine art influences to a wider audience. Another was television, with arts programmes such as the BBC's *Monitor* (1958–65) and *Omnibus* (from 1967) bringing the visual and other arts to a mainstream, if not necessarily a mass, audience. The increased interest in art was reflected in the rising circulation of art journals like *Art and Artists*, *Studio International*, *Art Forum* and *Arts Review*. It was a good time too for contemporary art venues. The Tate, the Whitechapel and the Institute of Contemporary Arts all flourished in London. The Walker Art Gallery in Liverpool successfully hosted the John Moore's biennial exhibition, and the Whitworth in Manchester put on important shows of younger artists' work (Sillars 1992: 272).

What of the art itself? Above all the mid-sixties art boom was driven forward by Pop Art, a form which originated in the early fifties. Pop Art developed out of a series of meetings of the Independent Group at the ICA, where a group of like-minded friends – Richard Hamilton, Lawrence Alloway, the architects Peter and Alison Smithson, the artist Eduardo Paolozzi and the architectural historian Reyner Banham – gathered to discuss their visions of contemporary art. The Independent Group had a shared preoccupation with modern technology, commercial design and mass-media culture, and so they were naturally predisposed towards art forms that absorbed and recontextualised these influences. Pop Art played around with the distinctions between high art and the iconography of modern popular culture. Its comic book aesthetic unashamedly celebrated post-war affluence and the new consumer culture, particularly the US hard commercial culture of brand advertising, pulp magazines and Hollywood films. Pop Art thus in a sense reversed the normal current of *avant-garde* movements: whereas its predecessors developed in opposition to mainstream culture, Pop Art positively luxuriated in the new materialist 'paradise'. It was Pop Art's greatest strength, producing images that were glamorous, sexy, witty and euphoric, using visual references that were familiar to anyone who watched television, put posters on their walls, read magazines or shopped in the high street. The first well-known British example of this aesthetic is Richard Hamilton's iconic illustration, *Just What Is It That Makes Today's Homes So Different, So Appealing?*, a collage of magazine images which he produced for the 1956 'This is Tomorrow' exhibition. By the early sixties British Pop Art was seeping into a wider public consciousness via the publicity surrounding the annual 'Young Contemporaries' exhibitions held at the Whitechapel Art Gallery. These exhibitions raised the profile of the artists Peter Blake, Joe Tilson, Richard Smith, David Hockney, Patrick Caulfield and R.B. Kitaj, all of whom had studied at the Royal College of Art. Although their work was highly individual and eclectic rather than part of a highly-defined 'school', each of these artists at least absorbed some aspects of Pop Art's sensibility into their painting. They also profited from the media perception that they were part of an artistic movement which, in common with early twentieth century Dadaism, sought to expand the parameters of art by challenging conventional tastes. Thus they benefited from the very commercialism that underpinned much of their work, selling their art in

a buoyant market that was crowded for a time with private galleries and dealers. Ironically, however, the form's worship of consumer culture came to be seen as Pop Art's greatest weakness. Critics on the radical left dismissed Pop Art as a decadent irrelevance. To them, it was a form which built on a complacent acceptance of the ideology of affluent consumerism, failing utterly to engage with the realities of the modern world and the forces that reshaped society. Other critics, who were simply bored by it, claimed that Pop Art continually recycled the same idea. To some cynical observers, the wider public interest that Pop Art had helped to generate in the visual arts was superficial. They claimed that it was merely a consequence of weekend newspaper colour supplement hype and a fleeting sense that art galleries were fashionable places for poseurs. Worse still, the growing market for contemporary art was seen to have a corrosive effect on the artist, with the true spirit of the *avant-garde* giving way to a commercialised art boom. Hugh Adams made this complaint about the art world of the sixties:

> *The leeches on the artist's back multiplied: in the world of 'You've never had it so good' galleries proliferated, art institutions expanded, and the media presentation of the artist as pop idol rescued him from his lonely attic . . . Roaring young lions of the early sixties became sleek, purring, sedentary ones later, their art consequently soft, and sufficiently accessible for the manipulators and middle-men to be able to package producer and bland product alike.*
>
> (Adams 1978: 32)

Although it was an emblematic feature of sixties visual culture, Pop Art was only a fraction of what the art world offered at the time. Among older British artists, Francis Bacon and Frank Auerbach produced some of their best paintings in the sixties. Crowds still flocked to see the old masters in museums and galleries. The highest prices at a Sotheby's art auction in 1967 were paid for a Cézanne and a Picasso (Sillars 1992: 271). Among contemporary styles, Neo-Dada, New Realism, Op, Kinetic, Tachism, Hard-Edge, Colour Field, Minimalist, Conceptual, Event and Earth were all part of a bewildering array of artistic categories referred to in the sixties and early seventies. These styles often overlapped or had a dynamic relationship with each other, significantly blurring distinctions between painting, sculpture and performance art. For example, in

sculpture Anthony Caro and his students at St Martin's School of Art – the 'New Generation' – used industrial materials and modern building techniques to produce work that had more in common with architecture than classical sculpture. They bolted and welded steel plates and sheet metal together, laid iron poles on the ground, arranged girders, filled canvas sacks with plaster and put their work on the floor rather than on pedestals. Their sculptures were accessible, allowing spectators to engage with the pieces and explore their spaces freely, rather than passively admire them as rarefied works of art. It was part of an increasingly prevalent trend towards an elision of the artistic work and the process of spectatorship, with the intention being that spectators would experience art as a total environment. The sculptures could also be seen as three-dimensional abstract paintings, sharing some of Pop Art's predilection for recycling, recontextualising and demystifying the artistic process. Coming from the opposite direction, the paintings of Allen Jones and Derek Boshier, whose canvases were shaped to match the subject matter they depicted, displayed the sense of spatial awareness found in 'New Generation' sculpture. It was present too in Bridget Riley's Op Art, in which black lines were arranged on a white background in ways that gave the viewer the illusion of movement. Riley's abstract geometric patterns soon inspired fashion designers who printed them on to fabrics and sold them to the fashionable set. The humming wave effect of these Op Art pictures also had something in common with the stroboscopic lighting used by rock bands later in the decade. It was another example of how a long front of culture was established by the high sixties. If there was a unifying theme to an otherwise diverse field of British visual art in this period, it was a desire to make galleries and art works more accessible and enjoyable. Reverence and stuffiness in art were to be avoided at all costs in these self-consciously new times.