

23 April 1092

From Victor Pasmore to Gary Philipson Peterlee Development Corporation

Dear Gary

Many thanks for your two letters of April 15th and 19th; they arrived just as I was writing to thank you for the hospitality which you laid on for me at the Hall Garth Hotel – a very nice place in beautiful countryside. And I very much enjoyed the company of Arthur Cockrell and Jake Cameron.

With regard to your first letter and invitation to put on an exhibition of my work at Lee House in September I write to confirm this and my acceptance which will include the showing of a film about the work called “The Image in Search of Itself”. This film includes shots of both the South West Area housing and the Pavilion, so it should be of some topical interest to the local audience.

I spoke to my art dealers, the Marlborough Gallery, about the project and they will be happy to cooperate by providing all the pictures in frames and also by arranging transport, etc. Of course this latter business would have to be paid at your end.

The exhibition would consist of a selection of my best colour prints, some of which are very large, and will be similar to that which is now being toured in European cities by the British Council. These prints comprise of aquatints, etchings, lithographs and screen-printing and represent all the major stages of my abstract work.

A day during the first fortnight in September for the opening and film showing would be good for me. But the Marlborough would like you to confirm this as soon as possible so that they can reserve the pictures; no need to give precise dates yet – just say, September – October. Write to Miss Barbara Lloyd, Marlborough Graphics, 6 Albermarle Street, London, W1X 3HF. Tel: 629 5161.

With regard to your second letter about the Pavilion – thank you for sending me the press cuttings about my visit which I am very glad to have. I think the Press were remarkably accurate in reporting what was said except in their implication that the entire residential community in Sunny Blunts were there to voice objections. In fact only a small deputation turned up reinforced by reporters and Councillor Mrs Maslin who presumably had been petitioned to speak on their behalf. The main objections came from a couple whose house unfortunately looks, from the inside, as if it is situated almost underneath one end of the Pavilion and from an elderly man who lives in a semi-detached old-persons’ dwelling nearby. But, on the other hand, two people told me that they have no objection and one of them lives in a house equally close.

To sum up: the impressions I got from my visit were as follows:

1. I was surprised to find so little scribbling on the exterior walls. This is certainly very objectionable and should be removed. But with regard to the interior upstairs – this was quite the opposite to what I expected.

I fear that I upset some members of the deputation by my jocular response to this ‘mess’. But I had expected something really sordid and objectionable over the whole building: but when I was confronted upstairs with a gay and colourful exhibition of free child art I was so relieved that I could not help laughing and joking about it. It never occurred to me or my colleagues that the Pavilion would become a children’s painting studio:

2. But it is clear that for the people living in houses in very close proximity the studio idea is not a joke, mainly because of the noise which it involves. Indeed the two main contentions which came out of this confrontation were; first, noise of the children shouting and roller skating on the upper platform and, second, the ugliness of the building at very close quarters. I agree that to have a concrete mass towering over your little garden and living room under these conditions would be enough to make any piece of sculpture or architecture appear hideous even if by Michael Angelo. But I agree that it was a mistake to site any housing too close to the building.
3. With regard to the problem of attracting young 'thugs' and 'layabouts'; unfortunately this is a problem which faces all towns nowadays. Remove the Pavilion and they will find another place. However, some mitigation to this problem might be provided by lighting the footpath which runs across the lake underneath after dark as suggested by your chief architect, Jake Cameron.
4. I discussed the problem of both noise and eyesore with the couple living in the adjacent house mentioned above when they invited me inside for a cup of tea. I suggested two proposals; first, one which I have already made to you and which was reiterated by John Cummins at lunch; that is to close the upstairs platform by removing the side entrance staircase and by gating the door at the top of the end stairway. And second, to plant a tree on the grass verge between their house and the rear of the building. Indeed, tree planting could be extended to include other houses in too close proximity if the occupiers agreed. I enclose a sketch plan indicating possible places. Both agreed that this would improve the situation.

Unfortunately or perhaps fortunately after my confrontation with Mrs Maslin, John Cummins pointed out to me the rubbish dumping strewn about in the little valley just behind the Pavilion at the entrance to the Dene directly under the windows of adjacent housing. Perhaps this is the adult example which inspired the children to take a free hand with the pavilion:

I look forward to returning in September. Meanwhile

Victor