**Metro: ART AT VELOCITY**

Eduardo Paolozzi and Lance Wyman

19th May - 5th August 2017

Bloomberg SPACE
50 Finsbury Square
London
EC2A 1HD

I was intrigued and delighted in equal measure to be invited to the opening of what appeared as an unlikely collision between the virtuoso wayfinding of graphic designer Wyman, and the versatility and guile of sculptor Paolozzi. The show focuses on the transport-related imprint of both, and what emerges quickly and indelibly is an impression that their respective, very distinctive stylistic visual signatures, make memorable markers for place making.

Wyman’s exquisitely hand-drawn designs for the Mexico ’68 Summer Olympic Games were applied at that time not only to public transport, but to balloons, stadia, dresses, postage stamps, ashtrays and even the Olympic medals. The outstanding success of Wyman’s sensitively researched and painstakingly executed pictograms remains a milestone in the history of Mexico, graphic design and the Olympic games, and, in my view, a milestone which will be hard to surpass in terms of a near-definitive brand and identity.

Paolozzi is equally celebrated of course, mainly for his sculpture, but his instantly recognisable mosaics for the London underground are both unmistakably his, and rooted in an appropriate fascination with the physicality of machinery, speed and movement, which one might argue the case and the trace back to futurism.

What is interesting about this extremely well-staged exhibition is the relative segregation of the works and the differential between the maquettes of Paolozzi and real-scale artefacts of Wyman. In viewing Paolozzi’s mock-ups and plans, we are required to imagine ourselves at scale and can only guess at the difficulties of conspiring to produce an image to be viewed either at unfeasibly close quarters from a train platform, or from on the train itself, with the image tessellated and pixelated over a curvilinear surface. This was clearly not as easy as it appears to us in the passing commuter trade. With Wyman we have the benefit of being inside the construct of a real-scale, actual size replica metro station, as well as some extraordinary and intimate works presented in a series of compelling vitrine displays.

In my view, Wyman’s pencil drawings, trial prints and hand-coloured prototypes offer a personal and unmediated insight into the mind of a super-creative designer at work and in practice. With Paolozzi’s display we see the planner, the visionary and the draughtsman, but it is not by any stretch of the imagination, intimate. In the light of this, we would do well to remember that the pragmatic need for Wyman to show people the way through a city via a cohesive and clear identikit, without much use of the written word, was a rather different imperative than those which drove Paolozzi to apply what was essentially a graffiti mosaic, to Tottenham Court Road and other Transport for London venues.

In terms of other, more obvious differences, Royal Academician Sir Eduardo Paolozzi died at the age of 81 in 2005, whilst Mssr. Wyman, is still very much alive and kicking with great, relaxed good humour and was in abundant evidence at the opening of the show.

This is an exhibition where the outputs of the protagonists benefit from proximity but not comparison – the apples and pears argument if you will. But what the show does deliver is a unique opportunity to understand the transferability of visual creativity and its applications against the uniting backdrop of architecture, places and people.

The permutation of Wyman and Paolozzi is rare and implausible, but actually extremely evocative; the experience is still resonating over a week later. Being in the fortunate position of knowing both Wyman and Paolozzi personally, my only regret is that they were not able to meet as personalities within the context of this show. As the accomplished writer Richard Cork said at the opening, “Eduardo would have enjoyed this…” - I certainly did and can wholeheartedly recommend an hour with the work of these two great minds.