

# Ludic Labyrinths: Strategies of Disruption

Paula Burleigh

*Dylaby* (1962), an exhibition organized by Stedelijk director Willem Sandberg in collaboration with the artist Jean Tinguely, transformed the museum into an immersive labyrinth. At times dark and disorienting, the participating artists—Tinguely with Niki de Saint Phalle, Daniel Spoerri, Per Olof Ultvedt, and Robert Rauschenberg—cluttered the galleries with physical obstacles that required visitors to navigate raised platforms, climbing structures, and false stairways amidst a cacophony of noise. A celebratory atmosphere likely tempered any frustration generated by the deliberate lack of clarity in the exhibition layout, as visitors gleefully fired BB guns and danced in a sea of floating balloons. Scholars have noted that *Dylaby* anticipated major trends that defined art of the 1960s and beyond: active participation supplanted passive spectatorship, and both experience and environment took precedence over the autonomous art object.<sup>1</sup>

Less frequently discussed, however, is the actual structure of *Dylaby*, which gave the exhibition its title—an abbreviated form of “dynamic labyrinth.” *Dylaby* was far from the only exhibition to foreground the labyrinth as a central motif, metaphor, and organizing principle. Following World War II, the labyrinth experienced a revival in popularity throughout Europe, evident in works by collectives like the Letterist International, the Situationist International, and the Nouveaux Réalistes, which counted Tinguely, Saint Phalle, and Spoerri among its members.<sup>2</sup> This essay situates *Dylaby* within this larger revival of the labyrinth, which I argue functioned as a space of temporal collisions and play.<sup>3</sup> Both its confusion of time—gesturing simultaneously back to a mythic past and forward to a utopian future—and its ludic character were strategies of disruption, which artists mounted against stultifying conventions that governed the city and the museum.

One year after *Dylaby* opened at the Stedelijk, the exhibition's floor plan appeared in *The Situationist Times* (*ST*), a lavishly illustrated magazine edited and designed by the artist Jacqueline de Jong (b. 1939, Hengelo, NL).<sup>4</sup> De Jong devoted this issue entirely to the labyrinth, the second in a series on topological forms in art, archaeology, and visual culture writ large. With over four-hundred illustrations of labyrinths, texts by an interdisciplinary range of scholars, and a bibliography of recent labyrinth-related studies, the *ST* offers a thorough, if eccentric, view of the labyrinth as a prevalent motif and symbol in art and discourse of the era. De Jong briefly worked at the Stedelijk and served as a member of the Situationist International (SI), which brought her into contact with a constellation of artists in the Netherlands and France, among other places, whose work manifested labyrinthine themes. Consequently, a closer examination of the labyrinthine universe of the *ST* provides valuable context for *Dylaby*. Viewed in conjunction with the *ST*, it is evident that *Dylaby* was not an anomaly, but reflected one of the most important and yet little examined themes in art and architecture of the postwar and Cold War eras.<sup>5</sup>

### *The Situationist Times*

In 1958, following a period of living in Paris, De Jong returned to Amsterdam, working part-time at the Stedelijk Museum under Sandberg in the department of industrial design. In 1960 she met Guy Debord, founder of the SI, and witnessed the bitter negotiations between Sandberg and members of the SI over *Die Welt als Labyrinth*, a planned but unrealized exhibition that would have invited viewers to treat the Stedelijk and nearby Amsterdam environs as a series of labyrinths to be traversed via *dérive*, the Situationist technique for drifting through urban space.<sup>6</sup> De Jong joined the SI only to be expelled by Debord in 1962. In spite of the split, the *ST* included numerous references to the group's ideas and output, and generally it reflected key tenets of Situationism, with the notable exception of Debord's distrust in the visual arts.<sup>7</sup>

Three of the six issues of the *ST* explored topologies, or forms defined in the magazine as having "non-orientable surfaces."<sup>8</sup> Like a Möbius strip, a topology had no top or bottom, back or front, interior or exterior. The lack of any single correct orientation meant that these forms were subject to "continuous transformation," or an endless elasticity.<sup>9</sup> All of the topological issues, which featured the knot, the labyrinth, and the interlace, respectively, effectively argued for the universality of these forms throughout history and across cultures. As evidence, De Jong marshalled a dizzying array of examples from extant archaeological remains, contemporary artworks, architecture (both whole structures and fragmentary details), and popular culture. Both the comparative method and the interest in archeology came out of her collaborations with the Danish artist Asger Jorn. After his own expulsion from the SI in 1961, Jorn founded the Scandinavian Institute for Comparative

Vandalism (1961–1965), under the auspices of which he conceived of an impossibly ambitious thirty-two-volume history of ten thousand years of Nordic folk art. The project was partly motivated by his desire to highlight traditions outside of the dominant art historical narrative rooted in Greco-Roman tradition, but his initiative was also comparative. He wanted to locate forms and patterns that manifested across cultures, which he believed owed in part to the travel and migration of the historic Vandals across Europe. In pursuit of material, Jorn and De Jong traveled throughout France, Spain, Italy, Switzerland, and Scandinavia between 1961 and 1965, accompanied by the photographers Gérard Francheschi and Ulrik Ross. Together they documented stone figures, churches, monsters, pagan symbols, labyrinths, and mazes, many of which De Jong eventually reproduced in the *ST*.<sup>10</sup>

De Jong included *Dylaby* in *ST* no. 4, a special issue on the labyrinth (fig. 1). The magazine layout was a labyrinth in its own right: eschewing historical chronology and disciplinary categories, she juxtaposed images from disparate places and time periods to draw out striking and surprising morphological similarities. Examples of labyrinths varied widely in source and type: there were hand-drawn diagrams of labyrinths by De Jong, images of archaeological sites and artifacts, and photographs of what she identified as “found labyrinths”—anything from city maps to children’s games (fig. 2). In the absence of a didactic narrative, the onus was on the reader to make connections between these various elements through free associative play. Indeed, De Jong has confirmed that she conceived of the labyrinth issue as a *dérive*, in the way that the reader drifted through the magazine, spurred on by visual resonances rather than a clear narrative trajectory.<sup>11</sup>

De Jong reproduced texts by an interdisciplinary group of writers, including Aldo van Eyck, the philosopher Gaston Bachelard, and the mathematician Max Bucaille. Texts intermingled with the hundreds of images of labyrinths, past and present. While the index amended the reproduction of *Dylaby*’s floor plan with editorial commentary opining that the exhibition plagiarized plans for *Die Welt als Labyrinth*, the presence of the exhibition is nonetheless significant in that it links the show—albeit negatively—to a constellation of labyrinth-themed activities, many of which originated with those in the orbit of the SI.<sup>12</sup>

The labyrinth issue opened with a photograph of an arrow sign that read “labyrinthe,” urging the reader forward (fig. 3). A similar sign appears later in the issue, stating that play is prohibited in the labyrinth. The index identified both images as signs for the labyrinthine maze in the Jardin des Plantes in Paris, which echoed a reference by the former Letterist Ivan Chtcheglov (aka Gilles Ivain) in “Formulary for a New Urbanism.”<sup>13</sup> In this essay, which would become a defining text for the SI, Chtcheglov described and illustrated the same sign at the entrance of the *Jardin des Plantes* that read “No playing in the labyrinth” as the “height of absurdity,



Fig. 1. Jacqueline de Jong (ed.), *The Situationist Times*, no. 4 (Copenhagen: Art Print, October 1963): 138–139. Photo: Øivind Möller Bakken. All reproduction, deformation, modification, derivation and transformation of the *Situationist Times* is permitted.



Fig. 2. Jacqueline de Jong (ed.), *The Situationist Times*, no. 4 (Copenhagen: Art Print, October 1963): 64–65. Photo: Øivind Möller Bakken. All reproduction, deformation, modification, derivation and transformation of the *Situationist Times* is permitted.



Fig. 3. Jacqueline de Jong (ed.), *The Situationist Times*, no. 4 (Copenhagen: Art Print, October 1963): 2–3. Photo: Øivind Möller Bakken. All reproduction, deformation, modification, derivation and transformation of the *Situationist Times* is permitted.

Ariadne unemployed.” He further elucidated his meaning in the brief text “Ariadne Unemployed,” published in August 1954 in the Letterist International’s journal, *Potlatch*.

*At one sole glance, one can discern both the Cartesian layout of the so-called labyrinth at the Botanical Gardens and the following warning sign:*

#### NO PLAYING IN THE LABYRINTH

*There could be no more succinct summary of the spirit of this entire civilization. The very one whose collapse we will, in the end, bring about.<sup>14</sup>*

Chtcheglov contended that the *Jardin des Plantes* was not a labyrinth at all, as a rational, Cartesian layout is of course antithetical to its very definition, and to prohibit play in the faux labyrinth would have seemed doubly absurd. For Chtcheglov and others developing the *dérive* (Debord, Jorn, and Abdelhafid Khatib), the labyrinth could simply be discovered within the city by way of drifting in response to psychogeographic cues. The *dérive* was also a form of play: Chtcheglov’s declaration that prohibiting play in the garden is tantamount to the collapse of civilization is also an assertion of the ludic character of the labyrinth.

The drift effectively transformed the city into a labyrinth, revealing a psychic unconscious otherwise hidden beneath a mapped surface of rationality and order. Its meandering pathways were readily analogized with urban space. During this era, theorists such as Henri Lefebvre argued that state-sponsored modernity induced insidious incursions into the space of everyday life.<sup>15</sup> The labyrinth, in turn, functioned as an apt spatial antidote to the rationalist, compartmentalizing logic of urban initiatives like the Athens Charter, a logic that drove much of the postwar building and urban redesigns throughout Europe. Thus an archetype from the pre-classical era served as one of the most frequently invoked symbols to describe a new utopian urban order.

Perhaps the most famous of the Situationist labyrinths was Constant Nieuwenhuys’s *New Babylon* (1956–1974), which he envisioned as a giant labyrinth elevated above the earth’s surface. De Jong reproduced four images of *New Babylon* in the *ST*, featuring various sectors of the futuristic city where technology had theoretically rendered manual labor obsolete, leaving inhabitants to creative expression and free play.<sup>16</sup> *New Babylon* has been subject to extensive study, so here I simply emphasize the importance of the city’s labyrinthine form in creating politically emancipated subjects.<sup>17</sup> As Constant explained, “The labyrinthine form of New Babylonian [as a] social space is the direct expression of social independence.”<sup>18</sup> The agency of the city’s constituents was likewise important. Counting on the availability of prefabricated architectural units that could be moved at the flip of a switch, Constant imagined that inhabitants would manipulate the architecture at will.<sup>19</sup> In

other words, the architect ceded some power to those living in the city, who effectively became co-designers.

Just as Chtcheglov believed in the labyrinth as a site of play, Constant explicitly conceived of *New Babylon* as facilitating a perpetual state of *Homo Ludens*: Man the Player. The Dutch cultural theorist Johan Huizinga's study *Homo Ludens* (1938) deeply influenced the interest in play among the Situationists and others during this period.<sup>20</sup> While Huizinga regarded contemporary visual art as lacking in conditions favorable to play, he suggested that this was not the case in archaic cultures. In the past, he contended, art had sacred values that bound it to the performance of ritual, itself a form of play.<sup>21</sup> The postwar revival of the labyrinth—an archetype redolent of ritualistic associations—reflected the concomitant attention accorded to forms of play in art, which was itself tied to a broad turn away from the primacy of the visual toward more embodied modes of participation. As an anti-monumental architecture, often predicated upon darkness and confusions (a confusion achieved through obfuscation of sight), the labyrinth was the ideal stage on which a kinetic, ritualistic play of the body ensued.

The connections between the labyrinth, ritual, play, and the body were most thoroughly explored in the *ST* by the art historian Hans Jaffé, who had served as deputy director of the Stedelijk under Sandberg.<sup>22</sup> According to Jaffé, the labyrinth was nothing short of a symbolic worldview. While it had been integral to archaic societies, Jaffé argued that it had fallen into decline beginning with the classical period, and only in the twentieth century had it found new relevance (he discounted the Baroque labyrinthine gardens as frivolous formal imitations, devoid of symbolic value). Citing archaeological studies, he traced the shift in the pre-classical world from a proliferation of spiral forms, such as those found on ancient Babylonian tablets, to the “true labyrinth,” structured as a maze (as in the famous Daedalian labyrinth at Knossos). This shift, wrote Jaffé, visually indexed a changing belief system, from a one of predetermined fate, evoked by the single path of the spiral, to that of free will, represented by the true labyrinth in which the wanderer had to make choices. Jaffé contended that the continued decline of religious belief systems as anchoring worldviews in the twentieth century catalyzed the re-instantiation of meaning in the true labyrinth, which he understood as a symbol for the disorientation and anxiety inherent to navigating everyday life in the modern world. In Jaffé's words: “But a waking of myth has announced itself in our present day: man, anguished by the complexity of his world, searches for a new model of life, and this anguish translates itself into mythic terms.”<sup>23</sup>

Jaffé argued that this anguish could be worked through by ludic means. Play, he wrote, was always an integral part of the rites associated with the labyrinth, but a type of play that was “highly significant, full of meaning and implication.”<sup>24</sup> If the revival of the labyrinth was a symbol of humanity's journey through perennially confusing terrain, Jaffé

suggested that ritualized play was also experiencing a renewal, writing, “Really, every study of the labyrinth must begin with a dance.”<sup>25</sup>

De Jong’s selection and arrangement of images in the *ST* emphasized the connections, already evident in the texts, between the labyrinth and the body, as well as the archetype’s ludic dimension. Images captioned “the human brain,” “blood circulation by the human being,” “superior mesenteric (intestines),” and “Points of Acupunctation [sic] after a Chinese document” underscored Jaffé’s suggestion that the body was itself a labyrinth. Moreover, photographs of bodies in motion—people milling around a public square, nuns in a processional line, the running of the bulls in Spain—all suggested that the mobile body was integral to the labyrinth (fig. 4). Finally, an image of a child in a miniature golf course maze, in addition to various other appearances of children’s games, posited the labyrinth as a space for play.

### *Dylaby*: Dynamic Labyrinth

The buoyant atmosphere of *Dylaby*, complete with balloons, dancing, and a shooting gallery, ensured that this dynamic labyrinth was understood as a ludic environment. However, the most potent signifiers of play in the exhibition were children. Images of young visitors abound within the official materials documenting *Dylaby*, including the exhibition catalogue and a documentary by the Dutch filmmaker Ed van der Elsken. The ubiquitous presence of youth implicitly invited visitors to travel back in time to both the infancy of humanity, by way of the labyrinth, and to the more recent past of actual childhood. The unofficial yet highly significant role of children in *Dylaby* was consistent with broader developments in the social sciences and education. Beyond the theoretical interest in play largely inaugurated by Huizinga, following World War II, Europe and the United States witnessed a dramatic surge of interest in child’s play and nurturing the creativity and inner-life of youth.<sup>26</sup> These trends were not only germane to the institutional promotion and audience reception of *Dylaby*, but to the concomitant rise of immersive, experiential exhibitions and installations beginning in the 1950s and flourishing in the 1960s.

Upon entering *Dylaby*, visitors plunged into darkness, feeling their way through a dark gallery littered with objects that Spoerri coated in an array of materials creating different textures and even varying temperatures. Throughout the installations, visitors navigated raised platforms, climbing structures, and false stairways. In a second environment by Spoerri, chairs, pedestals, and mannequins affixed to a wall created the illusion that the gallery had been flipped ninety degrees (fig. 5).<sup>27</sup> Ultvedt built an elevated walkway strewn with white shirts, which rotated on suspended turnstiles like floating specters, evoked in the work’s title, *Doorloop met spoken* (*Walking with ghosts*). In *Raysse Beach*, a jukebox played The Beach Boys while people danced among plastic



Fig. 4. Jacqueline de Jong (ed.), *The Situationist Times*, no. 4 (Copenhagen: Art Print, October 1963): 114–115. Photo: Øivind Möller Bakken. All reproduction, deformation, modification, derivation and transformation of the *Situationist Times* is permitted.



Fig. 5. Installation view of Daniel Spoerri, *Dylaby*, Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, 1962. Photo: Ed van der Elsken. Credit: Nederlands Fotomuseum / © Ed van der Elsken.

balls and blow-up animals floating in a kiddie pool (fig. 6). Doing the twist in the raucous *Raysse Beach* had all the makings of what Jaffé would describe as the ritualized dance performed in the labyrinth. If *Dylaby* generated a disorientation akin to the chaos endemic to modernity, it also proffered the ludic means to work through and process that confusion.

The fun continued in the most participatory installation, Saint Phalle's shooting gallery, which invited viewers to become co-creators, just as Constant imagined for the inhabitants of *New Babylon*. Facing a collection of plaster prehistoric monsters and animals, mannequin heads, and plastic dolls, visitors fired air guns at small sacks of paint, which burst and covered the initially white assemblage with a multicolored array of splatters (fig. 7). The result recalled the aesthetic of an Abstract Expressionist painting, but with irreverent audience participation supplanting the heralding of individual heroic genius that dominated the narrative of postwar American gestural painting. In Rauschenberg's gallery the visitor followed an elevated, asphalt-covered path through caged constructions made of found materials and resembling monumental, immersive combine paintings. Numerous clocks hung inside the cages while their hands spun rapidly, all at different speeds. Theatrically illuminated with mechanical noises clanging in the background, Rauschenberg's installation was, as Stedelijk deputy director Ad Peterson described it, "manic and frightening."<sup>28</sup> The image of clocks spinning out of control suggests the way in which entering into the labyrinthine exhibition was to travel back in time, to an archaic world suggested by the maze-like structure, and to the perspective of a child, receptive to new ideas.

Contemporary reviews reflected both the dissonance and joy experienced in the show and, in one case, couched this paradox in a time travel metaphor. In his review, "Public is Co-Creator of *Dylaby* at the Stedelijk Museum," Gerrit Kouwenaar praised *Dylaby* for empowering the museum visitor to participate.<sup>29</sup> He opened with a description that evoked the contradictions inherent to the labyrinth: "...the dynamic labyrinth—a cross between a sunny kitchen, a haunted house, scaffolding, Grandma's attic, a ruin, and a sublimated birth trauma, which somehow forms a unit where people can grumpily or cheerfully lose their way."<sup>30</sup> Kouwenaar's commentary that it was both a relic of another time (a ruin) and evocative of an earlier developmental phase (a birth trauma), suggested that for audiences at the time, *Dylaby* conjured both the time of childhood and a premodern era in which art spaces elicited ritual rites of participation and performance.

Childhood was not just a metaphor in *Dylaby*: in the official publicity materials surrounding the exhibition, children were everywhere. They appear in installation photographs and in a documentary film shot in the galleries of *Dylaby*, all of which were commissioned by the Stedelijk and completed by Ed van der Elsken (see fig. 5 and 7, for example).<sup>31</sup>



Fig. 6. Installation view of Martial Raysse, *Dylaby*, Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, 1962. Photo: Ed van der Elsken. Credit: Nederlands Fotomuseum / © Ed van der Elsken.



Fig. 7. Excerpt from *Dylaby* exhibition catalogue with photographs by Ed van der Elsken, 1962. Credit: Nederlands Fotomuseum / © Ed van der Elsken.

Today, the presence of children in these materials hardly feels surprising given the ludic character of the show. But the degree to which they appear reflected relatively novel beliefs in play as a productive, creative pursuit and a necessary component of childhood development. As Amy Ogata argues in *Designing the Creative Child*, the postwar era baby boom ushered in new approaches to stimulating children's creativity through arts education, formerly the province of the elite, but increasingly widespread after World War II.<sup>32</sup> Among many new initiatives across disciplines, there was a marked increase in museum public programming designed to activate children by inviting them to make art rather than simply look at it.

*Dylaby* was not an exhibition explicitly for children, but it is worth noting that Sandberg, director since 1945, previously demonstrated interest in both engaging children and in the child as a creative symbol. His tenure as director was largely defined by his desire to make the museum and its resources more accessible to wider publics, one of the driving motivations behind initiatives to integrate children's programming into the repertoire of public education events offered by the museum.<sup>33</sup>

In light of widespread interest in engaging children within museums, as well as Sandberg's specific aims for the Stedelijk, children served as natural instigators of participation and play in *Dylaby*. They invited viewers to shed their adult inhibitions and travel back in time to childhood, but also to a mythic time when art was not exclusively the province of the eye, but tied to a body in motion. This is evident in the film, also titled *Dylaby*, in which a child narrator leads the camera through the exhibition. Van der Elsken juxtaposed the vantage point of the child with that of the adult viewer, and it was clear that the child not only enjoyed the show more, but also expressed an openness to understanding it that some adults lacked. Consistent with the discourse in the *ST* that foregrounded the disorienting, even anguished aspects of the symbol, Van der Elsken highlighted the truly labyrinthine aspects of the space. The camera followed visitors as they wandered through darkened rooms punctuated by loud noises and flashing lights. Doors refused to open, adding to the maze-like atmosphere: a couple nearly fell into an adjacent room after throwing their weight into a jammed door, while other doors led to cleaning closets and street exits. Although everyone appeared confused, the experiences of adults markedly contrasted those of children. Adult visitors stumbled through the galleries, audibly worrying that objects suspended from the ceiling might crash down on them.

While much of the consternation came across as lighthearted, the fun ebbed to reveal more anxiety-ridden moments. The camera lingered on a man as he walked up a flight of stairs only to encounter a false door, at which point he angrily declared, "There's so much crap in the world!" He went on to analogize the lack of seriousness in the exhibition to the lack of seriousness in contemporary definitions of



marriage, citing the rising divorce rate. Finally, he lamented, “I should laugh, but I could cry... what a crazy mess.” Though the man’s reaction comes across as hyperbolic, he functioned as an apt, if caricatured, symbol for the stodgy adult who found no redeeming value in the exhibition’s apparent disorder, only chaos.

The film suggested that children had a distinct experience of *Dylaby*. Embracing disorientation, they were the ideal ambassadors for the exhibition. As the camera follows the child narrator through the galleries, he describes the exhibition as a series of sensations, uninflected with judgment. In contrast to the cynicism later espoused by the angry adult, the young narrator’s tone conveys wonder, delight, and curiosity: “You almost fall down the stairs because they’re so steep!” he exclaims with no bitterness as he bounds over a climbing structure. Eventually he encounters Sandberg, asking the director whether or not “all of this is art.” After responding with a vociferous “Ja!” Sandberg suggests that the viewer’s uncertain movements in the dark serve a metaphor for life itself, a sentiment that echoed widely held beliefs in the labyrinth as a contemporary worldview. Played out in the contrast between adult and child visitors, the message of Van der Elsken’s film was clear: those who could adopt the receptive mindset of a child would benefit most from the unconventional structure of *Dylaby*, which necessitated participation rather than traditional, passive looking.

The participatory facets of *Dylaby*, combined with the prevalence of children in its documentation, may have also been influenced (consciously or not) by the proliferation of new playground construction in Europe during this period. As reviews like Kouwenaar’s highlighted, audiences fashioned their own experiences out of the raw materials of the exhibition. Similar strategies of inviting children to create through raw materials had been promoted among designers building adventure playgrounds, a type of outdoor play space that originated in occupied Denmark during World War II, and continued to proliferate, particularly in Britain, through the 1960s.<sup>34</sup> Adventure playgrounds and related “junk playgrounds” were spaces demarcated for play in which accumulations of debris and scrap building materials supplanted more traditional play structures like seesaws and slides. Likewise, recent playground design by Aldo van Eyck eschewed objects that looked like conventional children’s play equipment, reflecting the Dutch architect’s belief that playgrounds should introduce children to abstract art, which would in turn foster more imaginative engagement.<sup>35</sup>

Adventure playgrounds reflected the belief that play was more meaningful when generated by the imagination of the child as opposed to the ingenuity of the architect, so the playgrounds provided only raw materials—piles of wood, basic tools, sand—which children then activated.<sup>36</sup> They could run, climb, and jump among the accumulations of debris and materials, or they could go further to fashion their own rudimentary structures. Architectural historian Roy

Kozlovsky describes the relationship between children and the adventure playground in terms remarkably similar to the rhetoric surrounding participatory art: “Children introduce content and meaning to the playground through their own action.... It induces the pleasure of experimenting, making, and destroying.”<sup>37</sup>

*Dylaby* had the makings of an adventure playground. Rauschenberg, Spoerri, and Tinguely used almost entirely found, discarded materials to construct their installations, which were meant to be touched, climbed, and navigated. The Stedelijk’s exhibition catalogue emphasized this. In spite of its publication date, well after the opening of the show, the catalogue included fewer finished installation shots (though those were there, too) than images of the galleries under construction, which emphasized the rudimentary quality of the materials. An image of Ultvedt, for example, shows the artist scowling at the camera while clutching a handful of iron rods, which he has presumably salvaged from a dumpsite that appears behind him (fig. 8). In the exhibition catalogue photographs, children laugh, dancing, and otherwise enjoy the exhibition. A series of three photographs shows Tinguely, cigarette dangling from his mouth, scouring Amsterdam’s flea market and streets for wheels and broken furniture. Two children trail behind him, picking up junk for inspection (fig. 9). Such images drew upon what were by then familiar conventions of postwar urban photography, in which the presence of children signified the possibility of renewal amidst ruination, both physical and cultural. With *Dylaby*, the Stedelijk proffered a similarly inchoate environment in which children and adults alike navigated a disorienting maze of junk materials, offering the opportunity—particularly in the case of Saint Phalle’s shooting gallery—to literally co-create the art.

## Conclusion

*Dylaby* took place at a moment in history when the goal was no longer to escape the labyrinth, as per the ancient myth, but to find it. Artists reimagined the labyrinth in myriad forms, from magazines to exhibitions, to simply the hidden contours of the city. In all cases, these artists subverted the Daedalian hero’s journey in which Theseus escapes death by Minotaur, transforming the labyrinth into a site for play. While artists never entirely divested the labyrinth of its traditional meaning as a site of psychic disturbance, they saw the disorientation it incited as liberating and politically emancipatory. The labyrinth became a temporal collision, in that it simultaneously gestured back toward ancient mythic time, the recent past of childhood and, in some cases, forward to a utopian future. Likewise, artists harnessed the ludic quality of the labyrinth—a play factor that became a hallmark of the archetype’s postwar revival—to disrupt social norms inside and outside of the museum.



Fig. 8. Jean Tinguely (left) and Per Olof Ultvedt (right). Photo: Ed van der Elsken. Credit: Nederlands Fotomuseum / © Ed van der Elsken.



Fig. 9. Jean Tinguely at a fleamarket in Amsterdam. Photo: Ed van der Elsken. Credit: Nederlands Fotomuseum / © Ed van der Elsken.

Paula Burleigh is currently a visiting assistant professor in the Art Department at Allegheny College, where she also serves as director of the Bowman, Penelac, and Meghan Art Galleries. Her dissertation, completed at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, explores the prevalence of archaic forms in European art and architecture of the 1950s and '60s. Her writing has appeared in edited anthologies, *The Brooklyn Rail*, and *Artforum*.

1. Bruce Altshuler begins his account of radical exhibitions that shaped the course of art and exhibition histories with *Dylaby*, noting the prescience of its participatory, immersive qualities. See Bruce Altshuler, *Biennials and Beyond – Exhibitions That Made Art History, 1962–2002* (New York: Phaidon, 2013), 27–36.
2. Tinguely and Saint Phalle, along with Ultvedt, went on to realize another labyrinth-themed exhibition at the Moderna Museet in Stockholm in 1966. *HON – en katedral*, a giant earth mother goddess lying prone on her back with an interior explicitly designed as a labyrinth, was initially conceived as a follow-up to *Dylaby*. In the end, while there was no official connection between the two shows, *Dylaby* and *HON* shared a maze-like structure and raucous, participatory atmosphere.
3. The labyrinth's revival was not entirely new. Between the World Wars, the surrealists treated the structure as a metaphor for the dark recesses of human consciousness. In 1924, for example, André Breton analogized the Cretan labyrinth with the confounding depths of the unconscious mind. The surrealist review, *Minotaure*, with its first issue in June 1933, was named by André Masson and Georges Bataille in order to recognize the “minotaurèsque” character of their era. See André Breton, *Point du jour* (1924; repr., Paris: Gallimard, 1934), 7. For more on the relationship between the Cretan labyrinth to surrealism, see Whitney Chadwick, *Myth in Surrealist Painting, 1929–1939* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1980), 40–42.
4. Jacqueline de Jong, ed., *The Situationist Times*, no. 4 (Copenhagen: Art Print, October 1963). While the labyrinth-themed issue was published in Copenhagen, De Jong published other issues in Paris and London, respectively.
5. I have taken these examples from a chapter of my dissertation on archaic forms in art and architecture of Europe. *The Situationist Times* indexed many important labyrinths of the period, but there were various others not included, such as the various labyrinth installations by the artist collective GRAV (Groupe de recherche d'art visuel). Paula Burleigh, “The Labyrinth and the Cave: Archaic Impulses in Utopian Projects in Europe, 1952–1972” (New York: The Graduate Center, City University of New York, 2018).
6. The only known plans for *Die Welt als Labyrinth* appeared in the journal *Internationale Situationniste*, along with the group's account of the conflict with Sandberg that precipitated the show's demise. See “Die Welt als Labyrinth,” *Internationale Situationniste*, no. 4 (June 1960): 5–7.
7. De Jong produced six issues of the magazine, which ran from 1962 to 1967. Initial discussions around the idea for *The Situationist Times* occurred while she was a member of the SI, but by the time De Jong released the inaugural issue in May 1962, she was no longer a member of the group on account of her stance in solidarity with the German SPUR group, a former SI faction expelled by Debord.
8. Lech Tomaszewski, “Nonorientable Surfaces,” ed. Jacqueline de Jong, *The Situationist Times*, no. 4 (October 1963): 3–8. For a thorough accounting of the widespread interest in “topological thinking” in France in this period, see Larry Busbea, *Topologies: The Urban Utopia in France, 1960–1970* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007).
9. Ibid.
10. A 2016 exhibition at the Moderna Museet in Stockholm, *Comparative Vandalism: Photography from the Asger Jorn*

- Archive, curated by Henrik Andersson, explored this material. For a discussion of comparative vandalism and continuous collage, see also *Stone and Bone: A Trip to Gotland 1964/2014* (Aarhus: Antipyrine, 2016).
11. Jacqueline de Jong, in discussion with the author, February 1, 2017.
  12. De Jong, ed., *The Situationist Times*, no. 4: 138, 180.
  13. Gilles Ivain, "Formulary for a New Urbanism," *Internationale Situationniste*, no. 1 (June 1958).
  14. "Ariadne Unemployed," *Pottatch* 9-10-11, special holiday issue, trans. Reuben Keehan, Phil Edwards, and Gerardo Denis (August 17–31, 1954). Situationist archives available online at [www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline](http://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline). This essay is unattributed, but clearly written by Chtcheglov. Chtcheglov first mentions the "ridiculous labyrinth in the Jardin des Plantes" in "Formulaire pour un urbanisme nouveau," written in 1953 and published in *Internationale situationniste*, no. 1 (June 1958): 15. Reprinted in Ken Knabb, ed., *Situationist International Anthology* (Berkeley, CA: Bureau of Public Secrets, 2006), 1–7; 6.
  15. Henri Lefebvre, *Critique de la vie quotidienne*, 3 vols. (Paris: Arche, 1958–1981); volume 1 trans. John Moore as *The Critique of Everyday Life* (London: Verso, 1991).
  16. I use the term "Situationist labyrinth" loosely here, as Constant continued to work on *New Babylon* long after his break with the Situationist International. However, the conception of *New Babylon* (following the artist's visit to a gypsy encampment on the outskirts of Alba, Italy, in 1956) transpired during Constant's involvement with the SI, he published numerous texts related to his visionary city in *Internationale Situationniste*, and he was critical in formulating plans for the ill-fated *Die Welt als Labyrinth*.
  17. For exhaustive and insightful readings of *New Babylon*, see Mark Wigley, *Constant's New Babylon: The Hyper-Architecture of Desire* (Rotterdam: Witte de With, center for contemporary art/010 Publishers, 1998) and Martin van Schaik, "Psychogeogram: An Artist's Utopia. Part I," in *Exit Utopia: Architectural Provocations, 1956–76*, eds. Martin van Schaik and Máčel (Munich, London, New York: Prestel, 2005), 36–54.
  18. Constant Nieuwenhuys, "New Babylon: Outline of a Culture," in *New Babylon*, trans. Paul Hammond (The Hague: Haags Gemeentemuseum, 1974), 49–62.
  19. Nieuwenhuys, "The Principle of Disorientation," in *New Babylon* (The Hague: Haags Gemeente Museum, 1974), 65–70. Reprinted in Wigley, *Constant's New Babylon: The Hyper-Architecture of Desire*.
  20. For a comprehensive study of the role of play in Dutch conceptual art of the 1960s, including a thorough treatment of Huizinga's enduring influence on Constant and others, see the dissertation by Janna Schoenberger, "Ludic Conceptualism: Art and Play in the Netherlands from 1959–1975" (New York: The Graduate Center, City University of New York, 2016). In addition, Mona Hadler has written about the importance of play and games in relation to art and popular culture of the 1950s and early 1960s. See Mona Hadler, *Destruction Rites: Ephemerality and Demolition in Postwar Visual Culture* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2017), 68–72.
  21. Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture* (1938; repr., Boston: Beacon Press, 1955), 167.
  22. H.L.C. Jaffé, "Les Labyrinthes," *The Situationist Times*, no. 4 (October 1963): 23–28.
  23. *Ibid.*, 28.
  24. *Ibid.*
  25. Jaffé attributed this sentiment (in concept rather than direct quote) to the British anthropologist Samuel Henry Hooke, who researched the ritual dances performed inside of labyrinths in the pre-classical world. S. H. Hooke was a member of the so-called Cambridge School of Myth and History, which included the more well-known James Frazer (author of *The Golden Bough*, which De Jong excerpted for *The Situationist Times*). There has been much written concerning children as symbols of renewal within the postwar landscape, as represented
  - 26.

- frequently in film and photography from the era, and the concomitant rise of children's playground construction. See Ben Highmore, "Bombsites and Playgrounds: Postwar Britain's Ruined Landscapes," *Cultural Politics* 9, no. 3 (2013): 323–36; see also Roy Kozlovsky, "Adventure Playgrounds and Postwar Reconstruction," in *Designing Modern Childhoods: History, Space, and the Material Culture of Children*, eds. Marta Gutman and Ning de Coninck Smith (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, n.d.), 171–90.
27. This gesture was indebted to his "trap pictures," in which he affixed found objects like tables and chairs to the wall, "trapping" them for posterity.
  28. Ad Peterson, "Dylaby, ein dynamisches Labyrinth im Stedelijk Museum 1962," in *Die Kunst der Ausstellung*, eds. Bernd Klueser and Katharina Hegewisch (Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 1991), 161.
  29. Gerrit Kouwenaar, "Public is Co-Creator of Dylaby at the Stedelijk Museum," *Vrije Volk*, no. 8 (September 1962). Reprinted in Bruce Altshuler, ed., *Biennials and Beyond – Exhibitions That Made Art History, 1962–2002* (London and New York: Phaidon Press Limited, 2013), 35–36.
  30. *Ibid.*, 35.
  31. Ed van der Elsken took all of the photographs for the exhibition catalogue, which was released in September 1962 after the exhibition's opening, so as to include images of visitors in the gallery. See *Dynamisch Labyrint: Robert Rauschenberg, Martial Raysse, Niki de Saint Phalle, Daniel Spoerri, Jean Tinguely, Per Olof Ultvedt* (Amsterdam: Stedelijk Museum, 1962). Van der Elsken also recorded the ten-minute documentary shot almost entirely in the galleries. See Van der Elsken, *Dylaby* (1962; Amsterdam and Hilversum: VPRO, 2007), DVD.
  32. Amy F. Ogata, *Designing the Creative Child: Playthings and Places in Midcentury America* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 147–49.
  33. Stefano Collicelli Cagol, "Exhibition History and the Institution as a Medium," *Stedelijk Studies*, no. 2 (Spring 2015), <http://www.stedelijkstudies.com/journal/exhibition-history-and-the-institution-as-a-medium>.
  34. The Danish landscape architect Carl Theodor Sorenson designed the first documented example of one such playground in Copenhagen in 1943, while Denmark was under German occupation, and the idea was later cited as a model for converting Britain's bomb sites into playgrounds.
  35. For a thorough discussion of Aldo van Eyck's playground design, see Liane Lefaivre, ed., *Aldo Van Eyck: The Playgrounds and the City* (Rotterdam, Netherlands: NAI Publishers, 2002).
  36. Highmore, "Bombsites and Playgrounds: Postwar Britain's Ruined Landscapes."
  37. Kozlovsky, "Adventure Playgrounds and Postwar Reconstruction," 172.