

# 1968: A Global Perspective

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## The Subversive Thread of Imagination and *Affect*: Jeff Nuttall and 1968

"I was concerned to sew a subversive thread of imagination into the fabric of ordinary behaviour patterns."  
Jeff Nuttall, *Performance and Happenings*, 1974

Jeff Nuttall's book, *Bomb Culture*, an idiosyncratic and semi-auto-biographical account of the build-up to 1968, was written in 1967 and first published just before May 1968. It remains a key primary source for the emergence of international counter-culture in the 1960s. Nuttall played a key role in the London underground scene and coordinated a network of connections with European and American avant-gardes through correspondence and the instigation of a number of small journals and pamphlets, publishing William Burroughs, Dom Sylvester Houédard, Carl Weissner and Michael McLure in his *My Own Mag* between 1964-67. Through a diverse body of practices, Nuttall – a performance artist and poet – advocated the insurrectionary power of spontaneity and persistently articulated a connection between the power of the imagination and collective revolutionary political consciousness. Much of Nuttall's subsequent work, both creative and critical, was a response to '68. There is a pervasive longing and melancholy in *Snipe's Spinster* (first published 1975) which looks back over the ground of the mid-Sixties and at its political 'failure' – through the protagonists' paranoid hunting down and assassination of 'the Man', an extended metaphor for an anonymous figure of capitalism and world power. Furthermore, for Nuttall, an increasing 'degradation of awareness' had been instigated by the stalling of the revolution. Drawing on the ideas of Herbert Marcuse, Raoul Vaneigem, Antonin Artaud and Gilles Deleuze, in this paper I will interrogate the 'subversive thread' of *imagination* and *affect* as significant sites of revolutionary potential in 1968 through the cultural and counter-cultural productions and connections of Jeff Nuttall.