SPACE INVADERS 1982

3/4" colour video, stereo sound, 5 mins

We play video games knowing that we will lose. Our strategy is to react, to fire first, to try to discern the all important rules for discourse that determine the length of time before we will be shot out of the sky, before we must try to return. There is no overt narrative to link us to the past, no shared fantasy with the others around us, no longing or memory. Only the present and a barrage of lights and action and the over-powering feeling that we are really there or here, somehow more alive than before.

The body in space, floating, replaces the essentiality of drama, but was this always the case? Hugo Ball transformed himself into a marionette, a mannequin celebrating the reduction of man to a machine. Celebrating or lamenting, it is unclear. The Italian Futurists saw the metropolitan universe as devoid of sense or place, expressing a nostalgia for the future as well as the past. As George Simmel remarked, 'Pure nervous stimulation was the foundation of metropolitan activity.' The din of the city is seen as the sole reality; the joke, the agonized attitude converge in a re-iterated suicide attempt to teach those who can understand, to laugh at moral and material pain. By 1922 the mannequin jester was transformed into a clown capable of assuming a new identity, of pleasing those he serves, of prodding the Unconscious into a positivistic reconciliation of humankind with the city as a living machine: and we are all equal and all the same, we machines. From then on, writes Manfred Tafuri, the constructivist theatre sets itself up as the model for a positive relation between man and machine, not because the cause of alienation has vanished, but rather because it has become greater. The Russian constructivist Mejerchold's method became that of wrapping within work the need for play, where this play could be taken back to the beehive of production and enslaved by it. With a maximum of planning and mechanization (and therefore only by total alienation) could mass human kind re-explode into a collective 'labor fest', liberated by the sacrificial rites of Dadaism, the disbelief in it all - the body trapped by its machines has no hope of being free. It shows up its own imperfections with the Soviet experiences of the early 1920s: it is no longer the theatre which went into the city, but the city that re-entered the theatre, the bio-mechanical acrobat had become the prophet of a society of total work. Oscar Schlemmer's marionette lived by the creed: all that can be mechanized must be mechanized, result - we can see that which cannot be mechanized. A big yes that reduces humankind to being a marionette liberates the same marionette, for the mannequin is 'that body which either has no consciousness at all or an infinite one; that is to say either a marionette or a god.'

Space Invaders is a science fantasy that maps the terrain of three environments connected through their access to what in the 60s might have been conceived of as a 'global village'; the giant video screen of the disco, the home television, and the video arcade game. But this global community has grown so

powerful that its inhabitants want to carry their own worlds with them. When that happens, what becomes of the present? Worlds collide and pretty soon 'everyone is a star'. Just like Andy Warhol predicted, but now it is for longer than 15 minutes.

Starring: Gina Marchito, Wayne Fielding and Mark Pierce / Edited by John O'Hearn and Johanna Drucker / Music: Sonic Youth / Special Effects: Chronicle Productions / Audio Rerecording: Peter Miller Studios / Production: EC Productions / Post Production: Television Office, UC Berkeley