

The Art of the Game

"MEN WITH BALLS" RE-EXAMINES THE WORLD CUP AT APEXART

BY CARLO MCCORMICK



Film still from *Mexico vs Brasil* by Miguel Calderón

A beloved global event of epic proportions, this year's FIFA World Cup in South Africa will for many involve a drunken spree of nationalist fervor at some wretched sports bar. If, however, your ideal of the game is a bit more intellectual and artistic, apexart will be hosting "a mini-soccer paradise" during the months of the games at their downtown gallery. Said paradise will include an array of pithy memorabilia, artifacts, art (such as the video pictured above by Miguel Calderón, in which he edits together an impossible match where his native Mexico beats perennial powerhouse Brazil, 17-10), bleachers, beer, rock legend Mark E. Smith of the Fall reading game results and a soundtrack of the most egregiously bad pop anthems written for the World Cup over the years. The exhibition/event -- aptly titled "Men With Balls" -- will provide a discursive forum for us to ponder collectively the poetics, passion and politics of the sport itself.

Curated by renowned philosopher Simon Critchley, a Liverpudlian transplant currently ensconced here at the New School, "Men With Balls" embraces the World Cup as the epitome of Guy Debord's *Society of the Spectacle*. As Critchley explains, "There is nothing about it now that isn't medicated, commercialized and franchised." But on laying out the problematic politics of the games, as past winners have reified repressive regimes in Argentina and Brazil or redefined national identity in France on racial terms, Critchley offers a critique far more nuanced than the Situationist radical's. For in himself and the game he loves dearly, he is able to find "the few threads that stitch together a life, a memory and an identity." There is a rare seriousness and fun to this project, and our bet is that while watching another insufferable nil-nil match, we might benefit from a chance to talk about the poetics of time and space -- or as Critchley remarks -- "the acceleration and intensity of experience when entering another order of time."