The Collective Grace of Soccer

For English philosopher and soccer fan Simon Critchley, the World Cup presented an opportunity to meld his love of the physical and the metaphysical. Critchley has curated a New York art exhibition and sports viewing space—how often do those worlds collide?—called *Men With Balls: The Art of the 2010 World Cup*.

When visitors to apexart in Lower Manhattan are not watching the real-time clash of nations on giant screens, they can take in high-minded reflections on the game, such as a cut-and-paste fantasy match in which Mexico defeats Brazil 17-0 or a 90-minute meditation on the play of Frenchman Zinedine Zidane that the *New York Times* called “beautiful and hypnotic.”

But even if you can’t make it to the gallery any easier than you can make it to Johannesburg, be sure to read Critchley’s wonderful essay on the apexart site. Here is a taste:

The World Cup ... is about ever-shifting floors of memory and the complexity of personal and national identity. But most of all it is about grace. A truly great player, like Pelé, like Johan Cruyff, like Maradonna, like Zidane, has grace: an unforced bodily containment and elegance of movement, a kind of discipline where long periods of inactivity can suddenly accelerate and time takes on a different dimension in bursts of controlled power. When someone like Zidane does this alone, the effect is beautiful; when four or five players do this in concert, it is breathtaking (this collective grace has been taken to a new level by the F.C. Barcelona team in the last few years). But grace is also a gift. It is the cultivation of a certain disposition, some call it faith, in the hope that grace will be dispensed.

*Image courtesy of apexart.*