



OF MOUTHS AND EXPLOSIONS

Marc Behrens

U.K.

2004

Duration: 12:34

Format: digital video (DVD/DV)

The video project 'Of Mouths and Explosions' consists mainly of sequences of the artist's mouth making noises, mimicking explosions and sounds of typical action movies – a thing that children do. Along the bottom of the screen runs a CNN-style ticker tape containing questions, criticisms and statements relating to Hollywood cinema and the model of perception it represents. Answers to these questions are also rendered in the ticker tape texts, or they are spoken by a woman who sometimes appears on screen. Some questions trigger full screen explosions.

“Almost every little boy knows the habit of making explosion and gun sounds with his own mouth (I can at least tell of Europe). If it comes from war experience handed down to post-war or inbetween-war children or if it comes from Hollywood movie experience which for many people in our western culture is synonymous with the first I can't tell.”

“It is an astonishing fact that in English language to 'blow up' means not only blowing air into something (with your mouth) but to detonate. There exists even an etymological connection between those two very different activities. And, of course, we have to recall Michelangelo Antonioni's two most unforgettable films: 'Blow-Up' (in which the word stands for zooming in and enlarging a photo-graph) and 'Zabriskie Point' (in which a house is blown up, detonated by a young woman's mental power). For me this bears a strong fascination that relates back to childhood days when I'd blown up some things I hadn't liked, had I just had the power to do so). Praise for sublimation through art!”

The screen is divided into several partitions which the artists considers as the optimum way to render parallel visual information, since it is difficult for the brain to decode superimposed visuals – in contrast to superimposed audio, which is common practice in electronic music composition. Behrens started exploring this technique in the previous work 'Collateral Generator of Forms', in which he extended a conventional musical composition to embrace a synaesthetic pair of sound and image, an idea that is inspired by Bill Viola's writings.

'Of Mouths and Explosions' pro-vides not only a critique of action movies, and of political and militaristic propaganda encoded in Hollywood cinema, but also addresses inherent compositional and structural issues within video, cinema, and new media. As the first real post-capitalist art technique, new media (a field that incorporates video) represents an exact antithesis to Hollywood cinema with its claims to content and message, formal structure and its means of distribution and diffusion.

The first stage of Behrens' project was presented as a 'fixed' video at Ferens Art Gallery, Hull/U.K., from 21st to 24th June 2004. The second stage will be the development of an interactive version. In this the sequences will be triggered by a player/user, who will be able to type in questions to which answers will be found by the software according to specific keywords.