

Extract from **Internationale Situationniste** at **Context XXI**

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The Situationists and New Forms of Action Against Politics and Art

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Up to now our subversion has mainly drawn on the forms and genres inherited from past revolutionary struggles, primarily those of the last hundred years. I propose that we round out our agitational expression with methods that dispense with any reference to the past. I don't mean that we should abandon the forms within which we have waged battle on the traditional terrain of the supersession of philosophy, the realization of art and the abolition of politics; but that we should extend the work of the journal onto terrains it does not yet reach.

Many proletarians are aware that they have no power over their lives; they know it, but they don't express it in the language of socialism and of previous revolutions.

Let us spit in passing on those students who have become militants in the tiny would-be mass parties, who sometimes have the nerve to claim that the workers are incapable of reading *Internationale Situationniste*, that its paper is too slick to be put in their lunchbags and that its price doesn't take into account their low standard of living. The most consistent of these students accordingly distribute the mimeographed image they have of the consciousness of a class in which they fervently seek stereotypical Joe Worker recruits. They forget, among other things, that when workers read revolutionary literature in the past they had to pay relatively more than for a theater ticket; and that

when they once again develop an interest in it they won't hesitate to spend two or three times what it costs for an issue of *Planète*. But what these detractors of typography forget most of all is that the rare individuals who read their bulletins are precisely those who already have the minimal background necessary to understand us right away; and that their writings are completely unreadable for anyone else. Some of them, ignoring the immense readership of bathroom graffiti (particularly in cafés), have thought that by using a parody of gradeschool writing, printed on paper pasted on gutters like notices of apartments for rent, they could make the form correspond to the content of their slogans; and in this at least they have succeeded. All this serves to clarify what must not be done.

What we have to do is link up the theoretical critique of modern society with the critique of it in acts. By detouring the very propositions of the spectacle, we can directly reveal the implications of present and future revolts.

I propose that we pursue:

1. *Experimentation in the détournement of photo-romances* and "pornographic" photos, and that we bluntly impose their real truth by restoring real dialogues [by adding or altering speech bubbles]. This operation will bring to the surface the subversive bubbles that are spontaneously, but only fleetingly and half-consciously, formed and then dissolved in the imaginations of those who look at these images. In the same spirit, it is also possible to detourn any advertising

billboards — particularly those in subway corridors, which form remarkable sequences — by pasting pre-prepared placards onto them.

2. *The promotion of guerrilla tactics in the mass media* — an important form of contestation, not only at the urban guerrilla stage, but even before it. The trail was blazed by those Argentinians who took over the control station of an electronic bulletin board and used it to transmit their own directives and slogans. It is still possible to take advantage of the fact that radio and television stations are not yet guarded by troops. On a more modest level, it is known that any amateur radio operator can at little expense broadcast, or at least jam, on a local level; and that the small size of the necessary equipment permits a great mobility, enabling one to slip away before one's position is trigonometrically located. A group of Communist Party dissidents in Denmark had their own pirate radio station a few years ago. Counterfeit issues of one or another periodical can add to the enemy's confusion. This list of examples is vague and limited for obvious reasons.



Comics durch Zweckentfremdung

(in „Die Rückkehr der Kolonne Durrutti“ von André Bertrand – 1966).

The illegality of such actions makes a sustained engagement on this terrain impossible for any organization that has not chosen to go underground, because it would require the formation within it of a *specialized subgroup* — a division of tasks which cannot be effectual without compartmentalization and thus hierarchy, etc. Without, in a word, finding oneself on the slippery path toward terrorism. We can more appropriately recall the notion of propaganda by deed, which is a very different matter. Our ideas are in everybody’s mind, as is well known, and any group without any relation to us, or even a few individuals coming together for a specific purpose, can improvise and improve on tactics experimented with elsewhere by others. This type of unconcerted action cannot be expected to bring about any decisive upheaval, but it can usefully serve to accentuate the coming awakening of consciousness. In any case, there’s no need to get hung up on the idea of illegality. Most actions in this domain can be done without breaking any existing law. But the fear of such interventions will make newspaper editors paranoid about their typesetters, radio managers paranoid about their technicians, etc., at least until more specific repressive legislation has been worked out and enacted.

3. *The development of situationist comics.* Comic strips are the only truly popular literature of our century. Even cretins marked by years at school have not been able to resist writing dissertations on them; but they’ll get little pleasure out of reading ours. No doubt they’ll buy them just to burn them. In our task

of “making shame more shameful still,” it is easy to see how easy it would be, for example, to transform “13 rue de l’Espoir [hope]” into “1 blvd. du Désespoir [despair]” merely by adding a few elements; or balloons can simply be changed. In contrast to Pop Art, which breaks comics up into fragments, this method aims at restoring to comics their content and importance.

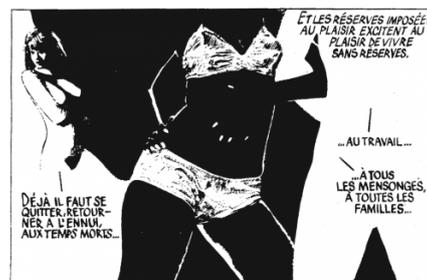
4. *The production of situationist films.* The cinema, which is the newest and undoubtedly most utilizable means of expression of our time, has stagnated for nearly three quarters of a century. To sum it up, we can say that it indeed became the “seventh art” so dear to film buffs, film clubs and PTAs. For our purposes this age is over (Ince, Stroheim, the one and only *L’Age d’or*, *Citizen Kane* and *Mr. Arkadin*, the lettrist films), even if there remain a few traditional narrative masterpieces to be unearthed in the film archives or on the shelves of foreign distributors. We should appropriate the first stammerings of this new language — in particular its most consummate and modern examples, those which have escaped artistic ideology even more than American “B” movies: newsreels, previews and, above all, filmed ads.

Although filmed advertising has obviously been in the service of the commodity and the spectacle, its extreme technical freedom has laid the foundations for what Eisenstein had an inkling of when he talked of filming *The Critique of Political Economy* or *The German Ideology*.



Comics durch eigene Erstellung

(Text von Raoul Vaneigem, Bilder von Gérard Joannès – 1967).



Comics durch eigene Erstellung

(Text von Raoul Vaneigem, Bilder von Gérard Joannès – 1967).

I am confident that I could film *The Decline and Fall of the Spectacle-Commodity Economy* in a way that would be immediately understandable to the proletarians of Watts who are unaware of the concepts implied in that title. Such adaptations to new forms will at the same time undoubtedly contribute to deepening and intensifying the “written” expression of the same problems; which we could verify, for example, by making a film called *Incitement to Murder and Debauchery* before drafting its equivalent in the journal, *Correctives to the Consciousness of a Class That Will Be the Last*. Among other possibilities, the cinema lends itself particularly well to studying the present as a historical problem, to dismantling the processes of reification. To be sure, historical reality can be apprehended, known and filmed only in the course of a complicated process of mediations enabling consciousness to recognize one moment in another, its goal and its action in destiny, its destiny in its goal and action, and its own essence in this necessity. This mediation would be difficult if the empirical existence of the facts themselves was not already a mediated existence, which only takes on an appearance of immediateness because and to the extent that consciousness of the mediation is lacking and that the facts have been uprooted from the network of their determining circumstances, placed in an artificial isolation, and poorly strung together again in the montage of classical cinema. It is precisely this mediation which has been lacking, and inevitably so, in presituationist cinema, which has limited itself to “objective” forms or re-presentation of politico-moral concepts, whenever it has not been merely academic-type narrative with all its hypocrisies. If what I

have just written were filmed, it would become much less complicated — it's all really just banalities. But Godard, the most famous Swiss Maoist, will never be able to understand them. He might well, as is his usual practice, coopt the above — lift a word from it or an idea like that concerning filmed advertisements — but he will never be capable of anything but brandishing little novelties picked up elsewhere: images or star words of the era, which definitely have a resonance, but one he can't grasp (Bonnot, worker, Marx, made in USA, Pierrot le Fou, Debord, poetry, etc.). He really is a child of Mao and Coca-Cola.



Plan fixe intercalé dans un travelling

(dans le film de Guy Debord « Sur le passage de quelques personnes à travers une assez courte unité de temps » – 1959).

The cinema enables one to express any-

thing, just like an article, a book, a leaflet or a poster. This is why we should henceforth require that each situationist be as capable of making a film as of writing an article (cf. the “Anti-Public Relations Notice” in *Internationale Situationniste* #8). Nothing is too beautiful for the blacks of Watts.

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