CLASS WARGAMES

AUTUMN OFFENSIVE

When we were invited to participate in the *Play!* exhibition at Museum Jorn, Class Wargames was delighted to be given this opportunity to pay homage to one of the illustrious founders of the Situationist International. From its rise during the Renaissance onwards, the bourgeoisie has restricted artistic creativity to producing commodified artefacts for spiritual contemplation or mass entertainment. In response, successive avant-garde movements over the past two and a half centuries have experimented with subversive aesthetics and cutting-edge techniques to undermine this cultural tyranny. In the late-1950s, the Situationist International declared itself as the latest iteration of this radical tradition. Even now, its provocations, remixes, urban wanderings and DIY methods can still inspire the popular imagination. But what is often forgotten today is that these exciting innovations had a profound revolutionary purpose. As its righteous prophet, Asgar Jorn proclaimed the central tenet of the Situationist International: making art collectively is building the communist future in the capitalist present.

Alongside its experimental paintings, films, installations, publications and architecture, the new avant-garde would also achieve this emancipatory ambition by creating its own transitory and participatory games. Back in the 1920s, Marcel Duchamp and Aleksandr Rodchenko had anticipated this artistic appropriation with their Surrealist and Constructivist *Chess* sets. The Situationists would make the next move forward through discarding the formal rules and competitive play of traditional games. Instead, spontaneity and cooperation were their creative leitmotifs. As admirers of Johan Huizinga's writings, Situationists would ensure that players of their art pieces are emancipated from bourgeois rationality and transformed into living premonitions of libertarian communism: homo ludens. For revolutionary gamesters, everyone is a winner.

In 1962, the Situationist International irrevocably split into the Nashists – political artists – and the Debordists – artistic politicos. Because Jørgen Nash was his brother, Asgar Jorn inevitably found himself within the camp of the 2nd Situationist International. In this Scandinavian offshoot, inventing wacky games continued as an avant-garde art form. Amateurs playing 3-sided football are mocking the corporate racket of professional sports. But, over in his Paris HQ, Debord now advocated a more proletarian definition of communism: all power to the workers' councils. Situationists were no longer just revolutionary gamesters. They must also be designers of the game of revolution: a training exercise teaching the military-political skills required to overthrow spectacular capitalism. Far from being obsolete, formal rules and competitive play are essential. Only the smartest players could be winners of *The Game of War*. The losers must study hard to do better next time.

The inclusion of Class Wargames' replica of *The Game of War* in the *Play!* exhibition at Museum Jorn overcomes the 1962 veritable split within the International. On display twice size and in pewter, Debord's beautiful design can be fully appreciated as an avant-garde masterpiece. When Class Wargames hosts the collective playing of this Clausewitz simulator at the gallery, its participants are metamorphosing into homo ludens. As North and South manoeuvre their pieces for victory over each other, both sides are learning how to prevail on the spectacular battlefield. Since Asgar Jorn generously funded not only the Nashists, but also the Debordists, it is most appropriate that this synthesis of the dialectics of Situationist gaming is happening within Museum Jorn. Revolutionary gamesters are now players of the game of revolution.

Ludic Labour!

CLASS WARGAMES

PRESENTS

"I'm not a philosopher, I'm a strategist." - Guy Debord

Class Wargames is playing Guy Debord's *The Game of War* using a twice size pewter replica of his original 1977 design during the afternoon of Friday 2nd October at Museum Jorn in Silkeborg, Denmark.

Guy Debord is celebrated as the leader of the Situationist International and as the author of the searing critique of the media-saturated society of consumer capitalism: *The Society of the Spectacle*. What is much less well known is that after the May '68 Revolution, Debord and his partner - Alice Becker-Ho - quit Paris and went to live in a remote French village. Over the next two decades, Debord devoted much of the rest of his life to inventing, refining and promoting what he came to regard as his most important project: *The Game of War*.

Politics is a continuation of war by other means.

The Game of War is a Clausewitz simulator: a Napoleonic-era military strategy game where armies must maintain their communications structure to survive and victory is achieved by smashing your opponent's supply network rather than by taking their pieces.

For Debord, *The Game of War* wasn't just a game - it was a guide to how people should live their lives within Fordist society. By playing this Clausewitz simulator, revolutionary activists could learn how to fight and win against the oppressors of spectacular society.

Wargames are a continuation of politics by other means.

www.classwargames.net

THE PLAYERS

Richard Barbrook
Faban Tompsett
Ilze Black
Rod Dickinson
Stefan Lutschinger
James Moulding
Simon Youel
Richard Parry
Dave Levy
Victor Fleurot

FORTHCOMING ENGAGEMENTS

Friday 16th Oct: *Falling Sky: the Gallic Revolt against Caesar*

Friday 27th Nov: *1803 Battle of Aragaum: Command & Colors Napoleonics*

May Day Rooms
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