

Addendum to the Text

Overview of Links Between *Space Invaders* Research and Current Practice



Blacked Out (www.blackedoutexhibition.co.uk) was a group show in London which ran from the 21st to the 28th of August 2010. Nine artists including myself were involved in the exhibition, the focus of which was the exploration of light in a blacked out, urban space. Using the mediums of video, neon, drawing, sculpture, photography and light installation, the show examined the aesthetics and interplay of light in relation to contemporary practice.

The two works I exhibited (*I'm So Proud Of It I Put My Name On It* and *All Materials Of Value Have Been Removed*) were projection based pieces which used a variety of images inspired by initial *Space Invaders* research. Images included a contrast between graffiti and institutionalised text (private land signs, etc) as well as photographs of estates earmarked for demolition in 'regeneration' projects, which are discussed by Minton in relation to issues of social cohesion/disparity. This work also directly called upon references to environmental interaction as viewers were invited to explore their physical relationship to the space by interrupting the flickering projection and discovering how their shadow cast onto analogue light sensors changed (or froze) the projected image. In so doing, visitors were invited to reflect upon the dialogue between the images; cityscapes, buildings, signs, statements and the impositions and implications that these affect upon their relationship with the urban environment. In addition *This Belongs To* cards were made available for visitors to use as tools to interact with the installation (See below). *This Belongs To* is a public participation project in which participants use laser cut cards with identifying marks written onto acetate panels to temporarily project on to their environment to claim ownership of the city, or in this case, the installation.



It was judged that these images and opportunities to interact had successfully encouraged consideration of presented issues from observations of interactions (see below) and audience feedback, including one comment from a visitor to the private view stating that the work "made me feel powerful."



Visitors interact with the projection using *This Belongs To* cards



Visitors interact with the light sensor

Alternative Party is an annual digital culture festival which began as a demoparty in 1998 and the related exhibition explores creativity in arts, technology and science. The event, held at the Cable Factory in Helsinki, Finland, provided opportunities to develop various aspects of the installation work and was the main source of feedback from which the *'Theory of Control'* was generated following involvement in 2009. The 2010 event saw the exhibition of a new installation titled *Space Invaders* which brought the interactive developments it to an audience of visitors from all over Europe.



Space Invaders featured developments from *Blacked Out*, including continued use of light sensors to control multiple projections and video. Again, images used were directly related to the texts discussed here and referenced Natural Surveillance, use of CCTV, gated developments and social stereotypes related to FOC. Additional interactions were made through the use of *This Belongs To* cards, which visitors were again invited to use in claiming the projections (left). At Alternative Party, these shadows were then traced around, permanently marking the surface and bringing in a new element of interaction

between the participant (as they held their card) and myself (as I traced around the shadow). As it is difficult to hold the card particularly still, this required an element of co-operation and seemed to illustrate, at least in part, Jacobs' discussions relating to *Casual Public Trust* and relations with strangers. A related workshop on Saturday night using *This Belongs To* cards (including a version in Finnish (right) and a new development incorporating an LED) saw various temporary interventions in the city of Helsinki.



It was during discussions with visitors and during an interview I gave at the event that it became most apparent how the research for the Contexts unit had impacted upon my practice. I was able to speak far more fluently on a range of background issues and the resulting conversations were stimulating with relevant contributions from visitors who did not require much prompting to engage with the topic. There were approximately 30 interactions with the work and the positive feedback is possibly best summed up with this quote from one participant:

“Love the idea and the story behind it. Can easily relate. Also, it’s nice to be part of the installation. I’ve already been thinking about how you interact with the place you live in and it’s true how you relate/interact makes a difference. I’m looking forward to tagging my hood :)” (With reference to *This Belongs To* workshop)



A visitor adds their mark to the projected image



The projected video and still imagery



The results of a traced interaction



A contribution to the *This Belongs To* Workshop (LED development)



A contribution to the *This Belongs To* workshop (Finnish version)