

# 1812

(ARCHIVE WORKS#05)  
WAR AND PEACE STUDIES  
CARLOS CASAS

Notes by Carlos Casas

**1812**  
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80 min  
Format: 16:9  
Sound: 5.1

Screen from hard disc.  
(available also form DVD)

1812 is an immersive audiovisual work entirely created and reworked from the classic Russian film War and Peace by Sergey Bondarchuk, from 1967, the work uses only and exclusively found footage and material from the film, and implodes it to create a new audiovisual work, a new visual sound experience. The result is an experimental vision that pretends to expand the way we perceive films and tries to push our notion of audiovisual sensations. Narration and plot lines are annihilated and imploded to become a sort of visual sound collage. 1812 wants to present a new vision and sound image of war, war and peace was hailed as presenting a new approach to war scenes and achieving a realism never achieved in film before, its use of 200.000 extras for the war scenes made of it the biggest production ever accomplished by man, a record that will never be broken again, in face of the new computer possibilities, war and peace was also a visual and sound experiment and its 5.1 sound mix became a standard in future productions and even its techniques were later to become standards and copied in Hollywood. War and Peace is surely the grand and boldest film production ever made. That is why I believe it is worth it to bring it back alive in a new shape, in a new vision, thru to its original intent, to transcribe the feeling of war and to bring alive the vision of Lev Tolstoy, the writer who best that any other writer would envision with its writing the cinematic visual language that will make cinema the means of expression of the next century, 1812 is the original title Tolstoy indented for his novel, that is why in an homage to his work too, I ve decided to call the project 1812, also a way to recall the 200 years span that separates us from the actual facts that were described in the book. 200 years that also provides a new reading of this work, in the context of Europe today.

1812 is composed by 4 parts  
Peace ( prelude, polonaise, dance, epilogue)  
The songs ( Andrei Song, Natascha Song, Napoleon Song, Pierre Song)  
The seasons ( Summer, fall, winter, spring)  
War ( Borodino, Schöngrabern, Austerlitz, Moscow)







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**(ARCHIVE WORKS#06)**  
**War and Peace Studies**  
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**Yuri Dovronich soviet cinema**  
**critic interviews Carlos Casas**  
**Tashkent 2011**

**Tashkent Biennale 2011**  
**Art week, 1812**  
**Received prize for**  
**Best Video work**

**Why War and peace? Why did you decide to focus on it? What does it represent to you as artist and as westerner?**

The first time I saw WP, it somehow disgust me, for its classic feel, for its baroque vision, For its grandeur, and melodramatic stance, I was somehow young and the years of a certain minimal approach to cinema were there, it was only few years ago that I manage to see the film in its entirety, and it made a blowing impression, like if I was catching up, like finally falling to its feets, letting its rhythm its craft finally play its magic on me, I was totally hypnotize by it, by its movements, by its sounds by its grandeur and epic, by its baroque vision of the world and by its unique approach to war, I started to read about it and the passion for it grew, I knew I wanted to do something about the film but never had the guts to approach finally until this summer, when I finally decided to dedicate time to it, Somehow I said I would dedicate 7 weeks of my life to work on this project, a film and a novel that paradoxically took 7 years to its authors to conclude, Tolstoy took 7 years of his life to write it and Bondarchuk film took 7 years to finally open in cinemas, it was a small homage, a small effort somehow, but I wanted to do it, to pay homage to that effort, to that celebration of human achievement that is WP the film, and the book, I feel that somehow today there is a much more need and understanding of this message, of this film, which somehow Will never repeat again, it was part of that amazing moment of history, the cold war, that polari-zation of the world. My vision of it it is somehow different, and present time somehow presents interesting new angles to it, in relation to society and off course to a certain spiritual crisis.

One of the things that fascinated me about this project is that I was working with the concrete material of the most expensive film ever made, money wise and human wise, the film with most people working on it, the greatest film ever made, and surely also the last, and I was to be confronted alone, me and it, alone without budget without any production or money, the film my computer and me...a solitude fight with the material. A sort of journey inside it, it was a sort of implosion. Imploded cinema. To also quote Youngblood. I am fascinated by some scenes some micro moments in the film and those moments are the ones that are building the whole scene... they create a grid where I construct the piece, some of the pieces are constructed out of few seconds in real time in the film, that is why the concept of implosion is so true, so defining of the work I am doing, I am imploding the film in itself. To recreate to create something totally new.

**You speak about Visual sound and now about imploded cinema, what is the relation of this to the expanded cinema movement or VJ movement.**

Well I have to say I have nothing to do with the VJ movement, somehow I feel very distant to it, I never made part of it. I respect somehow some of its developments, by I believe my work comes more from the cinematic and more from experimental cinema side, from the works of Austrian filmmakers like Martin Arnold, Peter Tscherkassky or more precisely Joseph Cornell, all mixed with my passion with experimental music, industrial music and noise, from the ambient isolationism to more radical Japanese noise to European electronic music (again the Austrian scene late 90) was a big influence till the new American noise of the last decade. The expanded cinema approach is also something I am interested in other parts of my research, my fieldworks and my documentary films come with a necessity to expand that tradition to other contexts, like bringing the live element and the experimental music experience approach, all this comes together. In the Archive works, where I always work with found footage, from films, archive or other found sources, I am interested in testing the limits of the formal and sound, using the material as one, sound and image, as a total entity, not creating a division, what you see is what you hear, the concept of WYSIWYH is very important to me and it is what makes the work unique, is like using For the first time you see what you hear in the sense of sound production, that is why I call it Vi-

“Considering its cost and the vast effort that went into its making, such a film can be made only once in our time. The wonder, indeed, is that it was made at all.”  
Roger Ebert

sual sound, using the visual to create the sound and viceversa. So somehow there is 3 interesting concepts here visual sound, imploded cinema, and WYSIWYH that somehow should be analyzed and further develop as an theoretical base of my work. I am interested in Theory but somehow more interested in doing, experimenting, I think it is up to you and others critics to develop the theory.

**Can you tell us about the formal part of the work the technical part of the project, you said you work alone on the project, how did you develop the work.**

I have mainly used video editing programs, and audio, basically final cut and pro tools software, the most common editing tools around, the classic tools for any filmmaker. I am not interested in complex software techniques or other visual programs. I like the idea of using the classic instruments, it is the way you use this instruments that make it different, somehow it is a challenge to achieve things with the most basic of equipment, and somehow that applies to my approach to things which is very DIY very straight not at all technical or complex. There is no mathematics, only intuition and trial and error, anyone could do it. Somehow in WP I have develop my techniques and approach further than the cemetery archive works in the sense that here I have composed the songs, somehow I have create with the concrete material structures visually and sound wise, so somehow I was also creating with the meaning of the film the story and off course Tolstoy vision. Somehow, I have tried to construct a narration somehow even though the ultimate goal was not to recreate the story with text but with sound with music somehow, I was interested in how to reproduce the sound of war, how can you create elaborate that sound that noise and push it to the extremes. Like If I was making a sound piece out of war and peace, also I wanted that the experience was more physical somehow, using that traditional structure of songs and using the rhythm parameters to alter soundtrack and time signature and meter to 4/4, 3/4 2/4 or even sometimes I was experimenting with 6/9 or even 12/8 etc... creating a new level of sound from the original one. There is a implosion of layers that make this amazing wall of sound.

Also the mix I am doing is 5.1 which is actually the sound that Bondarchuk envision in the theatrical release and that was develop at that time in Russia the Sovscope 70, which is a 6 channel stereo sound, a sort of copy of the Todd-AO American system, that later became somehow the 5. 1 Dolby system.

In the live performance of the piece it would be done with a live soundtrack so it means that the mixing will be develop live, all the sound parts will be controlled live and mixed live. Somehow Around 90 channels of sound that produce the final sound of War and peace.

**I see that you speak about WP never as a film never as you new film, how do you see this work in your career?**

Well I consider my archive works always as a work in progress, as an experimental part of my practice, in this case especially WP was intended to become an album in the classic musical sense, I thought of it as a release, as a musical release with songs and pieces of music, of visual sound.

I don t need and I don t think you should consider WP as a film I believe it is something that escapes definition somehow. I never thought of projecting it in a cinema hall, even though I am sure It could be an experience!!!!

**Somehow how could you describe the work how can you define it and where it should stand as a work. You say it is not a film, you say it is a music album, visual sound. There must be a place to file it under...**

You are right, it is impossible to define it, and even more difficult to file it, if I was to describe it to my grandmother I would say that it is like the visual transcription of my dream after watching War and peace, if it would possible to make a recording of my dream after watching War and peace that would be the result. The dream of War and Peace...

In relation to a place to file it I would file it under visual sound, and I mean I hope somehow that would be the way to define works in the next coming years. I think it is surprising how long it is taking to finally mix both productions, image and sound, there is no cases of both entities being Produce in equal share...as an entity. I really hope it would be the case in the future.

**You have spoken about Russian cinema being an influence in your cinematic work, why you think so, and which filmmakers do you admire?**

Well it is difficult to say why I am more influenced by Russian filmmakers than American, Maybe It is a question of education of spending time watching the films, there is a certain sensitivity a certain vision of the world in the Russian sensitivity, that sensitivity has been lost in American and western cinema, to put it mildly is like keeping some feelings in the fridge of the cold war. It is like somehow the need for a certain spirituality was pushing ahead a certain aspect of the art in the soviet period, that enclosed spirituality somehow was felt in the arts, and in some of the artists who manage to survive during soviet times. Somehow what is interesting about this film also is that it wasn't very well accepted in Russia, Bondarchuk has always been seen as a Party director and never was well received from the Russian intelligentsia, only after the grand success around the world and the oscar, that a proper critical appreciation of his work came, and that is also something that happened with films like Potemkin and Tarkowsky for instance... Somehow the Russian directors have always been protected by a certain western critical acceptance, It is the case of Sokurov and more underground Russian directors like Yufit.

**To go back to WP the film is considered the definite Tolstoy adaptation, you said before that your work somehow relates also to the novel, what do you think about the literary work and how it influence your work.**

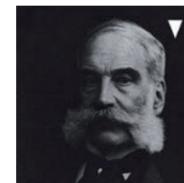
Well off course it relates to the novel since the film is a faithful and precise adaptation from it. I was trying to be clear on that, and also that my research also relates to studying the book and precisely the passages that I was interested in developing of the film...to try to understand somehow the story in new eyes.

Like in the wolf hunt chapter, that became wolf part, which sincerely it is amazing in the book and also great in the film, or the passage of Natasha speaking of Madagascar which somehow in the book comes in a total more meaningful power than in the film...Also it is interesting to see the Vidor film, and how much the film influenced somehow Bondarchuk, There is no way of comparing both films but it is interesting to do it somehow, and then you can understand that Bondarchuk was well aware of the film, and also it makes clear the understand that it was hard for the Russians to let his major literary achievement be converted into an American film. Somehow you understand that Bondarchuk had an infinite carte blanche, that allow the film to be what it became the most grand filmic experience ever made by man. If you think that Napoleon arrive to Russia with less than 400.000 men and 250.000 men fought in Borodino, and then Bondarchuk used 120.000 to make the Borodino war scenes it really shows you the grandeur of the production.



**Carlos Casas/Nico Vascellari**  
Choir  
VON000 DVD  
Edition of 500

Conceived as a manifesto for the label, Choir is an audiovisual experiment, that takes the shape of an installation and live media event, as well as a limited edition video work. The image and sound is a superposition of source material selected by the artists and overlaid in order to produce a ghostly image an "hypnotic tantric metal experience" as some of the first viewers of the piece told.



**Carlos Casas**  
Interview with a whale hunter  
VON004 7' Edition of 100  
(V.A.Ed\*)

A series of field recordings from Siberia, Chukotka, from Radio frequency scans to ambient landscapes, a sonic journey into one of most desolate and extreme environments in the planet. This release is composed of CD in 300 copies and a special Von Archives Artist editions\* 7 with an Interview with a whale hunter. The first in a series of Artists Editions.



**Prurient/Carlos Casas**  
Vezdekhod  
VON008 DVD  
Edition of 500

This Collaboration between Prurient and Carlos Casas is an homage to the classic Russian tank: Vezdekhod, an all terrain tank that is the only way of transport for most of Siberia. From the Field recordings captured by Carlos Casas, Prurient, created and constructed these solid musical masses. An audiovisual experiment on the crossover of documentary and sound exploration.



**Carlos Casas**  
Cemetery Archive works  
VON009 DVD  
Edition of 500

This release presents some of the archive works developed as a research for a future film about a cemetery of elephants. Part of the research is actually experimenting with archive film material as visual and sound matter, the research is based on classic adventure films, documentaries, Lost World literature adaptations and exotic adventure films from the golden period of adventure film. An overwhelming experiment with the audiovisual matter.



**Carlos Casas**  
Aral Field Recordings.  
MM003 MC  
C60 edition of 100  
C60+C90 edition of 30

"Aral field recordings is part of an ongoing research on radio frequencies in remote areas, this radio frequencies were captured in Moynak, a city once the biggest port in the Aral sea, today a desert, a ghost town inhabited by the remain population mostly old people that try to survive one of man made worst disasters.

[www.musica-moderna.org](http://www.musica-moderna.org)

cassette 1 is a selection of this radio frequencies recorded and edited by carlos casas, the sounds were captured from a small radio receiver from FM-AM-SW\_VLF

cassette 2 is a transfer from a tape that circulated around that village, and that contains Russian pop music, this cassette was probably copied by the whole village and was a sort of connection with the real world, a way to be part of the present. The sounds and the quality of the tape relate to the amount of copies done recorded and recorded again. Cassettes were used till the actual tape would be worn out and then reused to record another tape. Tapes were introduced by workers returning from Russia or Kazakhstan

**Releases by Carlos Casas**  
available from Von Archives  
[vonarchives.com](http://vonarchives.com)