

Homo Academicus Curatorius: Millet Matrix as Intercultural Paradigm

by Marc James Léger

But we who somehow are so tainted by cynicism, because of our helplessness in the ugly world which surrounds and presses on us, cannot we somehow raise our own hopes at least to the point of thinking that what hope glimmers on the millions of the slaves of Commerce is something better than a mere delusion, the false dawn of a cloudy midnight with which 'tis only the moon that struggles? – William Morris, "Art and Socialism"

Since the 1980s and 90s, museum and exhibition practices have undergone unprecedented and much warranted study. As part of this new development of the field of museum studies, curating has also received sustained analysis as a practice that creates a space for discourse and critique. Some of the ways in which curatorial theory has both surfed and suffered the neoliberal re-engineering of art institutions can be noticed in the almost schizophrenic breakdown between certain categories of practice, between making and theorizing (Rogoff), between artist and curator (O'Neill), artist-run centre and museum (Doherty), community centre and academy (Esche), avant-gardism and inclusion, production and presentation (Farquharson), and alternative and official systems (Möntmann).¹ Notwithstanding the investment of the New Institutionalism in the practices of certain key curators working in certain galleries and museums, the field is also capable of demonstrating once in a while that, as Pierre Bourdieu argued in *Homo Academicus*, a turn towards the originary and the ordinary is also a turn towards the alien.² In this regard, an art exhibition can be shown to be capable of providing its own context in such a way that the reading of it is not internal and the goal is an objectivity that does not lose the benefits of what is familiar. Here, the function of criticism is not the "international solidarity between holders of equivalent positions in different national fields," but rather, the presentation of a singular exchange in which self-analysis provides a useful description of some of the invariants of the genus *homo academicus curatorius*.³ In order to

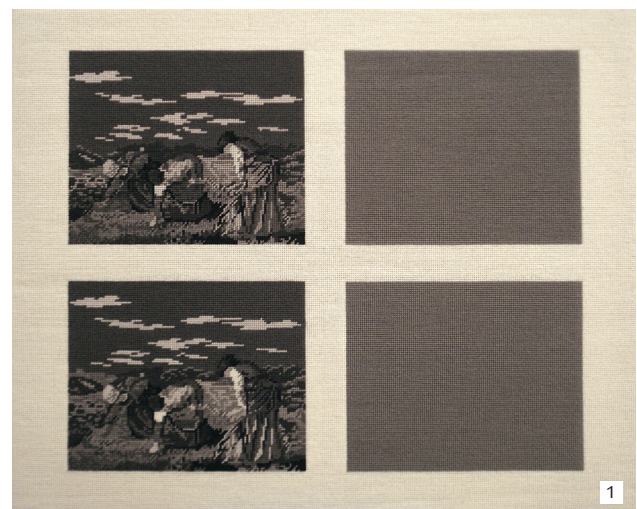
produce this objectification from the outside, I begin by asking: What is it today that promises to renew the belief in art's social value but which tends rather to reproduce the void of pseudo-satisfaction?

In "Welcome to the Desert of Post-Ideology," Slavoj Žižek describes the difference between pleasure and the psychoanalytic concept of enjoyment (*jouissance*).⁴ For Lacan, enjoyment as *jouissance* translates into *plus-de-jouir*, an excess-enjoyment beyond the pleasure principle. Within contemporary consumer culture, sated with novelty, society attempts to incorporate this excess into calculated pleasures. The function of enlightened hedonistic consumerism, Žižek argues, is to deprive enjoyment of its excessive, traumatic dimensions. "Enjoyment is tolerated," he writes, "solicited even, but on condition that it does not threaten our psychic or biological stability: chocolate yes, but fat free; Coke yes, but diet; mayonnaise yes, but without cholesterol; sex yes, but safe sex."⁵ Žižek argues that here we are in the realm of what Lacan described as the Discourse of the University, where pleasure is regulated by scientific knowledge and untroubled by the Real of enjoyment. Seen in this light, what might we be able to discern as the post-ideological coordinates of curating? One particularly influential document of 'post-ideological' theorization is Irit Rogoff's "Turning," an essay that calls on institutional players to stop lamenting what they can't control (the structures and processes of capitalist ideology), and to turn instead towards sites of possibility, potentiality, actualization, access, and so

on, “liberated,” as it were, from organized anti-capitalist resistance.⁶ Here, institutional critique is transformed into ‘institutional chic’; the emasculation of critical voices by biopolitical processes is compensated by curators who try to fill the void created by the diffusion of neoliberal state and market mechanisms. Similarly, within the realm of socially engaged art, the prohibition against anti-art gestures makes it such that institutions seek to unite desire and Law rather than oppose them.⁷ Curators today no longer prevent artists from drawing ties between aesthetics and the fields of class power and corporate money – they instead solicit critiques and deconstructions of all sorts, thereby effectively sabotaging them, reducing provocation to contractual mutual consent.

Beyond the matter of disciplinary societies and societies of control, part of the problem of today’s ultra-postmodern “insiderism” can be assessed as a matter of belief. Žižek argues that we often do not need to believe in something ourselves in order to believe but that we believe through others, or through external signs, symbols and other material surrogates.⁸ One of the functions of curating is to relieve us of the function of believing by effectively performing this function for us. Within the conditions of market capitalism, the curator mediates the proper relationship towards artists and audiences as subjects involved in commodity relations. In this process, a kind of “curatorial complex,” artists and publics lose whatever autonomy or independence they might have had and are reduced to part objects within an ideological matrix. Today these relationships are compounded as *social capital* increasingly replaces the kinds of *cultural capital* that were previously considered substantial enough to sustain a legitimate art practice.⁹ Networking, community, cooperation, collaboration, participation, potentiality: these can be and sometimes are the watchwords of increased interpersonal violence.¹⁰ On this score, and in terms of class relations, very little of our social exchange has been transformed since Marx characterized the rights of man as the paradise of “Freedom, Equality, Property and Bentham.”¹¹ Given that so-called social mediation (social constructionism, performativity) is the necessary means to translate stakes in the world of class relations into the worldlessness of theory, contemporary curators and other institutionalized cadres call on publics (or better still, counter-publics) to reconnect with art – however, without believing in it themselves. The problem, then, is not that contemporary curating is theoretically concerned with critique, but that it does not do enough, in the terms of curating, to display and challenge the forces

that structure the impersonality of social relations. The emphasis that is placed on bodies, affect, language and identity (on so much “animal disquiet”) does very little to reveal those impersonal forces since this emphasis is understood only abstractly and avoids the concrete terms of social reproduction. Consequently, contemporary curating might very well prevent us from making difficult distinctions between conservative, liberal and radical perspectives, allowing art, with all of its post-ideological affinities with “the political” and “agonistic public spheres” to replace radical political organizing.¹²



Whereas today’s post-postmodern institutions continue to operate according to what Pierre Bourdieu defined as the function of art within class society, this social function is all the more difficult to assess as the majority of institutionalized players refuse the language of class distinction.¹³ One is more likely to find the values and politics of liberal ideology expressed in terms of pluralism and culture wars. This culturalization of politics, however, provides further

indications that few today continue to believe in art itself, that it is nothing but a bad joke unless it can translate into those kinds of struggles that are easily appropriated by the ruling classes and thus operate as stakes in a game that is framed by social mobility and utility. The art game becomes today a knowledge game, an experience economy or any other term by which the global underclass appears as only a problem that justifies the existence and rule of experts.¹⁴ As for the dark matter that Gregory Sholette identified as the raw material that feeds the art world, “the structural invisibility of most professionally trained artists whose very underdevelopment is essential to normal art world functions,” the system usually has nothing to say.¹⁵

How then to get past the liberal psychosocial drama that would pit cooperative artists, networkers and perennial insiders against resistant, difficult subjects?¹⁶ Might a practice that outwardly changes nothing but that questions basic institutional coordinates offer an alternative within a system that still needs art? Might the real threat to art’s dissolution be our non-belief in it and if so, what kind of curating is willing to acknowledge the most depressing aspects of all the talk about cooperation and collaboration?¹⁷ One particularly salient proposal has been put forward by Mark Hutchinson, who argues that in a universe of dematerialized practices, we need an analysis of collaboration wherein the curator operates as a kind of analyst or subject supposed to know – one who knows that he or she doesn’t know, but who can nevertheless “provide the conditions in which the patient can disabuse him or herself of the belief in the subject supposed to know.”¹⁸ In this kind of transferential relation, artist and curator are not in an equivalent relation, Hutchinson argues, but involved in an imaginary investment in, and, I would add, struggle over cultural capital. In the following I explore the potential of this idea of curator-as-analyst by examining the collaborative exchanges between two Montreal-based artists: Rosika Desnoyers and David Tomas.

In December of 2010, an exhibition titled *Millet Matrix I* was held in the apartment of Rosika Desnoyers, an artist who since the mid-1990s has been working with needlepoint as a means to explore operations of power and knowledge within university and museum discourse. The exhibition was focused on a distributed presentation of a work by Desnoyers titled *Millet Grid* (2006), which is comprised of two juxtaposed versions of *After Jean-François Millet, Gleaners (1857)*, one from 2002-2003 and one from 2006.

Millet Matrix I was described as part one of “A two-part curatorial project by David Tomas.” Tomas is an established Canadian artist whose projects and writings have provided aesthetic and ethnographic explorations of the cultures of visual representation.¹⁹ *Millet Matrix I* falls squarely within Tomas’ ethnographically-based investigations. As he puts it, with regard to *Millet Matrix I*,

There is no question here of adopting the position of curator-as-artist or artist-as-curator. I would like to think of this practice as that of a transcultural visual worker, or more precisely, as that of a visual worker who is navigating in the unknown spaces that separate one artist’s practice from someone else’s and who is operating with an alternative – transcultural – viewpoint on the world, disciplines and knowledge.²⁰

Millet Matrix I was the third of Tomas’ transcultural curatorial ventures and acted as a kind of visual thesis, encapsulating the reasoning that structures Desnoyers’ needlepoint practice. The apartment installation was accompanied by a text by Tomas titled “Programming and Reprogramming Artworks: A Case of Painting and Practicing Conceptual and Media Art by Other Means,” published in the Spring 2009 issue of the Université de Montréal journal *Intermédialités*.²¹ Whereas Tomas is a Professor of Visual Arts at the Université du Québec à Montréal, Desnoyers is a graduate of the doctoral Humanities Interdisciplinary Program at Concordia University. Tomas has been Desnoyers’ teacher and friend since the early 1990s and is presently acting as her post-doctorate supervisor. While Desnoyers worked on the completion of her dissertation, Tomas curated his fourth exhibition, which was based on Joseph Conrad’s 1899 novella *Heart of Darkness*.²² A catalogue for this exhibition, titled *Live rightly, die, die...* (2012), was soon accompanied by a self-published artist’s book titled *Escape Velocity: Alternative Instruction Prototype for Playing the Knowledge Game* (2012).²³ These and other texts provide us with some valuable documents with which we can address Tomas’ role as transcultural worker. Following *Millet Matrix I*, Tomas and Desnoyers planned a second exhibition, *Millet Matrix II*, in which the black and white image of Desnoyers’ *Millet Grid* that appears in Tomas’ *Intermédialités* essay becomes the basis for a new needlepoint work called simply *Millet Matrix*.

Before I address the relevance of *Live rightly, die, die...* and *Escape Velocity* to the two *Millet Matrix* exhi-

bitions, it is necessary to say that after *Millet Matrix I* Desnoyers worked not only on her PhD thesis but also on the large *Millet Matrix* canvas – a work that took two years to complete.²⁴ In an unpublished document, titled “*Millet Matrix II: Between Commission and Collaboration*,” Tomas describes the way in which *Millet Matrix* came into being. He explains how the works chosen for display in the first exhibition were two “needlegraph” works by Desnoyers based on Jean-François Millet’s *The Gleaners*. Put together, these works comprise *Millet Grid*. In a separate interview document, Tomas describes *Millet Grid* in these terms:

The Millet piece foregrounds the notion of work that is so important to Rosika’s feminist and historical interests, as well as to her own method of production, since it is not only a painting about work, but it is also a painting about the work of women *in the field*. Moreover, it is interesting to note that the women in Millet’s painting are anonymous in form and character; their faces are hidden from the viewer because of the way they engage with the serial and mechanical task. The two Millets in Rosika’s work were bought on ebay and their authors are unknown. (...)

While each work might appear to be a straightforward reworking of an original needlepoint based on the errors that Rosika has discovered in the original, which leads to the production of a second “monochrome” work punctuated with “holes” created by the absence of one or more stitches, each work is *also* a kind of portal into the social and aesthetic history of the medium, as well as a commentary on the *work* of art’s theoretical place today. Each work is the result of an articulation of a double authorial logic (original and a copy that is also an original) as well as an exploration of the divided and differed nature of the original in each case (original *and* copy). (...)

The mark of individuality, the author’s signature, is encoded in a series of absences – a pattern of holes – in a monochromatic field. By revealing its pattern, Rosika is replacing herself as author through the very process through which she creates her fiction as author of the final work.²⁵

Millet Grid, as it was reproduced in black and white in Tomas’ essay, becomes the pattern, or model

image for *Millet Matrix*, folding Desnoyers’ art practice directly into the context of Tomas’ theoretical writing about her work and within the framework of a two-part apartment exhibition. In “*Millet Matrix II: Between Commission and Collaboration*,” Tomas states that *Millet Matrix I* raised the question of the “authorial politics of the curatorial gesture” in relation to “the dialogical model upon which it was based.”²⁶ He adds:

Millet Matrix II has taken form through a *commission* that was initiated in December 2010. (...) [T]he commission was used to trigger a mutation in *Millet Matrix I*’s conceptual, historical and genealogical logics through the production of a new work whose authorship resided outside of the basic parameters of Desnoyers’ practice (...) The result, in the case of *Millet Matrix II*, is a single ‘meta-work’ that transcribes and fuses *Millet Grid*’s independent pictorial elements. However, this work is not based on the original *Millet Grid*. Instead, it is based on a small black and white reproduction. The reproduction accompanied an essay on Desnoyers’ work – “Programming and Reprogramming Artworks: A Case of Painting and Practicing Conceptual and Media Art by Other Means” – that had been published in the Spring 2009 issue of *Intermédialités*, a Montreal-based academic journal. (...)

Entrusting a commission to someone is (...) to create an affective and principled bond of commitment vis-à-vis the project to be undertaken, in place of a pecuniary-based contractual bond. In the case of *Millet Matrix* (2010-2012), the relationship was based on friendship, trust and a common interest in exploring the possibilities of a practice.²⁷

One question that is worth asking in response to this text is the extent to which it does in fact, through the commission, trigger such a “mutation” in the artist’s historical and genealogical logics, or whether it actually details only some of the spatial and temporal possibilities that a genealogical project makes available.²⁸ To answer this one must consider in its entirety, and not only as one wishes, the general program of Desnoyers’ research project, which proposes a Foucauldian-inspired “genealogy” of nineteenth-century Berlin work, the precursor of what is today more generally known as needlepoint.

Desnoyers' thesis in research-creation has developed over the last six years as an unprecedented examination of the practices of eighteenth-century needlepainting and nineteenth-century needlepoint (Berlin work). Her work begins with needlepoint as a now submerged practice that reaches back two hundred years. In the early nineteenth century, Berlin work was the most widely practiced art form among European middle-class women. Despite this fact, and for complex historical reasons, it has hitherto escaped serious scholarly study. Desnoyers' investigation does not seek to fill in the gaps of scholarship with historicist narration, but instead looks at the history of writing about embroidery for clues concerning the various discursive formations that could on the one hand account for its immense popularity in the early nineteenth century, and on the other, its decline and "submersion" at the time of the rise of a discourse of aesthetic autonomy. Some of the fields of investigation that she tracks include: the shift from aristocratic amateur artists in the eighteenth century to that of the making of the modern amateur; the importance of practices of copying (fundamental to needlepainting – for which prestigious paintings are copied in embroidered textile) in both learned liberal arts discourse and in entrepreneurial product innovation; the significance of an industrial aesthetic in early practices of Berlin work, a characteristic that would make it anathema to the Arts and Crafts movement and a foil in the rhetoric of the foundation of the Royal School of Needlework. By the turn of the twentieth century, embroidery historians and museum curators would lament Berlin work as a "mistaken art" that led refined embroidery away from its true potential.²⁹ The crux of all of this for Desnoyers is that, as she puts it,

Berlin work, understood in terms of genealogy, implies that the truth of needlepoint is not grounded in the past any more than it is in the present and that in each case what we have to contend with are discursive regimes that create truths about culture. Needlepoint is therefore a means for me to make work that incorporates a reflexive critique of the disciplinary regimes within which contemporary artists operate.³⁰

In this regard Desnoyers distinguishes her work from the aims and ambitions of contemporary artists who reclaim craft practices and who with this pretend to challenge museum discourse. She thinks of needlepoint instead as a 'problematic' that engages issues around technology, creativity and the social functions

of art, and that reflects upon artistic practice as a value-producing and meaning-making enterprise.

Given that Desnoyers describes her practice as neo-conceptual, it is perhaps not altogether surprising that Tomas could define her work as "conceptual and media art by other means." In the journal essay that became the vehicle for both the impromptu catalogue of *Millet Matrix I* and the source for the visual referent of the large needlepoint canvas, *Millet Matrix*, Tomas relates Desnoyers' work to computer programming, an association that is supported not only by Desnoyers' study of the proximity of art and science in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and of the historical ties between calculating machines, computers and textile weaving, but also by Tomas' numerous investigations of cybernetic systems as they relate to cultural practice.³¹ The grid-based logic of Berlin work charts links them not only he says to the basic methods of mass production, through a division of labour and through the automation of creativity, but to post-60s conceptual art practice as defined in particular by Sol LeWitt. Here Desnoyers' research area and research methods overlap with Tomas', in particular as he defines technologies in terms of multidimensional intersystems. In his book of essays on photography, *A Blinding Flash of Light*, Tomas asks the simple question, "What is a new technology?" The usual answer to this presumes a linear temporal schema in which an invention progresses towards a more contemporary version. Tomas' alternative is a "networked/intersystemic approach" that presents a series of technologies – the camera lucida, railway locomotion, perspective machines, photography, cinematography, virtual reality – assembled around a local network that links events across space and time. This relational history of media suggests that there is no strict determinacy to the presence of technologies and that "relationships are defined in multiple directions and dimensions."³² A new technology can therefore be understood in terms of the space created between different inventions as they intersect within a transhistorical continuum.

This idea of a relational history of media corresponds adequately to a genealogical method of research, which does not necessarily look to the past, to the moment of emergence or origins, to locate the most active truths or the most effective *agencements*. What both methods reveal are the ways in which knowledge is shaped by diverse practices and institutions. In *Live rightly, die, die...*, a large project in which Tomas operates as both artist and curator, the framework of *Heart of Darkness* is used to bring up to date

the correspondence between the “exhibitionary complex” and the “carceral archipelago” of today’s neo-colonial relations. Mediating both worlds are the rapidly mutating artistic and intellectual practices of today’s culture and knowledge industries. If Desnoyers has chosen to pursue interdisciplinary research as a way out of the narrow confines of aesthetics, a field in which needlepoint is typically limited to only one basic register – women’s craft hobby – Tomas has addressed the parameters of such as escape. In the case of *Live rightly, die, die...*, his concern is ethnographic, proposing curating as a means to place the spectator in a decentered position regarding their own culture and as a way of estranging contemporary colonial attitudes.³³ However, in contemporaneous projects he is more specific about the locus of his field of study. In “Dead End, Sophisticated Endgame Strategy, or a Third Way?” he suggests that the center of gravity of institutional critique has shifted from the museum towards the university. Alternatives to traditional institutional critique, he says, should be directed towards a “self-reflexive ‘analysis’ of the university, its educational functions, systems of acculturation (disciplinary models and methods), economic and political affiliations in critical-institutional terms.”³⁴ This is precisely the task that he assigns himself in *Escape Velocity*, an artist’s book that traces the changing institutional and intellectual frameworks through which his practice has developed over the years. The university, he argues, “processes the art world’s human and intellectual raw materials and transforms them into viable products (artists, theories, and practices)” all the while “serv[ing] as a *measure of progress* (and ultimately of *viability*) against which to pass judgment on the archaic models of creativity that still dominate the art world’s culture, economy, and socio-institutional organization.”³⁵

In Desnoyers’ thesis, aspects of such an institutional history are seen in the formation of professional art academies in the eighteenth century, where elite amateur practices were routed and where the rules for annual exhibitions prevented practices of copying, all the better to improve the social circumstances of most professional painters. Working with needlepoint for her is in itself a foray into histories of domination and an elaboration of the conditions of possibility for a contemporary practice that by and large has remained anti-professional, obscure and resistant.

While contemporary curating emphasizes collaboration, and while contemporary engaged art highlights social process, art practices like those rep-

resented in *Escape Velocity* and *Millet Matrix* connect process and product and acknowledge the university’s role in the production and reception of artworks. To practice an institutional critique of the university is not to conform to Lacan’s Discourse of the University, in which systems of knowledge confront radical artists in a confidence game designed to structure belief within capitalist society at large, masking the social purpose of the neoliberal university as a space for the commodification of educational services; it is, rather, to propose something along the lines of the Discourse of the Analyst, in which artists confront audiences, presuming knowledge itself to be the function and purpose of the university.



It might in this context be worth noting that over the last year or so, during the exhibition of *Live rightly, die, die...*, the publication of *Escape Velocity*, the writing of *A Genealogy of Berlin Work* and the making of *Millet Matrix*, more than 300,000 Québec students organized collectively to prevent a 75% increase in university tuition. Protests that began in March 2012 gained momentum in May when the provincial Liberal government passed an emergency bill known as Law 78 (Law12), which effectively criminalized the strike. After months of civil disobedience and unprecedented demonstrations in which citizens added their voices to the students who later called for a social strike, the government opted for a kind of referendum through the means of an election. The failure of the Charest government to win another term and the rescinding of Law 78 should, however, be seen for the partial victories that they are. At the present time of writing, April 2013, the Parti Québécois government under Pauline Marois has given notice that negotiations with student organizations must move beyond “psychodrama” and towards mature renegotiation of tuition increases indexed to inflation. According to members of the ASSÉ (Association pour une solidar-

ité syndicale étudiante), the group that organized most of the mass demonstrations of the *Printemps érable*, the government's concern at the summit will be with "quality of teaching, accessibility and participation, governance and financing," code words for the further commodification of education and job training, and the building of market mechanisms based on price and quality control.³⁶ Given this situation, the conceit that there is no outside to capitalist crisis is hardly more intelligent and knowledge-based than collective acts of resistance. Against the now institutionalized hullabaloo concerning community and collaboration, I would propose fidelity to some of the terms within a *relational history of politics* wherein the words society, solidarity and socialism stand against the occlusion of art practices that refuse the postmodern 'no man's land' beyond left and right.

If the average contemporary curator helps to produce the artist as a commodity, the function of the curator-analyst is to display as openly as possible the material force of ideology. The present obsession with the idea of the curator as a collaborator is a false problem. Like Tomas and Desnoyers, institutional players should do more to examine the transformation of the artist within the new knowledge economy.

Notes

1 See, respectively, Irit Rogoff, "From Criticism to Critique to Criticality," *Transversal* (January 2003), available at eipcp.net/transversal/0806/rogoff1/en; Gerd Elise Morland and Heidi Bale Amundsen, "The Politics of the Small Act: Interview with Paul O'Neill," *On Curating* (2009), available at www.on-curating.org/documents/oncurating_issue_0410.pdf; Claire Doherty, "The Institution is Dead! Long Live the Institution! Contemporary Art and New Institutionalism," *Engage* #15 (Summer 2004), available at www.scribd.com/doc/32788979/Institution-is-Dead; Alex Farquharson, "Bureaux de change," *Frieze* #101 (September 2006), available at www.frieze.com/issue/article/bureaux_de_change/; Nina Möntmann, "The Rise and Fall of New Institutionalism: Perspectives on a Possible Future," *Transversal* (August 2007), available at eipcp.net/transversal/0407/moentmann/en.

2 Pierre Bourdieu, *Homo Academicus*, trans. Peter Collier (Cambridge: Polity Press, [1984] 1988) xii.

3 Bourdieu, *Homo Academicus*, xv.

4 Slavoj Žižek, "Welcome to the Desert of Post-Ideology," in *The Year of Dreaming Dangerously* (London: Verso, 2012) 47-61.

5 Žižek, "Welcome to the Desert of Post-Ideology," 48.

6 Irit Rogoff, "Turning," *Journal* #10 (November 2008), available at www.e-flux.com/journal/turning.

7 A good example of such policing of avant-garde excess is noticed in Grant Kester, *The One and the Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

8 Slavoj Žižek, *On Belief* (London: Routledge, 2001).

9 See Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, [1979] 1984).

10 With regard to potentiality, Badiou teaches us that an event "is not the realization of a possibility that resides within the situation," but "paves the way for the possibility of what – from the limited perspective of the make-up of this situation or the legality of this world – is strictly impossible." See Alain Badiou, "The Idea of Communism," in Costas Douzinas and Slavoj Žižek, eds. *The Idea of Communism* (London: Verso, 2010) 6-7.

11 Karl Marx, "The Sale and Purchase of Labour-Power," in *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Volume 1*, trans. Ben Fowkes (London: Penguin, [1867] 1976) 280.

12 On this subject see Alain Badiou, "Does the Notion of Activist Art Still Have Meaning?" *InterActivist Info Exchange* (November 19, 2010), available at <http://interactivist.autonomeia.org/node/13795>. See also Jodi Dean, *The Communist Horizon* (London: Verso, 2012).

13 See Marc James Léger, "Welcome to the Cultural Goodwill Revolution: On Class Composition in the Age of Classless Struggle," in *Brave New Avant Garde: Essays on Contemporary Art and Politics* (Winchester, UK: Zero Books, 2012) 82-99.

14 On this see George Yúdice, *The Expediency of Culture: Uses of Culture in the Global Era* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003) as well as Marc James Léger, "Art and Art History After Globalization," *Third Text* #118, 26:5 (September 2012) 515-527.

15 Gregory Sholette, *Dark Matter: Art and Politics in the Age of Enterprise Culture* (London: Pluto Press, 2011) 1-3.

16 To give one example, at the October 2012 Creative Time Summit, Tom Finkelpearl, Director of the Queens Museum of Art, compared Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X and recommended that artists be more like the former and cooperate with publics and institutions rather than take a militant stance.

17 See Karl Marx, "Co-operation," in *Capital*, 439-454; see also Christoph Spehr, "Free Cooperation," *Transversal* (August 2005), available at <http://eipcp.net/transversal/0805/spehr/en>.

18 Mark Hutchinson cited in Dave Beech and Mark Hutchinson, "Inconsequent Bayonets? A Correspondence on Curation, Independence and Collaboration," in Paul O'Neill, ed. *Curating Subjects* (London: Open Editions, 2007) 56.

19 Tomas' writings and projects are presented on his website at <http://www.er.uqam.ca/nobel/dtomas/>.

20 David Tomas cited in Marc James Léger, "An Interview with David Tomas Concerning His Recent Collaboration with Rosika Desnoyers, Part I," *Etc* #93 (Jun-Aug 2011) 46.

21 David Tomas, "Programming and Re-programming Artworks: A Case of Painting and Practicing Conceptual and Media Art by Other Means," *Intermedialités* #13 (Spring 2009) 89-113.

22 See Rosika Desnoyers, *A Genealogy of Berlin Work: A History of Errors*, PhD Dissertation, Concordia University, 2012.

23 David Tomas, *Live rightly, die, die ...* (Montreal: Dazibao, 2012); David Tomas, *Escape Velocity: Alternative Instruction Prototype for Playing the Knowledge Game* (Montreal: Wedge, 2012).

24 The project was delayed by one year because the large quantity of grey wool required to make the work had to be specially dyed to the artist's specification.

25 David Tomas cited in Léger, "An Interview with David Tomas Concerning His Recent Collaboration with Rosika Desnoyers, Part I," 43-44.

26 David Tomas, "Millet Matrix II: Between Commission and Collaboration," unpublished document, November 2012.

27 Tomas, "Millet Matrix II: Between Commission and Collaboration."

28 See in particular Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977) 139-64, and Foucault, "Two Lectures," in Michael Kelly, ed. *Critique and Power: Recasting the Foucault/Habermas Debate* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1994) 17-46. See also Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," *Diacritics* 16:1 (Spring 1986) 22-7.

29 Desnoyers mentions in particular, A.F. Kendrick's *English Embroidery* (1905) and Mrs Lowes' *Chats on Old Lace and Needlework* (1908). Desnoyers, *A Genealogy of Berlin Work: A History of Errors*.

30 Desnoyers, *A Genealogy of Berlin Work: A History of Errors*.

31 See for instance, David Tomas, "From the Cyborg to Posthuman Space: On the Total Eclipse of an Idea," *Parachute* #112 (Oct-Dec 2003) 81-91; "Notes Toward a Metropolis for the Twilight of a Mind," *Public* #32 (2005) 94-107; "Harold Cohen: Expanding the Field: The Artist as Artificial or Alien Intelligence?" *Parachute* #119 (Jul-Sep 2005) 47-67; as well as the essays collected in *Beyond the Image Machine: A History of Visual Technologies* (London: Continuum, 2004).

32 This relational model challenges many of the assumptions of, for example, a text like Jonathan Crary's *Techniques of the Observer* (1990). See David Tomas, *A Blinding Flash of Light: Photography Between Disciplines and Media* (Montreal: Dazibao, 2004) 30.

33 See David Tomas, "Live rightly, die, die... Anatomy of an Exhibition," in *Live rightly, die, die...*, 7-26. See also Marc James Léger, "An Abnormal Tourist Itinerary: David Tomas's 'Live Rightly, Die, Die...,'" *Afterimage* 40:2 (Sep-Oct 2012) 14-17.

34 Tomas, "Dead End, Sophisticated Endgame Strategy, or a Third Way? Institutional Critique's Academic Paradoxes and their Consequences," *Etc* #95 (Feb-May 2012) 27.

35 Tomas, "Artist: Identity in Mutation" in *Escape Velocity*, no page number.

36 See Ethan Cox, "PQ sets date for education summit, Quebec students continue fight against austerity agenda for education," *rabble.ca* (November 10, 2010), available at <http://rabble.ca/blogs/bloggers/ethan-cox/2012/11/pq-sets-date-education-summit-quebec-students-continue-fight-against>.

Captions

1 Rosika Desnoyers, *Millet Matrix* (detail), 2010-2012, needlepoint, wool on canvas, 63.5 x 79 cm. Courtesy of the artist.

2 Rosika Desnoyers, *Millet Grid* (2006). Comprised of *After Jean-François Millet, Gleaners (1857)*, 2002-2003, needlepoint, wool on canvas, 30.5 x 24.7 cm and 29.3 x 24.7 cm, and *After Jean-François Millet, Gleaners (1857)*, 2006, needlepoint, wool on canvas, 30.7 x 23.9 cm and 29.9 x 23.8 cm. Courtesy of the artist.

3 Installation view of *Millet Matrix* (2010-2012) in the exhibition *Millet Matrix II*, 2013, curated by David Tomas. Photo Marc James Léger.

Marc James Léger is an artist, writer and educator living in Montreal. His essays in critical cultural theory have been published in such places as *Afterimage*, *Art Journal*, *C Magazine*, *FUSE*, *One + One*, *Parachute*, *Canadian Journal of Film Studies/Revue Canadienne d'Études Cinématographique*, *Journal of Aesthetics and Protest*, *Left Curve*, *RACAR* and *Third Text*. He is author of *Brave New Avant Garde* and *The Neoliberal Undead*, and editor of the forthcoming *The Idea of the Avant Garde – And What It Means Today*.