

# **The London School of Economics and Political Science**

Markets and Mediators:  
Politics and primary art markets in Montréal

Vrajesh Hanspal

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## **Abstract**

*Markets and mediators: Politics and primary art markets in Montréal* is an ethnographic study of Montreal's primary art market and explains how history, government policy and calculative agency operate together to frame the practice of cultural mediators in the visual arts field. Actors operate within a complex financial and symbolic economy that must respond to changing modes of governance and international trends that increasingly concern metropolitan rather than national development. These forms of agency are situated within overlapping discourses concerning cultural policy at a provincial and municipal level that organize the artistic field in the city, the 'rule and roles' and 'weak ties' that format legitimate action in the primary market and the processes that are used to incorporate new trends and innovation in the field. The thesis argues that mediators in the primary art market play a generative role in the creation of a multicultural and cosmopolitan cultural capital while addressing the conflicting demands of Quebec's nationalist politics. The thesis uses Bourdieu's field and cultural theory, Callon's theory of markets and contemporary work on cities and multicultures to understand this competition over scarce resources by actors in an art world dominated by state support and institutions. The function of art worlds and their mediation by urban elites reiterates the political importance of aesthetic canonization and labor market practice in a city held to bear a specific responsibility for maintaining a sense of culture and identity.

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## Chapter 1

### Making Sense of Primary Art Markets and Mediation in Montréal

*The first time you sell something is when it should cost the most,” he says. “I’ve definitely had the goal to make the primary market more expensive.” He compares a Prada outlet and an Oxfam shop. Why, in the world of shoes, do you pay more for a new pair from Prada, while in the world of art, the big money kicks in only when the shoes get to Oxfam? (Damien Hirst quoted in Januszczak, 2008)*

*Created in 1956, the Conseil des arts de Montréal has become an essential partner in Montréal's artistic creation. Its grant and touring programs, the Conseil des arts de Montréal en tournée, as well as its Grand Prix, the Prix Arts-Affaires de Montréal, the Maison (which also houses rehearsal studios), support of emerging artists and artists from ethnocultural communities, all combine to make the Conseil a unique lever for the development of "Montréal, cultural metropolis". (CAM, 2008)*

#### Introduction

People working in sales often remark that the key to success is ‘selling the sizzle not the steak’. In the context of the contemporary primary art market the ‘sizzle’ is an array of qualities that are made apparent through a portfolio, CV and media manipulation in equal measure to the work itself. The route to success and prominence for artist, gallery owner or state curator is linked to the accumulation of positive endorsements by a series of actors operating in a network. They are all part of the “collective activity” (H. Becker, 1984, p. 76) of the field that includes journalists, academics, bureaucrats and buyers. Montreal’s primary art market, like primary art markets throughout the major urban centers in the world, is a social assemblage (DeLanda, 2006) that functions on the basis of particular modes of economic and cultural action. Art markets also serve an important generative role in shaping narratives of the nation and the city through the meditative practices of actors in relation to labor markets, government policy and artistic canonization. Taken together the art world remains a political site that reproduces the narratives of citizenship and the multicultural within its complex network of positions, strategies and identities.

The collective activity of the local artistic field (Pierre Bourdieu, 1993) in Montréal is characteristic of activity in art worlds generally as well as the specific and more localized political concerns tied to the province of Québec and the city of Montréal. The operation and governance of the artistic field is not simply about the ownership of resources and the distribution of power but the language and culture of those involved and the way in which these linkages and associations amongst actors plays out in a complex network of relations. The act of doing the economy and understanding economic transactions and market making in Montréal involves uncovering what Callon describes as ‘entanglements’ (M. Callon, 1998) – the complex array of criteria that can enter into the frame of economic calculation`. In the province of Québec, where culture and language are viewed as threatened, debates surrounding the politics of history, identity and language play a key role in shaping cultural and economic life in Montréal and its art world.

Galleries and the art worlds they operate in are complex and inter-dependent ‘social assemblages’ (DeLanda, 2006) that play an important role in the cultural economy and cultural ecology of the city. This specialized field generates jobs, careers, institutions and ‘buzz’ (Zukin, 2001) that cultivate specific ideas and associations about place. The image of the dynamic, diverse and cosmopolitan city is derived in part by the output and production of the cultural sector and the actors who inhabit that space and the power of this image to resonate among travelers, other global cultural consumers and the people who inhabit the city. The ascendancy of a local art world is therefore intertwined with the success of the city particularly where, from a political perspective, culture and the cultural economy is understood to be a key element of domestic and international economic development and promotion.

In Montréal, the second largest city in Canada and the largest city in the Province of Québec, the concern for cultural protectionism and the preservation and safeguarding of French language and culture happens alongside a drive to create an internationally recognized, cosmopolitan center. The French ‘sociological fact’ (Hogg, 1988, p. 12) and the politics of Québécois nationalism are the sine qua non of daily life in the Province. To many people, particularly those in the Anglo-American world, the anxieties of cultural preservation are localized within an over-riding context of linguistic and cultural global dominance. For the 7.6 million Québécois the threat of assimilation into the Anglophone sea of 350 million Americans south of the border and an additional 25 million in the other 9 provinces and 3 territories of Canada is an abiding concern. French-Canadian and Québécois nationalism has been the organic political force that since the British conquest of New France in 1769 has protected and preserved this community from the risk of cultural and linguistic extinction and, more recently, economic subjugation by Anglophone business and political interests. In the context of a post-sovereignist<sup>1</sup> Québec, Montréal’s artistic field and its commercial primary art market actors are at the cusp of the changing relationship between the city and the province, public and private sector interests, parochial national interests and a cosmopolitan cultural economy and the changing ethnic and racial make up of the urban population.

The choice of primary art markets as the site for this study comes from the important and primordial role of this highly specialized area of the art field in generating meaning, significance and value for new and emerging art and artists entering the local art market – seeking both financial success and recognition by art historians, curators and collectors. The particular but not exclusive focus on the entrepreneurial activity of primary market actors and

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<sup>1</sup> The term post-sovereignist is used throughout this paper to designate the period following the 1995 referendum in Québec and the defeat of the sovereignist proposition of secession by a margin of less than 1%. - 49.42% for those in favour and 50.58% for those against.



enabling conditions for their activity comes from a need to better understand their role as mediators between cultural production and cultural promotion in the changing dynamics of governance and control between the city and the state in the operation of a regional cultural marketplace.

The primary art market represents only one area within the network of actors and institutions that makes up a regional visual art world. This is a network composed of a complex hierarchy of categories and players that runs from dealers and producers of decorative junk to dense and highly conceptual and abstract work. The primary market also operates alongside a secondary market that trades in more established artists with significant histories and pedigrees and a tertiary market that serves as the arena for the trade done by auction houses. The state run galleries, artist run centers, government funding agencies, universities, artist and gallery advocacy groups and commercial galleries, mainstream and specialist art press, often addressing different areas of expertise and niche markets within the field, also are part of this larger network. Given the dependence on the state run network in Québec and the role of art and culture in the Québécois state building exercise, an examination of one element of this field demands an exploration of what is the larger state managed and funded network of institutions and actors that dominate the visual arts economy.

‘Markets and Mediators: Politics and Primary Art Markets in Montréal’ uses history, government policy and ethnography to understand the way the politics of nationalism and identity shape culture and economic practice in relation to the primary art market in Canada’s second largest city. Through an examination of Montréal’s artistic field and its primary market operators I explain the changing dynamics of the nationalist and culturalist discourse in Montréal and the challenges faced by entrepreneurs in this slow moving yet competitive

regional cultural economy. The thesis looks at how actors in the primary art market negotiate the conflicting demands between the local and the cosmopolitan in a city held to bear a specific responsibility for maintaining a sense of culture and identity. It also examines how the larger political environment and challenges to an essentialist and narrow conception of Québécois identity and ensuing issues of inclusion play a part in setting the tone and shaping the character of evaluative and labor market practices that frame the creative economy as a whole and generate the multicultural and cosmopolitan city.

At the outset of the research project what appeared to me to be the more explicit competition over symbolic and financial resources on the commercial side of the primary art market overshadowed the complex translations involved in the artist and state run sector in assigning value within an equally complicated and inter-connected economy of qualities (M. Callon, Méadel, & Rabeharisoa, 2005) and socio-technical arrangements (M. Callon, 2006, 2007; M. Callon & Caliskan, 2008). What became clear was that the overriding conditions for the operation of the primary art market and the visual arts field generally, and the curatorial and selling propositions surrounding its practice, were shaped by actors who drew from a much deeper historical discourse and consciousness that implicated the larger artistic and cultural field in Montréal and the province of Québec. Not only were the ‘qualities’ at play complex and diverse, but actors were also very conscious of the image of the field that was being presented to a local and international audience through the design of policy, operation of businesses and galleries in the local art world and the curatorial decisions surrounding art and artists. The engagement with this discourse and the complex criteria surrounding standards and practices particular to the rarified field of ‘high art’ had a part to play in generating definitions of citizenship and community in the city.

## Research Process – History and Policy

‘Markets and Mediators’ draws from over a decade of personal experience in the visual arts field as artist, bureaucrat and mediator in Canada and a period of focused ethnographic research between 2006 and 2007 in the Montréal area consisting primarily of structured and unstructured interviews, participant observation in and around visual art events in the city and the collection of relevant ephemera and news material. What began as an ethnographic study of gallery owners operating in the primary art market and their network of relations in the larger art field in Montréal opened up new lines of inquiry concerning the assumptions and associations that guided many within this ‘interpretive community’ (H. Becker, 2007, p. 69). This was far more complex than the reductivism of a homo-economicus, (isolated behavior of isolated individuals...(Martinelli & Smelser, 1990, p. 2) and instead involved understanding the economic as distinct, messy calculative processes that are also inextricably tied to the social, cultural and historical contexts in which they operate - and most importantly for our purposes - reiterating the fact that the cultural economy in general and the primary art market in particular are sites for politically loaded forms of exchange.

Though the dynamics of operating in the artistic field in a peripheral center like Montréal shares a great deal with art world mechanics and labor patterns and policy in North America and in Europe, the critical and overriding distinguishing factor is the way in which a specific politics of identity and nationalism shapes the local ‘habitus’ (Pierre Bourdieu, 1984 [1979], 1993, 1996) and operates as a frame for the development of the local field and the strategies employed by its actors. Market innovation, participation, and legitimacy occur within the prism of these political concerns. Primary market operators are ‘change agents’ bringing new work and art to the field, but as Bourdieu has explained the ‘criterion for membership of a field is the objective fact of producing effects in it’, (Pierre Bourdieu, 1993, p. 42) - agents of

change must have some degree of acknowledgement from those already within it to shape the terms of what constitutes legitimate goods and practices. The politics of identity and nationalism play an influential role and are situated in a specific local history that shapes discourse and practice in important ways. The individuals I encountered shared a sense of attachment to, but not necessarily detailed knowledge of this history and collective sensibility. For respondents a changing combination of metropolitan and provincial loyalties and boosterism shaped mediating practices and discourse and were surprisingly in step with the broad lines and spirit set out by policy objectives at the provincial and metropolitan level.

The line of reasoning offered by respondents concerning the unique condition of the local art world and the sense of responsibility of actors and mediators in guiding its maintenance reiterated the historically embedded importance of art in Québec's national development and the value placed on the cultural economy more generally as a key feature and representation of this unique national and civic identity and culture. Irrespective of allegiances in terms of constitutional and linguistic politics or sentiments and strategies favoring city over state, the enabling conditions established by Québec provincial policy and in turn the Montréal municipal cultural policy in recognizing the value of the local cultural economy was celebrated amongst respondents as a key distinctive trait of life in Québec and in Montréal, particularly when they compared their situation to those operating in other North American cities.

'Markets and Mediators' examines the mechanics of mediation and market making from the perspective of history, policy and praxis. These are the frames employed by those I interviewed to explain their role in Montréal's primary art market network. They also serve as useful methodological tools to breakdown the complex dynamics and variables at play in the

structured and unstructured discussion and the other empirical evidence I gathered for this project. Unraveling native assumptions involves an examination of the ontological dilemmas of the Québécois identity and historical construct and the dynamics of culture and cultural power at the level of government policy and ground level practice. Respondent's commentary on performing within the local market highlighted the important links between the 'cultural economy' and the urban development of Montréal for cultural actors and their enterprises. These issues, linked to urban branding and positioning, are contingent on the specific dynamics of market size and context that shape primary art markets in the city and their day-to-day operation.

The theoretical concerns that are dealt with throughout the thesis are also pragmatic ones of explaining how in the process of 'doing economics' and making markets, actors are in the midst of a complex and messy process of value making that is refracted through the objects, producers, mediators and consumers that make up this small but symbolically powerful community in the city. The significance of what the actors do in the drive to increase sales and prominence within the local primary market also reflects the changing relationship between the state and the city in the area of policy and practice. The shifting focus of the cultural field from the national to the metropolitan through changes in government policy and bureaucratic structures, innovative business and curatorial practices, new kinds of urban promotion and brand building and labour market decisions also engages new paradigms of inclusion, participation and citizenship that reverberate through the city of Montreal and the province of Québec.

## The Gallery and the City

Like symphony orchestras, museums and restaurants, commercial and publicly funded galleries act as points of entry and trade into the local art world. As purveyors of a very particular class of luxury good, gallery owners operate retail businesses and curators and administrators in the artist run centers operate spaces that are an important part of the general amenities and entertainment based drive in urban development. (Clark, Lloyd, Wong, & Jain, 2003) This consumption based perspective sits alongside the idea of the creative city as a source of cultural production - “a city based on generating new ideas, especially those that impact on social and cultural life is one that has a vibrant ecosystem of creative industries and creative workers” (Pratt, 2008a, 2008b). This orientation affirms the fundamental understanding that “the symbolic elements of culture are shaped by the systems within which they are created, distributed, evaluated, taught and preserved.” (Peterson & Anand, 2004, p. 311) and ‘performed’. (duGay & Pryke, 2002; Don Slater, 2002; N. Thrift, 2000) Vibrant local cultural economies act as dynamic sites for production and consumption based activities that define what it now means to be a vibrant metropolis and ‘cultural capital’ and are framed by concerns over aesthetics, ethnicity and marketing. (Zukin, 1995) Montreal has adopted its own formula based on these ingredients and the city’s primary art actors want to implicate themselves deeper in this branding exercise that they see as mutually beneficial to the businesses and spaces they run and in line with the marketing ambitions of the municipal government charged with generating tourist and investment dollars.

Locally produced cultural goods and services come to be associated and identified with the city, and the city becomes known as the place of their production. The association drawn between the recognition of a cultural sector or product and its geographic origin creates linkages that tie city and cultural product together within modes of city brand recognition

(Ooi & Pedersen, 2009). Music festivals, underground music scenes and the groups that they spawn, circuses, novelists, chefs, restaurants and art movements all become part of, and contribute to the discourses and narratives used to explain and differentiate one urban space from another. Local art markets benefit from the direct or indirect exposure that comes from positive and hopefully international endorsements and acclaim garnered by other sectors of the cultural economy, the percolation of a civic zeitgeist and the cultivation of localized styles, fashions and trends that inevitably pepper a range of specialized forms of cultural practice.

Art objects have always been a ‘loaded’ form of material culture given the symbolic and financial value they can acquire but at the height of the recent art boom the hyperbole also surrounded the network of relationships that enable the art object. The trans-national, multicultural variety of contemporary art that operated in conjunction with bull markets and global flows of capital represented an aesthetic and moral reference point for styles of art object but also for particular kinds of art networks, participants and spaces that constitute and enable the art world. The role of small business in this paradigm is also very important - emblematic of the highly political celebration of entrepreneurial initiative that was happening in consort with the ascendancy of neo-liberal governments around the world. The significance of these market relationships and their symbolic importance reflect particular manifestations of the cosmopolitan ideal so important to art worlds and the contemporary city. Montréal manifests and generates a particular and measured version of this cosmopolitan ideal conceived of as an “intellectual and aesthetic stance of openness toward divergent cultural experiences, a search for contrasts rather than uniformity” (Hannerz, 1990, p. 239). This narrative is also a key ingredient in the inspirational lifestyle most associated with a wealthy, fashionable and globalised elite, in that the art openings in Montréal, like London,

are typically as much about participating in, and selling a local ‘versioning’ (Hebdige, 1987) of an idealized urban lifestyle as about celebrating specific art or artists. ‘Versioning’ is a process best described as part of the ‘glocal’ information loop, (R. Robertson, 1992, p. 173) where the dominant influence of international trends are played out and worked through local variants in commercial and creative practice. This ‘lifestyling’ component is part of the changing fashions in the field towards a more populist and mediatised strain to the contemporary art experience. The argument that increasing market orientation surrounding the art object and artist involves the substitution of a localised politically activist art for globalised multicultural variety and spectacle (Stallabrass, 2004; Wu, 2001) often overlooks the way in which this variety has generated and incorporated a new diversity of discourses and voices onto the economies of the cultural sphere.

### Changing Peripheral and Sullen Markets

To a large extent the travails of the arts community in Montréal parallel those endured by their colleagues in English Canada and by individuals operating in the multitude of art centers on the periphery of the hegemonic structures of the international visual art demi-monde. (Pierre Bourdieu & Haacke, 1995; Bourriaud, 2002; Moulin, 2000; Plattner, 1996; Quemin, 2006; I. Robertson, 2005; Stallabrass, 2004; Thornton, 2008; Velthuis, 2005a) The public and private sector visual arts economies in Canada operate in a difficult space that is judged by outsiders and judges itself in relation to the powerful influence of international art economies centered in New York and London. Though initial success is cultivated in ‘essentially national circles of recognition...passing from peer recognition, critical recognition, patronage by dealers and collectors and finally public acclaim.’ (A. Bowness quoted in Moody, 2005, p. 73) neither the public nor private sector of the Montréal arts economy is able to effectively sustain the careers of visual artists without additional work in the state funded art or



educational system in the form of administrative positions or teaching - conditions that are typical for those working in the artistic field. (Interviews, 2008; McRobbie, 2002; Menger, 1999). The allure of major markets bears down on the young artists, curators and dealers alike to a large part shaping career ambitions and aesthetic sensibilities with the possibilities of conferring international prestige, entry into the art cannon and large sums of money to those chosen and able to participate. Like the hegemony of Hollywood in the aesthetics and economics of film and television production, the key nodes of the art world set the benchmarks for quality and price that serve as the gold standard that everyone in the periphery is measured against. While Hollywood operates on economies of scale and the power of a deep-pocketed marketing juggernaut, the art centers operate on economies of prestige and an equally impressive and well-resourced marketing and public relations network.

The globalization and market domination of the international art scene can be understood on similar terms to other modes of post-industrial, corporate global power and concentration in key market centers of the world (see Sassen, 1994). The global art market centered in London and New York and its meteoric rise in the hands of private sector investors and speculators, in and through prestigious art fairs in Europe and the USA, commercial galleries and auction houses, challenges the authority of state art bureaucracies and institutions (Stallabrass, 2004). Given the intimate relationship between the location of influential and important art markets and global financial centers Montréal does not fare well. Simply on the basis of the 2001 GDP per capita for metropolitan areas with over 2 million habitants Montréal ranks 44<sup>th</sup>, behind Toronto's 30th place and of course the preeminent places held by the key nodal points of the global economy - Tokyo, New York, Chicago, Paris and London. (OECD, 2004). Sitting uncomfortably beneath the shadow of Toronto's ascendancy, players in Montréal's

visual art world, in particular those in the primary art market community, were eagerly looking for strategies, resources and alliances that would get their art, artists, galleries, institutions and city noticed internationally and generate the interest that they believe their part of the scene deserves.

In the context of the heated media interest and financial speculation in contemporary art, the situation in Montréal's primary market in 2007 remained slow moving, cautious and conservative. The idea of a sullen market became a recurring theme in my discussions with players, particularly in face of attention garnered by Toronto and Vancouver. There was a sense of frustration between the perceived talent and potential of the city's art and artists and the difficulty in generating international recognition and spurring local demand. The imbalance between the city's place as an important regional visual arts center and issues of visual art sales and international reputation was rationalized and explained through a complex mix of 'sociological realities', government inaction and artistic independence from the political and economic.

The emergence of this narrative of sullen markets was always situated in contrast to another more encompassing one that involved a fun and pleasant European flavored, bilingual, multicultural and cosmopolitan city – the financial and economic center of French North America. This inspirational narrative built in the spirit of North American Horatio Alger stories - of moving from humble origins to acclaim and success - is shaped in part by Montréal's 'lack of true 'global city' status in economic terms and relative lack of extremes of wealth and poverty and the sense of possibility that comes out of 'the low cost of living and low rates of crime that puts Montréal in an advantageous 'quality of life' situation when compared to say, New York or Los Angeles, London or Paris' (Germain & Rose, 2000, p. 5)

This is a particularly Montréal version of civic pride - a chauvinism that operates as an important popular narrative and a tenet of municipal cultural and economic policy. It also serves as the background for ambitions to 'cultural capital' status, something the city stakes a claim to through past achievements like the International Exposition of 1967 (EXPO 67) and through the contemporary international recognition of certain sectors of the creative economy such as popular music, film, outdoor festivals and the circus arts. The city may have a vibrant history of cultural activity when compared to other Canadian cities but this status and the ensuing competition for tourist and investment dollars is harder to sustain in face of the challenge posed by other major economic and cultural centers in the Americas and the rest of the world.

What became clear from the interviews was that what many of the respondents thought should have been a period of growth in local markets and international profile for local players within the community, particularly in the primary commercial sector, failed to materialize. The mediating and gatekeeping role they perform between the cultural and financial elite of the city and the artists/producers in the field places them in a strategically important position to take advantage of the shifting relationships between the state, artist run and private cultural sectors. They are also well positioned to take advantage of the growing wealth and aesthetic modes of consumption of Montréal's burgeoning nouveaux bourgeoisies. Yet those I talked to had to temper their optimism concerning these possibilities with the problems that beset 'culture and commerce' in the visual arts in Montréal.

## The Significance of Practice

For those operating in the primary art market and for commercial gallery owners in particular, the act of doing business involves calculations that are entangled in the discourses and practices specific to this art world and extends out to the network of relations within the cultural economy of the city of Montréal and the visual art field's role as a political instrument and the object of policy and programs at the various levels of government. Understanding and negotiating these complexities involves moving through specialized socio-technical networks (Barry & Slater, 2005; M. Callon, 1998) that operate on the basis of specific rules and roles that format behavior (Abolafia, 1996) and forms of expert technical knowledge (Pierre Bourdieu, 1993, 1996; Foucault, 1973) that involve visual art, history, marketing and politics. These actors are both technocrats and 'enterprising individuals' (Rose, 1999) who operate in a specialized sector that regularly disrupts attempts at national boundedness. Given that "the integrity of national territory is often thought to depend on the uniformity of legal and technological regimes *not* marked by the contaminations of the international and the foreign" (Barry, 2001, p. 43), recent shifts in the associations created by the accelerated mingling of artists in art worlds further challenges linear notions of territoriality in such an internationally linked network. The negotiations, calculations, alliances and conflicts between players competing over scarce symbolic and monetary resources leave behind what Keith describes as the "cultural traces of thinking about the cosmopolitan..." (Keith, 2005, p. 24) – traces that can be found in the performance and associations between actors in Montréal's art world and their role in curating the city. The politics of aesthetic canonization, gatekeeping and careers in Québec's contemporary art world - responsible for the creation of national symbols, institutional power and valuable labor markets - is dominated by these actors and the institutions they control that are based primarily in Montréal. Definitions over identity constructs like Québécois, the struggle of

sustaining a small business in a cultural sector dominated by a grant based economy and the challenges of producing cultural product on the periphery of international hegemonies come together in the practice of actors in Montréal's primary art market.

The urban renewal projects and funding initiatives central to improving amenities and economic performance that come out of this internationalist drive also become representative of the way Montréal and its cultural actors, like any other major city, 'structures narratives of economic globalization ... and structures of power.' (Keith, 2005, p. 12) In Montréal, this urbane and cosmopolitan discourse, increasingly skeptical of essentialist Québécois nationalist politics, serves the role of colloquial reference point for French, English and Allophone speaking citizens. By extension, for those operating in the cultural economy this is linked to the re-iteration of the untapped and undiscovered talent and skill of local artists and artisans who have yet to receive the recognition they deserve. Success in other fields such as music, film or outdoor festivals reverberate across the cultural economy as a whole acting as points of reference as well as inspiration that percolates through the field.

Much of the modern development of the art field in Québec concerns its generative role in the national project wherein "nationalism is about entry to, participation in, identification with, a literate high culture which is co-extensive with an entire political unit and its total populations, and which must be of this kind if it is to be compatible with the kind of division of labor, the type or mode of production, on which this society is based." (Gellner, 1983, p. 95) In the interviews and local literature the framing devices for discussion about contemporary artistic production and promotion moves between a heightened cosmopolitanism that is typical of the international character and particular hegemonies of contemporary art networks and the "situated awareness" (Stark, 2009, p. 125) of localized

manifestations of art business practice, knowledge and the politics of Québec. Mediators in the visual arts field and commercial gallery owners in particular, operate in the discursive space between history and innovative possibility. However the technologies at their disposal, used to generate agency or ‘agencements’ (Michel Callon, 2008), ultimately concern strategic maneuvers within dominant and relatively well established discourses and institutional networks associated with the local art world and framed by the ‘structural and structuring tensions that constitute the Québec collectivity’ (J. Létourneau, 2004, p. 32) that are part of the sociological and political history of the province.

The liberal cosmopolitan elite that I talked to, who populate the city’s art world, are both present in the nationalist struggle as well as continually belittling its importance. The exercise of branding an image of Montréal as a dynamic and unique French speaking Euro-american city now overshadows much of the old nationalist discourse in the mediascape of municipal politics, but the relationship between politics and the art field players refers directly to Bourdieuan terms of pure gaze and autonomy (Pierre Bourdieu, 1993, p. 264). This involves avoiding the profane realm of Canadian and Québécois constitutional, linguistic and identity politics, particularly in the case of operators in the commercial ends of the field. At the same time the heightened concern over national identity in Québec is now framed within a new conception of a post-911 orientalist strain of a domestic politics that draws too much of its inspiration from the protectionist debates emanating from continental Europe. The tendency to frame these debates around identity and immigration within a Huntington style paradigm of clashing civilizations (Huntington, 1993), in the context of debates surrounding ‘reasonable accommodation’ and secularism, was happening within a growing shift towards a Québécois variant of a neo-liberal market and consumer orientation involving growing and moneyed

middle, and particularly, a burgeoning creative class (Richard Florida, Stolarick, & Musante, 2005; Vaillancourt, Lemay, & Vaillancourt, 2007).

For many actors in the primary market, particularly those outside of the commercial sector, the changes that were unfolding in part through the incursion of a free market orientation within the cultural sphere represented a significant shift and re-organization of the priorities established by the Quiet Revolution in the 1960's. These concerns were always framed by the knowledge that the scale, peripheral status and regional character and political utility of the visual art field necessitated a dependence on state funding and validation. Yet the need to undo the condition of 'sullen market' necessitated a fresh approach that involved both structural and substantive changes in the primary market that would be in keeping with the ambitions of actors in the field. These post-industrial realignments between public and private sector interests involve important changes in evaluative and labor market practices. These practices are as much about global flows as local forms of cultural fatigue that play an important role in Québec's national and Montréal's civic building exercise and the engineering of a cosmopolitan and multicultural creative economy.

### Plan of the Thesis

This project is about processes rather than a thorough survey of Montréal's primary art world. At its core it is an attempt to understand the way in which power and nation are constituted and operationalized in a fractured and ethnically complex specialized sector of the cultural economy. The analysis situates what I broadly define as entrepreneurs (within both the private or public sectors) in the Schumpeterian sense of mediator who takes it upon him/herself to come up with new combinations to advance their careers or business interests.

They do this through the application of a ‘calculative agency’ in the hopes that the ensuing conversions translate into a combination of increased financial, labor, and symbolic capital. They are actors operating in the primary art market as a specialist group of cultural intermediaries whose work is built around strategic negotiations and calculations performed through various marketing functions. These negotiations and calculations are situated in the overlapping discourses concerning the economies of the visual arts, the cultural economy of the city of Montréal, and the future of the Québécois nation. A key concern throughout the thesis is how this nexus of the creative economy, the city and the nation state come together to shape forums for different kinds of active and plural participation. In this sense the city’s art world is one site where the idea of cosmopolitan and multicultural citizenship is operationalized through the performance and competition between actors in a specialized market.

Unlike Plattner’s ethnography of the art world in St-Louis, Missouri (Plattner, 1996), this ethnography of art markets on the periphery focuses primarily on the operation of a small and specialized sub-sector within Montréal’s art and cultural scene. My initial hypothesis assumed a conscious and deliberate connection between the art market and Québec’s cultural ‘dilemma’. These hypothetical linkages have been tempered by the fieldwork and analysis - important relationships and correlations between the political history of the province and mechanics of the visual arts community exist but within a far more complex and nuanced environment than I had assumed.

Small business practice and niche market making in such an ecology affirms the fact that markets and market making are a highly localized and social practice (see Braudel, 2002 [1982]) with geographically particular characteristics. The research is informed by extensive



vocational experience in the city's art and cultural scene as well as fieldwork in the form of interviews and observational data that were collected between November 2006 and June 2007. This was also a period of intense public debate in the province, involving a provincial general election campaign and an accompanying, extremely high profile and mediatized public consultation on the issue of 'reasonable accommodation' by the provincial government in relation to minority rights and national identity. The relevance of these debates and the issues they raised in the public sphere inform this discussion about art and culture, mediation and power.

The research project draws on the work of Bourdieu and Callon and is situated within the larger context of debates concerning culture and economy and the field of economic sociology and the imbrication of cultural and economic life. The second chapter provides an explanation of the theoretical underpinnings used to make sense of the assemblages in the substantive sections of the thesis. The work of Bourdieu and Callon is employed to understand the particular mechanics and economics of the artistic field and the competition over scarce monetary and symbolic resources that generate value in the creative economy. The implication of these market relationships is that they are also fundamentally political relationships. It is the work of these two theorists that best helps us translate the importance of these economically banal mechanisms particular to Montréal's cultural economy into components of and sites for the larger political field and battles over 'distinction', money and power through which citizenship and belonging are operationalized.

The development of the visual arts field is conceived of as an element in the development of the city and the process of urban branding but most importantly this process generates "the rhetorics...and the practices...that render comprehensible the social and economic spaces of

the city.” (Keith, 2005, pp. 114-115) The focus on the characteristics of material and symbolic capital accumulation specific to the economies of the cultural field through the practice of individuals is what is so useful in Bourdieu’s theory of cultural practice and power. I have chosen to focus on the historical and performative nature of field theory and the manner in which this approach is important to an understanding of the way power and values are exercised and reproduced in this sector of the cultural economy. Problems arise with Bourdieu’s work particularly in relation to habitus and field. Here his "tendency to emphasize the correspondence between social structures and mental structures presents practice as the outcome of the relations between habitus and objective conditions, rather than the outcome of negotiated relations between variously disposed individuals." (Bottero, 2010, p. 14)

Bourdieu's tendency to assume outcomes and not account for much of the often banal detail that constitutes competitive economic practices between individuals has led to an under theorisation of agency, social change and revolution in his formidable body of work (Bottero, 2010; Bottero & Crossley, 2011; Crossley, 2001). Though different art worlds share many of the same characteristics, like the play between instrumental and substantive modes of reasoning that are embodied in the differences between public and commercial art systems (a formative characteristic of Québécois and Canadian art worlds) for example, the need to understand culture and economy as things that people do and also actively create and change necessitates a more subtle methodology for understanding the production and reproduction of social action and relationships. Actor Network Theory and Callon’s work in particular, provides a methodological framework that can account for the strategic calculation involved in the creation and reproduction of markets and cultural activity. Problems arise with an ANT and particularly a Callonian approach because it too often disregards the overriding cultural and contextual frames that are constructed and operate through cultural and economic action. Callon's view of culture as a 'false explanation rather than a traceable assemblage' does not

effectively account for the ways in which 'the cultural' is constructed through socio technical networks of actors along with the values and meanings which become institutionalised as rules that govern action. (Entwistle & Slater, 2013, pp. 5-6) Though purists in each theoretical camp may disapprove of the approach taken here, the discussion stresses the common threads between field and network theory and resolves around a discussion of the fundamentally localized and political character of cultural mediation and entrepreneurship in Montréal as a type of 'socio-technological' network (Barry & Slater, 2005; M. Callon, 1998; Mitchell, 2005). The emphasis on the performative also concerns what Bourdieu identifies as the effects of the 'structuring structure' of social relationships and technologies that are both a consequence of and continually influenced by changes in the city and its history. The effects of history, geography and precedence shape the character and quality of the competition over scarce resources, be they symbolic or tangible, financial or aesthetic through tools like marketing and professional standards, government policy and pricing rules that reproduce, legitimate and frame market action.

The methodological principles implicit in Bourdieu's field theory and central to Callon's network approach guide the overall research project and the particularities of the fieldwork. Chapter three opens up the discussion around methodology and the ethnographic process, highlighting research strategies employed and in particular the challenges involved in doing research on elites who operate in intimate regional contexts. The emphasis is on the issue of insider research, ethnographic distance and 'appartenance' in face of the specter of Québécois essentialism. The conflict between outsider status in the art field and the process of interviewing elite cultural operators, most of whom are members of the dominant majority, is framed within the context of the dilemma over the unresolved status of 'Québécois' and its implications for ethnographic research.

It is Montréal's complicated and dynamic cultural and political history that has played a key role in shaping practice within the cultural sphere. In chapter 4, I explore the relevant historical and political background that frames the visual arts field in the city and province. This is part of a process that Bourdieu describes as 'double historicization', 'the reconstruction both of the space of possible positions ...in relation to which the historical given (text, document, image, etc) to be interpreted is elaborated, and of the space of possibles in relation to which one interprets it' (Pierre Bourdieu, 1996, p. 309) . The first half of this process, of uncovering what is concealed in the 'cultural arbitrary of a tradition and history', highlights and explores many of the traits unique to the cultural economy that come out of the historically contingent evolution of the artistic field. The second part of this process, involving the self-referential and reflexive understanding of historicization through the interpretive and analytical process, is explored through the focus on methodology in Chapter 3.

The substantive portion of the research project is broken into four broad sections that begin with an examination of Montreal's history and move onto key aspects of provincial and municipal cultural policy before taking a close look at strategies employed by mediators in the field who together generate the visual arts field in the city. Chapter 4 draws a cursory map of the built political and philosophical geography of the visual arts field in the city. In Montréal the geographies of the primary art market concern political maps and discursive spaces tied to linguistic allegiances and the changing economies between state bureaucracy and private sector development. This occurs in the context of a focused state building enterprise and the shifting boundaries of an ongoing linguistic, cultural and economic nationalism.

The primary art market has a physical presence that is distributed through different neighborhoods serving specific niche markets which operate in relation to changes in income and commercial real estate values and state based community gallery initiatives in the city. The complex network of state institutions and support for most levels of the cultural sector is linked to the development of French corporatist and Keynesian inspired cultural policies. The importance of the key institutions and jobs that make up the visual arts sector at the provincial and municipal level in the city reiterates the importance of the artist and the visual arts sector to the emancipation of the French majority in the struggle that led up to and included the Quiet Revolution in Québec in the 1960's. This involves the role of government in generating the actants that 'return artworks [and artists] to history through a mediating process that 'transforms autonomous artworks back into illustrations – “an illustration whose value is not contained within itself but is extrinsic, attached to it by a historical narrative”.(Groys, 2008, p. 47) This functionalist role of the cultural mediator and the importance of the Réfus Globale and its artists come together in generating a domestic artistic canon and an art historical discourse that operates alongside the creation of a complex state and artist led cultural infrastructure situated within a very particular mode of 'melancholic nationalism' (Maclure, 2003).

In the context of the field research these historical developments play an ongoing role in framing a common understanding of the visual art field in the province. For most of the interview subjects the narrative of the Quiet Revolution and the dilemma of Québécois melancholia were assumed points of reference in our discussions and continued to resonate through their understanding, explanations and activity in the artistic field. As Bourdieu points out, 'only social history can effectively supply the means to rediscover the historical truth in

the objectivized or incorporeal traces of history which present themselves to awareness in the guise of a universal essence'. (Pierre Bourdieu, 1996, p. 311). Through this process, a very particular and highly localised discourse has had a profound effect in shaping the distribution of economic and symbolic capital in the field in the city and province.

Following a cursory look at earlier manifestations of cultural policy in Canada and Québec, chapter 5 takes a close and selective examination of the 1992 *Notre culture, notre avenir* provincial policy document. This piece of legislation remains the most comprehensive arts focused cultural policy when compared to other interventions at the municipal or federal levels in Québec. The analysis focuses on the policy's attempt to reconcile the complex indeterminacy between linguistic and majoritarian ethno-cultural expression in the context of a growing plural and multicultural population. Québec's answer to federal multiculturalism and attempt to address cultural pluralism through a policy of 'interculturalism' is explained. Drawing from St Pierre's work on advocacy coalition frameworks and the creation of the 1992 policy (Diane Saint-Pierre, 2003), the chapter looks at the way in which the policy was designed as a function of federal/provincial constitutional politics at the time and state funded art sector stakeholder mobilization in the early 1990's in Québec. The chapter then moves on to a discussion of an 'evolutionary byproduct' of the 1992 document, *Montréal Cultural Metropolis 2005*, the city's cultural policy. This document was designed to address the goal of achieving cultural metropolis status and realign the city away from ill-defined provincial policy objectives incapable of addressing the needs of Montréal's role as the province's multicultural and artistic center in a post-sovereignist and neo-liberal political environment.

Chapter 6 focuses on commercial gallery owners operating in the primary art market in the city and their work as mediators acting between producers and consumers and the strategies they employ to cultivate sales and status in a competitive yet slow moving market. The highly entangled, social character of market activity in this sector of the cultural economy is shaped by ‘the strength of weak ties’ (Granovetter, 1973, 1985) and the ‘rules and roles’ (Abolafia, 1996) that format activity. Drawing entirely from the interview material, this account of the inter-relation of cultural and economic activity is partial and selective and affirms how micro-social activity sets up the repetitive and taken for granted interactions that constitute larger concepts like culture and economics (Collins, 1981). The details involved in the complex relationship between specialized business practice and the particular local conditions that shape that practice reveal the ‘socio-technical networks’ that in turn shape and are necessary for entrepreneurial activity and cultural mediation to take place in the primary market in Montréal.

The implications of the findings are that the terms for entry, participation and sustainability in the field, played out through the 4p’s of the marketing matrix involve a complex sensitivity to local political and social imperative that have to be brought into the calculative frame of entrepreneurial activity and innovation. The focus in this context is not on transactions based exchanges – ‘one time exchanges of value between two parties that have no prior or subsequent interaction’ – but the cultivation of longer term relationships, “...where there is an expectation of continuing exchanges and future interactions between the two parties” (Chong, 2008, p. 118). Commercial art sales remain a conservative affair that refract the reality of the city’s small pool of buyers and the limited means of a population only recently turned to home ownership within the overarching history of the French and English cultural divide. The centrality of cultural industry and production to Montréal’s economy and

cosmopolitan image, and yet its particular substantive relationship to nation building and state enterprise, plays out in the discussion with gallery owners who yearn for a mechanism to extend their market and reach beyond the confines of the city and province.

Chapter 7 explores processes of urban brand building through the concept of versioning practices and the development of art based ‘urban propaganda projects’ (Boyle, 1997) in the form of local Biennales and Triennials as city based forms of socio-technical agencements. These events are important in bringing the much-needed attention to the sullen primary market and improving Montréal’s profile as visual arts center. An art gathering of this kind is a type of event that “advertises itself with greater or lesser measures of a utopian, multicultural and cosmopolitan rhetoric” (Sloan, 2001, p. 126) important to both the positioning of the artistic field and the city. These events also reflect the increasing privatization of the visual arts sector through the more important involvement of commercial primary market art actors. The outcome of these processes also generates the ‘trickle down effects’ that operate in a complex interface between artists, the local cultural economy and international and local media attention so important for urban brand building, sectorial development and civic boosterism.

The disjuncture between the mechanics of recognition within the local network and the ambitions of actors in the field are also examined through a detailed look at the positioning and handling of one artist by stakeholders in the local art world and mainstream media space. Issues of assimilation and belonging reveal the essentialist clichés of both Québécois and Canadian identity politics and the manner in which these issues frame and render a ‘performative’ conception and vision of Québécois or Canadian within the field and the cosmopolitan face of Montreal. In the context of shifting governance structures primary



market actors are in a strategic position to respond to ‘multicultural drift’ and ‘curate’ a multicultural reality that is a product of the shifting demographics of the city of Montréal and a new generation of ethnic and racially diverse young people entering the work force. The process that Stuart Hall describes as the often hybrid identity and social formations that are a consequence of how different communities that now compose the nation actually interact on the ground, (Hall, 2000, p. 233) raises the volatile link between domestic multicultures, more dynamic markets and the international promotion of the city. At the same time these movements have been happening alongside more localised modes of soft, arms length bureaucracy in managing Montreal’s cultural economy and involvement in promoting the visual arts sector internationally. The multicultural and neo-liberal turn in governance generates what Keith describes as the crisis of bureaucratic rationality that “stems from the relationship between cultural change and systems through which difference is regulated”. (Keith, 2005, p. 58) This is a particularly metropolitan phenomena in Québec with deep implications for nationalist politics in the Province. In the context of the primary art market it represents an important challenge to traditional evaluative frameworks in the field and to the make up of the gatekeepers responsible for the field's maintenance.

## Chapter 2

### **Bourdieu, ANT and the creative economy**

*...a field occupied by objects and practices with minimal use value, indeed in the sub-field of art with a positive rejection of use value, is a field in which par excellence the struggle is governed by a pure logic of difference or distinction, a pure logic of positionality...*  
(Garnham & Williams, 1980, p. 217)

#### Introduction

The substantive portions of the analysis in Markets and Mediators makes use of theory drawn from economic and political sociology, cultural studies and cultural geography to explain the mechanics and politics of the primary art market and its responsibility in maintaining a sense of culture and identity in the city of Montréal. The discussion in this chapter links field and network dynamics, cultural mediation and marketing to localised forms of ‘complex cultural knowledge’ (Don Slater, 2002, p. 69) necessary for successful participation in the field. This complex cultural knowledge is also a highly politicized discourse that plays itself out through the performance of actors operating in Montréal’s slow moving yet competitive marketplace. The strategies and tactics of those operating in the field provide us with insights into how a local cultural economy operates and how urban economic and cultural development happen but also demonstrates how issues of citizenship and inclusion are generated through the discourse and performance of the multicultural and cosmopolitan.

From hiring to curatorial practices, the narratives of citizenship and multicultural drift are enacted and serve as a point of reference for the community at large. The province of Québec or the city of Montréal do not hold a particular monopoly on these complex social dynamics but Montréal’s visual art field, given its size, its peripheral international status and important role in the nation building exercise, is a key site where the tensions that arise from changing

evaluative frameworks and governance landscapes are played out. Yet the protectionism built into the labor market, curatorial dynamics and policy unfold with a keen sensitivity to practices that demonstrate the local field's currency in keeping in step with global fashions by generating topical narratives that play through the cultural economy at the all important municipal level.

The actors who participated in the study are all cultural mediators within the private or public sectors of the city who operate within the shifting horizons of local cultural and economic activity that is increasingly situated in a metropolitan and international rather than provincial or national frame. The primary market gallery owners, curators in state contemporary art museums or other mediators who have a hand in the primary market identified themselves as actors in a specialized field whose success was twinned to the promotion and building of the city of Montréal brand as an important regional and international cultural center. The theoretical link between market behavior and the internal logic of the local field situates these economic arrangements and mechanisms within contested political and national frameworks that play out in the context of a city based metropolitan cultural development.

The analysis employs the work of Bourdieu and Callon, using the former's theory of the artistic field and symbolic capital accumulation and the latter's work on markets, marketing and socio-technical networks to guide the research project and unravel the politics of market behavior in the field. Pierre Bourdieu's work provides a structural understanding as well as a vocabulary for explaining the competition over real and symbolic resources particular to Montréal's art world and the actors who operate in it. The tendency of Bourdieu's field theory to stress generalized structural formations and a macro perspective becomes problematic when trying to use his theory of cultural production to account for regional differences and

particularities. There is an important analytic distinction to be drawn between the 'generic mechanisms' that produce art worlds across the globe and 'specific forms' an art world assumes in a given context. (see Wacquant, 2008, p. 2) The particularities of Montréal's art world concerns the unique character and localized operation of actors in a competitive market place. It is Callon's work on the detailed functioning of markets and economies that offers the most useful theoretical tools to help make sense of the calculation and deliberation central to the competitive process and their resulting formation and the 'technologies' that enable that process. What functions fundamentally as a methodology sets the ground for the performative and structuring action of market making through socio-technical networks and the strategies and framings involved in the process of calculation. The section resolves around a discussion that attempts to reconcile the differences between Callon's network based approach and Bourdieu's field theory.

Trying to understand the management and operation of the primary market in Montréal's art world is about the interrelation and inseparability between what individuals do and the context within which they do it. What would have once been typically placed within a structure/agency dichotomy is now best explored through theoretical approaches that attempt to understand social process as complex assemblages of performed and embodied action, where as Latour suggests the social "...doesn't designate a domain of reality or some particular item, but rather is the name of the name of a movement, a displacement, a transformation, a translation, an enrollment... a type of momentary association which is characterized by the way it gathers together into new shapes." (Latour, 2005, pp. 64-65) The artistic field is a porous 'black box' that is an aggregate of these 'associations' between mediators and intermediaries through the shared and varied use and application of specific histories, resources and technologies. Moving through an art world and trying to explain its operation

involves being witness to the re-creation and re-production of a specialized field of knowledge and the network of relationships between actors and actants that make up that field. The act of doing gallery owning, curating or art criticism also generates and creates that city's art world. The interrelation of these mediating and gate keeping functions in the production of the art world is best understood through field and network theories that situate these relationships and their operation as elemental to the workings of a creative economy.

The discussions concerning the operation of Montréal's primary art market raised the question of the role of a creative economy in the shaping and branding of a metropolitan region and the art world's role in this process—why are these kinds of activities so important for the modern city? The process of crafting 'cosmopolitan' centers that respond to the shift towards 'economies of signs and space' (Lash & Urry, 1994) and an emphasis on consumer experiences and services, what Beck describes as cosmopolitanism as commodity (Beck, 2006, p. 41), is conceived of through the extended role and influence of the creative economy. The phenomenon of creating 'cultural capitals' is an inevitable byproduct of this, and competition over scarce resources and the creation of "cultural quarters is consequently one of the spatial forms through which the twenty-first-century city reconfigures the conventional hierarchical relationship between city, region and nation state." (Keith, 2005, p. 124) As my research data shows, commercial art practice remains deeply entangled in the discourse concerning the city and by extension, other larger jurisdictions that surround it - which all have an important role in shaping the contours of the local market. One of the outcomes of the play between market activity, policy and political will in Montréal involves the engineering of a particular vision of the cosmopolitan and the multicultural that is played out from the ground up, through consumer demand and gatekeepers directly serving the public, as well as from the top down, through policy and program decisions at the various levels of government.

The second half of this chapter will explore the theoretical background I am using to understand this relationship between the operation of the primary art market and the economic and political significance of the culture industries and creative economy to the city of Montréal. The chapter will conclude around a discussion of the ways in which these relationships have significant real and symbolic effects in fostering vibrant, plural forms of participation across a broad range of market activity as well as within the arts and culture sector.

### Studies in 'Art Worlds'

Within the sociological tradition the study of the networks and communities that create art and its value involves a general disregard for the history of aesthetics and the humanist tradition (Inglis, 2005). Though the importance of art's role "...to stimulate thinking in a way that exceeds verbal and conceptual comprehension" (Luhmann, 2000, p. 141) remains indisputable, the sociological approach does not simply accept 'Kantian transcendence' or the qualities of craft skill as the sole arbiter of value. Instead the value attributed to art is understood as generated through a "... network of relationships surrounding particular artworks in specific interactive settings...premiered on the idea that the nature of the art object is a function of the social-relational matrix in which it is embedded [and that] it has no intrinsic nature, independent of the relational context." ( Gell, 1998p7-8) The attribution of value to the art object relies on the mediation of its trajectory and the relative importance and operation of, and inter-relationships between, actors and institutions that format that mediation and in turn, the larger cultural field. For those in the primary visual arts market, like all individuals operating in a competitive environment, this relational setting is crucial since success in the field is contingent on effective calculation of the array of associations

linked to the object which may not necessarily be intrinsic to that art object. The intangible, transcendental potentiality that we bestow upon works of art is simply an applied and enabling attribute in a tradition of engineering the significance and value tied to the artwork, artist and its handlers.

The ‘conspicuous consumption’ by a lay public of art objects parallels the growth and dominance of market society itself. Along with mercantilism, the western tradition of oil painting was, as Berger (1977) points out, a key instrument in the demonstration of wealth and power for the growing merchant classes in Italy and Holland. Five hundred years later the purchase of a painting in a commercial gallery still serves a primarily established and upwardly mobile professional and business class looking to demonstrate financial clout and ‘good taste’. The art object is typically understood to exist along a hierarchical linear progression of value where at its most banal it is about naïve craft and a trade in home decorations, then moves to exchange and speculation worth millions of dollars and at its height achieves canonization and status as a priceless object imbued with political, historical, aesthetic and transcendent importance.

The reductionism of art worlds as simply sites for cultural domination and reproduction overlooks the process through which art worlds produce those effects in and through the often mundane work of individuals. A syncretic, ethnographic approach to art markets is far less common than theoretical and political economy studies. Important works dealing with the western visual arts economies from an ethnographic or economic sociology perspective include Becker’s *Art Worlds* (H. Becker, 1984), Bourdieu’s *The Field of Cultural Production* (Pierre Bourdieu, 1993) and Raymond Williams’s *Culture* (R. Williams, 1981) which attempt to outline the mechanics and operation of art systems from a structural and historical

perspective. An interesting text that shares with this research project's focus on art markets on the periphery of international art centers is Plattner's study of the art community in St-Louis, Missouri (Plattner, 1996). This ethnography attempts to explain the interrelation between artists, curators, galleries and museums through interviews and observation of the players and the problems they face with economic and symbolic status and recognition in face of New York City's North American dominance.

The tendency of sociological and ethnographic research into the commerce of art worlds to gravitate to the geographic centers of this economy is itself a testament to the hegemonic forces at play. Important examples include Whyte's (White, 1965) historical analysis of shifts in the French art system at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century which develops an important thesis about the birth of the 'dealer critic system' and the changing dynamic between private and public sector interests in the visual arts sphere through the waning power of state art academies in 19<sup>th</sup> century Paris and the Paris Salon. Also Fyfe (Fyfe, 1986) offers an analysis of parallel institutional shifts from state patronage to bourgeois art market in the British context through the changing role of the Royal Academy. In both instances these changes represented a new emphasis on individual canvases as part of a body of work as opposed to one of masterpieces endorsed by the state and an accompanying focus on the "artist as creative subject" (Fyfe, 1986, p. 28) – a tenet of the contemporary conception of the artist as author.

DiMaggio's (DiMaggio, 1987) historical analysis of the links between urban elites and art institutions at the turn of the century Boston remains surprisingly consistent with recent research into art patronage and wealth at major institutions in New York and London as explored in the work of Wu (Wu, 2001) and more generally in Stalabrass (Stalabrass, 1999,



2004). There is also a large body of work from French writers concerning art market dynamics, including Moulin's study of the post war market in France (Moulin, 1987) and art markets and globalization (Moulin, 2000) (Quemin, 2006) as well as Menger's (Menger, 1999) work on artistic labor markets and careers and the post-Bourdieuian 'pragmatic sociology' of Heinich (Heinich, 1998, 2001, 2007, 2012). Velthuis' (Velthuis, 2005b) recent work offers one of the most interesting examinations of art gallery dynamic from an ethnographic perspective with a particular focus on New York and Dutch commercial galleries. Sarah Thornton's recent contribution (Thornton, 2008) on the international dimension of the contemporary art network, like many mass market works on art worlds, such as Mason's (2005) account of collusion between the auction houses Christies and Sothebys in the 1990's, provides fascinating ethnographic and interview based accounts of the machinations of the rarefied echelons of this stratified network. As opposed to particular concerns over aesthetics, artistic labor or political discourse per se, all of these accounts share a common concern in dealing with art worlds as sites for competitive plays between different political and economic interests that act as a 'structuring structure' formatting artistic practice, institutions and markets.

In Québec, since the 1980's, there has been a proliferation of sociological research concerning the local art world. The work of Marcel Fournier (Fournier, 1986, 2001; Fournier & Roy-Valex, 2002 ) and Guy Belleavance (G. Bellavance & Fournier, 1992) particularly his edited collection *Monde et réseaux de l'art* (2000b), are key works that explore the linkages between Québec national formation and identity construction and growth and developments in the cultural sphere, particularly in the visual arts sector. The themes of center vs periphery and the cosmopolitan ambition of the arts community are explored within the historical continuity of the Quiet Revolution. Like the political economy and art historical work of Coutoure

(1988) and Coutoure and Lemerise (1992), the evolution of the arts in Québec are celebrated as the symbolic and institutional expression of the coming to power of the French-Canadian majority. This body of work has entrenched a narrative of local art production and a Québécois identity/national construction as the normative discourse and natural outcome of the Québécois 'Automatistes' movement and their work in the creation of the Réfus globale. Coming uniquely from the francophone side of the linguistic divide, this body of work reiterates the strong links between art and nation through the mechanics of cultural mobilization, demographic power and legislation.

The importance of these works has been their role in the historical documentation of the recent past and their function in shaping the normative discourse of our understanding of the Québécois cultural field and, like the curating process itself, situating, not simply art or artists, but an artistic field within a history (Groys, 2008, p. 47). In Québec this has involved a narrative that is distinct from both the Anglo-American cultural revolution of the 1960's and the student protest movement going on in France in 1968. Nevertheless, the tension between a primarily Montréal based cosmopolitanism and a linguistic and ethnically driven parochialism emerges as a common thread in much of this work as a normative and analytic concern. It remains an ongoing focus in more recent work on Montréal and its politico-cultural development in the context of the pragmatic concerns for enabling city building and creative economies and the ensuing ancillary tasks of urban marketing and development. These are now hot topics in the fields of urban and economic geography as well as in the sociology of cities and urban life.

## The Field of Cultural Production: Bourdieu and Economics of Cultural Practice

Pierre Bourdieu's work on the mechanics of cultural economies and symbolic power and Michel Callon's ANT approach to market creation and calculation represent distinct epistemological and ontological frameworks. However the methodological principles that are the core of ANT and have guided Bourdieu's research practice lead to compatible and overlapping research programs. They serve to clarify practices and interrelationships between specialized fields of market activity and the broader linkages to political, social and economic networks that are the constitutive forces of the field itself. This approach presents an effective way of identifying the unique properties of specialized networks without subsuming them into an amorphous cauldron of effects. Between the work of Callon and Latour, and the work of Bourdieu there is a fundamental understanding of the central importance of the 'competitive' and 'performative' aspect of social activity. The social for Bourdieu is a multitude of individuals operating in specialized fields "...[who] constitute, realize, modify and transform through their activity..." (Pierre Bourdieu, Chamboredon, Passeron, & Kraus, 1991 [1972], p. xx1). The fact that 'nothing social exists outside the actions of the subjects' (Ibid) implies more than the 'phenomenological' relationships between different subjectivities. For Bourdieu what is of central importance are the 'objective relationships' that are a product of social conditions and positions:

Social relations cannot be reduced to relationships between subjectivities driven by intentions and motivations because they are established between social conditions and positions and therefore have more reality than the subjects whom they link. (Ibid p.18)

This does not necessarily assume a writing-out of subjective reality but asserts the primacy and strength of collective forces in shaping individual subjectivities<sup>2</sup>. More importantly he

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<sup>2</sup> It is very much in the sense that the habitus is an 'embodied history'. Bourdieu's work 'recalls' Foucault's ideas of bodily governance and control. But for Bourdieu, Foucault's approach "refuses to look outside the

positions the individualized lived, performed and material aspects of these relationships as the most effective means for understanding the social writ large as a series of sometimes distinct and overlapping practices.

A core element of Bourdieu's thesis is the idea that issues of distinction and status are enacted and embodied in appearance, language, and the behavior of individuals competing for scarce symbolic resources that operate in tandem and parallel to traditionally conceived modes of exchange built around markets for goods and services. Fields of cultural production, such as the market for visual art, theatre or literature are the pre-eminent sites for these battles over symbolic and tangible resources. Bourdieu attempts to understand differentials of power through the competitive and performative struggles of individuals within different fields of specialized activity. Bourdieu's work on the field of cultural production and his appropriation of the vocabulary of economics to understand the constitution of cultural power provides an important movement towards conflating the economy culture divide through an understanding and analysis of practice. His "...theoretical project of understanding [both] the relationship between the historical pattern of social relations (structure) and the mundane social interactions by real people (agency)..." (Jenkins, 2002, p. 98) sets up a more subtle and complex map of the enactment (lived experience) of social relations to culture and its production than the 'reified' and static model suggested by the Frankfurt School (see for example Adorno, 1991). The study of the operations behind art and culture is as Bourdieu points out, "vulgar because it transgresses the sacred boundary which distinguishes the pure reign of art and culture from the lower region of the social and of politics, a distinction which is the very source of the effects of symbolic domination exerted by or in the name of culture." (Pierre Bourdieu, 1984 [1979], p. 511)

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'field of discourse' for the explanatory principle of each of the discourses in the field". (Pierre Bourdieu, 1993, p. 179)

The role of the cultural capital based elites that include commercial operators and other mediators in the cultural field, concerns the organization and application of modes of power in the form of a legitimate authority and opinion within the field. The control of 'doxa' or 'opinion' within a field exists between competing heterodox and orthodox interests which are made explicit in the reflexive discourse concerning dynamics of power, control and domination as actualized in the "...implicit dominance of a particular logic of practice where the symbolic system is common to all and taken for granted." (Garnham & Williams, 1980, p. 215). Where the Kabyle, with their lack of material resources, rely on the effects of communicating through direct human interaction in a context of relative shared opinion enacted through practice rather than 'explicit discourse' (Ibid), art worlds rely on equally systemic specialized 'languages' of conduct, training and knowledge as terms for participation within the field. The objective relationships that are actualized in specific material and symbolic forms of wealth and power are operationalized in ongoing battles amongst agents within the field for the claim of legitimate authority within the field itself. The condition of the field is rarely stable as new agents are always threatening established agents and the power and authority of these incumbents is continually being tested and challenged by new forces who want control of the realm of dominant and 'undisputed' authority and "...the naturalization of its own arbitrariness." (Pierre Bourdieu, 1997 [1977], p. 164) This state is doxa.

The battles for 'legitimate authority' waged within fields takes the form of the "dominant classes within the field maintaining an interest in defending the integrity of doxa or of establishing a necessarily imperfect substitute, orthodoxy" (Pierre Bourdieu, 1997 [1977]). The concept of symbolic capital is "...a disguised form of physical 'economic' capital,

produces its proper effect inasmuch, and only inasmuch as it conceals the fact that it originates in ‘material’ forms of capital which are also, in the last analysis, the source of its effects.” (Pierre Bourdieu, 1997 [1977], p. 183) The idea of power and authority within a field is tied to an individual’s ‘objective’ relation to others in the field itself, and in that sense manifests itself as ‘material’ in those relationships with other individuals in the field. Symbolic power or authority operates in a referential system, not in a vacuum, therefore ‘relations of domination are made and unmade and remade in and by the interactions between persons, and ...mediated by objective, institutionalized mechanisms, such as producing and guaranteeing the distribution of title...’ (Ibid). Cultural capital, as understood by Bourdieu, is a particular manifestation of symbolic capital, particular to but not limited to the cultural sphere. Status and prestige point to specific ‘objective positions’ within particular fields of specialized activity. A specific ‘social universe’ will have its own referents and markers for what it considers valuable in the form of outcomes, behaviors and aesthetics.

The symbolic and material manifestations of capital offer an important insight into the mechanics and organization of political power in the field that unravel through twinning of practice and discourse. Policy directives and positioning strategies of actors in the local artistic field become expressions of these ‘objective positions’ and of the aggregate influence of the collection of forces big and small, government or private sector orchestrated that operate in and attempt to shape the competitive network of relations which constitute the visual arts scene and the larger cultural economy in Montréal and in Québec. Most importantly and unlike the interactionists who ignore the ‘structural restraints of the field’, like Granovetter and Becker’s art world in particular,

...an artistic field ...is not reducible to a *population*...the sum of individual agents linked by simple relations of interaction or, more precisely, of cooperation: what is lacking, among other things, from this purely descriptive and enumerative evocation are the objective

relations which are constitutive of the structure of the field and which orient the struggle aiming to conserve or transform it. (Pierre Bourdieu, 1996, p. 205)

The role of policy, like the aggregate 'buy-in' to specific aesthetic positions or line management principles, is an important force in shaping the rules for legitimate action in the field, but it like the other 'actants' within the local network can be subject to contestation. Bourdieu's work points to the role of "organizational actors" and their relational "position takings to a space of position-takings..." (Pierre Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 14) as key sources for investigation. Yet this tendency to focus on the competition within specific objective-positions in the field occurs at the expense of minimizing the importance of how those very positions, in relation to the field at large, can change and mutate over time. For Bourdieu the structural organization of the field is largely fixed and competition over resources occurs within a largely pre-existing framework tied to capital accumulation. Yet given the complexity of the realm of art and culture and its deep ties to other social forces, individual agent's roles as mediators and the conflicts and alliances they generate, do maintain the capability of re-apportioning power within an evolving 'structuring structure' that is subject to changing organizational dynamics and politics within and without the artistic field.

Mediators operating in the primary market of the art field are in the business of generating value and meaning through their role as gatekeepers by deciding on what to choose to show and/or sell from the art created by producers in the local field. The positioning strategies they employ situate and re-purpose art and artist to the needs and demands of the local market. Entrepreneurial and curatorial possibility and innovation are framed by the localised variant of an internationally aware visual art discourse that mediators take into account in their gatekeeping responsibilities. The positioning strategies employed by mediators and key to the curatorial process involves drawing linkages to extrinsic factors in equal measure to the

intrinsic hedonic features of the artwork itself. Success in either the state, artist-run or commercial art worlds involves being sensitive to local variations in both taste and demand that make sense of and position art and artist with limited or no pedigree in the local primary market. Given the limited means of most commercial operators in terms of generating both innovative marketing strategies or extending market reach through participation in international fairs, the market remains particularly localized. Most importantly in Québec, the network of relations that establish legitimacy and distinction are framed within the particular historic and institutional dominance of the state funded visual art infrastructure. In the move from the more decorative or the more cutting edge extremes of the market, mediators are both the legitimators of the ‘disinterested critical gaze’ and the elite arbiters of local art and policy who curate the art world in the city.

The field is therefore the site for the creation of value, which is part of an extended collective activity made up of individual practices. Success in the art field and the art field’s role within the ‘gentrification game’ of ‘relations, practices and historical traces’ in Montréal concerns ‘the fragments of precedent and memory that are part of the cultural code’ (Ley, 2003, p. 2532) of the city. “This social world,” as Bourdieu points out, “has a history and, for this reason, it is the site of an internal dynamic independent of the consciousness and will of the player, a kind of conatus linked to the existence of mechanisms which tend to reproduce the structure of the objective probabilities, or, more precisely, the structure of distribution of capital and of the corresponding chances for profit (Pierre Bourdieu, 2000, p. 215). Though Bourdieu attributes too much to an unreflexive and unconscious motivation in his analysis, regional art worlds, in their role of serving a localized community, are sites that bear both the future possibility of actors within the field as well as the continuity of a geographically bounded history that is one of the key knowledge tools of the local mediator. Mediators



*employ* history, shape the local art world and in turn the city in a far more 'knowing' way, generating versions of the multicultural, parochial and cosmopolitan through the calculations they employ to further their interests. Success in monetary and symbolic terms within the local field therefore involves harnessing the performative and discursive aspects of practice as well as the knowledge base that comes out of history and policy which in turn contributes to the framing of opinion and legitimate authority within the field.

From this Bourdieuan perspective the links between sectorial practice and the urban space operates within the logic of cultural production. The relationship of the art field to the development and aspirations of the city extends the process of symbolic and economic capital accumulation out to the competitive market amongst cities for recognition and distinction through forms of urban brand building. The references to the 'Montréal Brand' in policy documents and my conversation with actors in the field was not sector specific but rather concerned the aggregation of positive endorsements in a broad range of fields that help formulate the city's distinct civic identity. The collective promotional efforts of local actors or visiting critics reiterate the fundamental role of the mediator in this context. From an amenities based, 'city as entertainment machine' (Clark et al., 2003) perspective, a positive review of a local restaurant or local band in the New York Times generates positive effects for goods and services that reverberate through the cultural economy and through the extended field of competing civic 'brands', as does Montréal's built heritage, annual music festivals or public bicycle rental scheme.

In part the significance of the visual arts field within the city's cultural economy concerns the value of this symbolic function within the sphere of cultural production that Bourdieu describes as the 'economic world reversed'. (Pierre Bourdieu, 1993, p. 29) While the field of

economics does its best to operate on terms that are devoid of the messy world of social and interpersonal behavior, the cultural field attempts to preserve an equally aloof relationship to the realm of the economic, particularly in the attribution of value in determining a hierarchy of good and bad that somehow exists outside the mechanism of a self regulating market. The reliance on arguments based on the analysis of craft skills and hedonic value mask the symbolic and social capital that exists and is instilled into the production of an artistic good. The “...field of cultural production is based on the repression of their economic and social conditions of possibility” (Pierre Bourdieu, 2005, p. 7) The economies of taste and status that drive cultural production and determine quality and value in art works are based on a ‘relational value’ which can only be understood through ‘constructing the space of positions and the space of position-takings in which they are expressed.’ (Pierre Bourdieu, 1993, p. 30) It is through “...divesting productive acts and relations of production [in the cultural sphere] of their symbolic aspect - that the various universes of symbolic production were able to assert themselves as closed and separate microcosms in which wholly symbolic, pure, disinterested actions...are carried out”. (Pierre Bourdieu, 2005, p. 7)

Even in the context of the discourse around the cultural economy, the cultural sphere attempts to cultivate a sacred space for itself protected from the vulgarities of the market. In Montréal, in particular, the role of cultural mediators in generating the appearance of ‘divestment’ from the profanity of the social and economic happens through the validation that occurs through the relational network attributed to all the parties involved – artist, art object, gallery owner, bureaucrats, buyers and critics. This relational network, even in the context of the neo-liberal shift in Québec, grounded in the strong social democratic tradition in the arts that ensures protection and financial support, is tied to the political growth and institutional expansion of the Québec state. The strategic calculations of the mediator therefore involves harvesting

endorsements and support from actors in an art field dominated by state funded institutions, periodicals and other actors only coming to terms with the increasing marketing and financial orientation and ethno cultural diversity in the cultural sphere. The negotiation by actors between the realities of the local market and the international ambitions of the field involves a process that Bourdieu describes as the capital of consecration, implying a power to consecrate objects...or people... and hence of giving them value, and of making profits from this operation. (Pierre Bourdieu, 1996, p. 148). Cultural mediators are therefore key actors in 'curating' the city through the strategic choices and positioning strategies they employ.

In the competition between 'autonomous' and 'heteronomous' principles of positioning, where the greater the autonomy of the work, in the sense of its 'disinterestedness' from business, profit motive, and in some instances even 'institutionalized cultural authority', the larger is the claim to a moral authority and ensuing cultural capital. (Pierre Bourdieu, 1993, pp. 39-40). The heteronomous principle that operates in parts of the artistic field is subject to forces external to the field, such as overt political mandates, decorative needs and most importantly financial motivations, and therefore lacks moral authority and cultural capital. This schism between the autonomous and the heteronomous is indicative of the competition for authority between the class of artists and mediators and the bourgeois within the dominant class: "The struggle in the field of cultural production over the imposition of the legitimate mode of cultural production is inseparable from the struggle within the dominant class (with the opposition between 'artists' and 'bourgeois') to impose the dominant principle of domination (that is to say – ultimately – the definition of human accomplishment)". (Pierre Bourdieu, 1993, p. 41) This battle for legitimacy and canonization within the artistic field is happening concurrently with challenges to the definition of that legitimacy coming from those on the boundary of the field trying to enter it. Since 'criterion of membership of a field is the

objective fact of producing effects within it' (Ibid, p. 42), agents of change must have some degree of acknowledgement from those already within it to shape the terms of what constitutes legitimate goods and practice.

The overarching frame for possible action in the art world occurs within this local 'habitus' that operates as a structuring structure that "does not reflect or represent a reality, but ...structures that reality." (Garnham & Williams, 1980, p. 214). Though a keystone element in Bourdieu's attempt at creating a cohesive macro theory and drawing from Norbert Elias' earlier use of the term (Elias, 2000 [1939]), it remains one of Bourdieu's most slippery concepts. The habitus is not a 'society' or community per se, but a sub-component, a constitutive element, a way of being which reflects and conditions perception and action for the individual in society. The habitus functions as a "structure which organizes practices...and the perception of practices, but also a structured structure" (Pierre Bourdieu, 1984 [1979], p. 170). Implied in Bourdieu's description is the idea of a 'world view' or as de Certeau claims, a modus operandi, 'common sense', second nature, etc. (deCerteau, 1984, p. 58) which shapes and continually informs the agent/subject realms. The "symbolic struggle for the production of common sense" (Pierre Bourdieu, 1990, p. 135) is situated within the structuring structural effects of the habitus. Though, as Crossley points out:

"just as habits generate practices, so too creative and innovative praxes generate and modify habits. The circle of social life, in which practices generate habits that generate practices, is an evolving circle. And the impetus for evolution within it derives from the creative and innovative potential of action itself." (Crossley, 2001, p. 95)

Bourdieu's tendency to overlook the ways in which the 'underlying structures or principles of fields of practice mutate over time' (Ibid) does not negate the utility of the 'habitus' to explain many of the 'taken for granted', but not necessarily unconscious traits and practices that actors must use to engender the appearance of legitimate activity in the field.

Nevertheless, suggested within Bourdieu's concept is a challenge to the primacy of rational choice theory, when he argues that:

...the habitus produces reasonable (not rational) expectations, which, being the product of dispositions engendered by the imperceptible incorporation of the experience of constant or recurring situations, are immediately adapted to new but not radically unprecedented situations. (Pierre Bourdieu, 2005, p. 214)

This 'feel for the game' is the central mechanism in the reproduction of the social through the 'doing' or practice in the field. The implication is that the rational calculating actor of the science of economics is a reductionism of the agent into a homogenous entity. In actual fact, it is the heterogeneity of agents, through

...highly dispersed demand behavior on the part of individuals [which] is capable of producing very unified and highly stabilized overall aggregated demand behavior... There is little room in the economic field for 'madcap behavior' and those who indulge in it pay the price for defying the immanent rules of the economic order by failure or disappearance." (Pierre Bourdieu, 2005, p. 216)

The local 'habitus' and 'feel for the game' in Montréal, with its particular sociological, political and historical precedents and possibilities, frame and format the script, performance and scope of entrepreneurial possibility within the local market. Sustaining an enterprise or career involves 'playing by the rules' without the need to employ such a degree of self-reflexive awareness. Our knowledge of the rules and roles establish the parameters for what individual actors know to be legitimate behaviour but not necessarily always rational behaviour, in as much as not all calculations in the field have to be of such complex and sophisticated order.

In the context of the distinction between commercial and publicly funded actors in the local art world and the distinction between and within each of these niche areas, the Montréal field involves an extremely malleable boundary with low costs of entry, both economic and symbolic, that outside of established institutional settings, remains an 'indeterminate site in

the social structure...offering ill-defined posts...and career paths that are full of uncertainty and extremely dispersed' (Ibid, pg43). The struggle between 'arts for arts sake' and 'art for money' is conducted by individuals whose very participation in this world assumes a dominant position by virtue of their participation in a field that holds a privileged status relative to other fields of human endeavor. The role of gatekeeper in a major institution like the Tate, Guggenheim, MOMA, or at the regional level, at the National Gallery in Ottawa or Musée d'art contemporain in Montréal, involves choosing works that define human accomplishment and represent the iconic images of the age. These positions, where the field of cultural production and the field of power meet, are therefore few in number and remain closely guarded, difficult to access and hotly contested.

What Bourdieu's work emphasizes is the condition of flux and ongoing competition that defines a field and the activities within it and in particular the validation that a whole system of relations brings to the power of any one individual or institution within it. The reputations that constitute power in the field are not created by any one influential person, personality, magazine or dealer but by the field of production itself, understood as the system of objective relations between these agents or institutions and as the site of struggles for the monopoly of power to consecrate - in which the value of works of art and belief in that value are continuously generated...(Pierre Bourdieu, 1993, p. 78). This movement through the artistic field is not only by definition entrepreneurial but also a highly networked, mediated and hierarchical affair brought about through the enlistment of a network of support from dealers, agents, curators, and writers who work with product and producer, art and artists engineering value. Each one is 'acting as 'symbolic banker' offering as security all the symbolic capital he has accumulated...' defending the artists they love and acting as the 'creator of the creator' (Ibid, pp. 76-77). The distance between the artistic canon and the graduate painter operates on

a continuum that stretches from the extremes of vocational uncertainty of the young graduate to the remote possibility of gilded permanence in the final repositories of art around the world<sup>3</sup>. Each step along that path necessitates the support of an array of actors operating within the different hierarchies in the field of artistic production.

In this sense Bourdieu's theory of cultural production, by understanding cultural fields as competitive sites, affirms the cultural space as another site for the making of markets and the competition and valuation of scarce goods and services. Like his reevaluation of gift giving and reciprocity in the *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Pierre Bourdieu, 1997 [1977]), Bourdieu's work involves a fundamental challenging of the restricted definition of economics:

... through which symbolic interests (often described as 'spiritual' or 'cultural') come to be set up in opposition to strictly economic interests as defined in the field of economic transactions... (Pierre Bourdieu, 1997 [1977], p. 177).

The result of which is an undoing of the restricted definition of economic interest so that "...economic calculation [can be extended to] all goods, material and symbolic, without distinction, that present themselves as rare and worthy of being sought after in a particular social formation – which may be 'fair words' or smiles, handshakes or shrugs, compliments or attention, challenges or insults, honour or honours..." (Pierre Bourdieu, 1997 [1977], p. 178). The analytical breadth that Bourdieu provides, extending the principles of economic sociology, accounts for the interplay of symbolic and material variables in the performance of actors in Montreal's artistic field and their complex interactions within the assemblage of Québécois national politics.

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<sup>3</sup> Major state owned institutions are typically mandated to not sell work in their collections as suggested in the use of the designation *permanent collection*.

## ANT and Performing in Markets

While Bourdieu's work provides a vocabulary and analysis that helps explain the operation and mechanics specific to cultural fields of activity at a relatively macro level, actor network theory, in its concern for ethnographic description and detail, contributes to the development of a more subtle framework for understanding the activities of individuals involved in the shaping of markets, allowing us to push Bourdieu's observations further. (Entwistle, 2008)

Actor Network Theory (ANT) has its roots in Science and Technology Studies (STS) and is based on the idea that specialized knowledge and practices frame and direct relationships with other human and non-human entities (technologies, forms of knowledge, environments etc.) in a network. This is an approach that can only be understood ethnographically and does away with the existence of any a priori structures or systems. Those working in STS affirm the fundamentally Foucauldian conception that expert knowledges frame our understanding and experience of the world but, most importantly for ANT's proponents, there are no firms, markets, or structure that can be understood as anything other than groups of individuals, objects and technologies that operate together. Within this framework "...a macro actor...is a micro actor seated in black boxes, a force capable of associating so many other forces that it acts like a 'single man'" (M. Callon & Latour, 1981, p. 299) Specialized cultures and domains of activity are shaped by what Latour describes as relationships between individuals and non-human things and objects. Proponents of ANT attempt to undo what are called the 'purifications' that render concepts like economy, society or culture for example as discreet, contained and totalised entities. Within the theory there "... is a recognition of the (epistemological) falsity of these purifications that goes hand in hand with a simultaneous recognition of their socially constitutive reality." (Entwistle & Slater, 2013, p. 3) The social, understood in this context "...does not designate a domain of reality or some particular item



but rather is the name of a movement, a displacement, a transformation, a translation, an enrollment. It is an association between entities which are in no way recognizable as being social in the ordinary manner, except during the brief moment when they are reshuffled together... Thus, social, for ANT, is the name of a type of momentary association which is characterized by the way it gathers together into new shapes.” (Latour, 2005, pp. 64-65)

The application of these principles 'of deflation', that attempt to dissolve the structure/ agency, culture/nature divide in a context of market making and economic practice, are at the heart of Callon's work on markets, which understands the market making process as the *performance* of calculative agency and expert forms of knowledge. The market “is a process in which calculative agencies compete or cooperate with one another... each agency is able to integrate the already framed calculations of the other agencies into its own calculations... it is these cross related calculations that contribute to the market as a dynamic process”. (M. Callon, 1998, p. 32) The expression of agency in and through competitive ‘triangular games’ follows a combinatorial logic, that of connection and disconnection, which is entirely relational ‘and which gives the market its structure.’ (M. Callon, 1998, p. 11) Structure in this context does not exist apart or a priori from agency so that there is both an equivalence between agency and structure, actor and network. (M. Callon, 1998, p. 8) Callon's attempt to reconcile Granovetter's challenge to avoid the twin pitfalls of ‘under’ or ‘over socialized’ accounts of economic behavior and the problem of ‘embeddedness’ (Granovetter, 1985) lead him to an analytical framework that involves creating bracketed frames that ‘dis-entangle’ and ‘stabilize’ objects for transaction.

The cultural for Callon is not sufficient explanation for economic practices but as Slater and

Entwistle point out it also remains problematically absent in his work and is simply "rejected as a social theoretical fallacy". (Entwistle & Slater, 2013, p. 6) Callon's concern, as they go on to point out, is that, like his rejection of embeddedness, "... accounts that rely on culture simply posit a context or macro structure that stands outside the arrangements it 'explains' but is, itself, left 'black boxed' (Entwistle & Slater, 2013, p. 5). The sweep of Callon's desire to denude the explanation of 'economization' and 'marketization' from the interface with the 'cultural' apports the 'purifications' he rejects in the economic realm to the performance and dynamics of the 'cultural'. Our appeal to Bourdieu in the study is in part due to his application of elements of a formal, calculative logic to the networks that constitute the fields of cultural practice, enabling (even within the context some of the latent structuralist tendencies) the reconstitution of the cultural and economic as jointly implicated practices that may employ distinct and highly specialised framing consideration.

Not unlike Bourdieu, Callon talks of the 'formatting' of relationships "that orient the agent toward calculativeness and disinterestedness" (M. Callon, 1998, p. 15), indicating a disposition towards forms of strategic calculation based on relative location within a network of relations. Bourdieu's understanding of culture affirms the scope of economic processes through competition over scarce symbolic and material resources in the practices of artists and mediators in the field of culture. Similarly Callon's focus on the performativity of markets through forms of socio-technical networks and technologies can be employed to challenge the analytical 'purifications' of culture as a monolithic and totalising force and elicit the aspects of formal economic calculation that are integral to 'cultural' processes. In this sense 'culture' concerns specific associations, relationships, historical positions and values that individuals choose to identify with and employ as framing considerations in the strategic calculation they make in the market environment.

For calculation to become possible the scope of variables under scrutiny have to be ‘framed’. Framing “...allows for the definition of objects, goods and merchandise which are perfectly identifiable and can be separated from other goods and other actors...in their conception, production, circulation and use”. (M. Callon, 1998, p. 17) However the process of framing can never be complete or maintained indefinitely without constant re-adjustment. There will always be ‘overflows’ - things overlooked, concerns shared by others but not you that make total framing impossible, attempts to dis-entangle and stabilize an object will always remain temporary since the object along with the other actors and actants that are involved in relationships with it remain inherently unstable and also in flux – so that any dis-entangling is fleeting before new relationships and entanglements come ‘overflowing’ the parameters of the frame to create new webs of relation. Like Appadurai’s ‘social life of things’ (Appadurai, 1986), “objects take their shape and meaning not in any single location but through their incorporation across diverse milieu.” (Suchman, R. Trigg, & Blomberg, 2002, p. 164)

The performance of the economy occurs in and through the use of technologies that are part of the framework of calculation. Accounting and marketing are different areas of specialization in and through which economic action and the making of markets is put into motion. Callon goes as far as to say that marketing tools perform the economy in as much as the “product...is a multi-dimensional reality, an entanglement of properties that the [4p’s] of the marketing mix disentangles”. (M. Callon, 1998, pp. 26-27) From this perspective the space occupied between the producer of art works and the end user – buyer or gallery visitor - in addition to the calculative agencies of those at these extremes of the production/consumption circuit is dominated by intermediaries wielding expert instruments

and expert knowledge that allow for the mediation between ‘economics and the economy’.

The use and importance of socio-technical networks, knowledge and know-how is a condition that demarcates the expertise and specialization particular to distinct areas of human activity.

The mediating act of the marketing process is “an essential link, an irreplaceable coupling device between theoretical work and economic practices, for it organizes real experiments.” (M. Callon, 1998, p. 28). Given the broad scope of variables that may be entangled for a transaction to take place “each transaction involves ethical, political and cognitive contestation...[the] limits [of which] are not only fuzzy, but establishing them involves reaching ever outwards from the market to wider social technologies and institutions.” (D. Slater, 2005, p. 56)

In the context of actors in the primary market and for commercial gallery owners in particular, the process of ‘choosing and bringing product to market’ is premised on the application of marketing strategies that are at the core of the curator’s role as entrepreneur and mediator.

Primary market dealers are in the business of creating ‘commercial frames’ (D. Slater, 2005, p. 64) for products where none existed by ‘defining the product in such a way as to position it within the competitively optimum definition of a market as well as the most culturally entangled relations of consumption’. (D. Slater, 2005, p. 62) This process not only shapes practice but also involves a range of technologies that must take into account the political nuances at play in the local ecology. Competing political interests are reflected, reproduced and challenged in Montréal’s small and competitive visual arts market. As Barry and Slater point out, the refraction of politics through the ‘framings’ central to the marketing process forms something like a surface on which forms of political, reflection, negotiation and conflict can condense. (Barry & Slater, 2005, p. 16) These specialized tools and practices serve as one of the means by which “economics participates in the per-formation of the

worlds to which it belongs, by helping to set up socio-technical agencies/arrangements” (Mitchell, 2005, p. 317) that format participation. The significance of these practices is that they serve as the means through which the ‘associations’ (Latour, 2005) that configure the art world materialize.

The significance of a socio-technical understanding of the activity of commercial gallery owners and the art world is that it approaches it as a loosely bounded yet relatively cohesive group of actors who employ an array of expert knowledge and tools that are prerequisites for legitimate participation in the network. Like Barry’s discussion of political machines (Barry, 2001), the smooth running of the city’s art world involves the complexity of localized technical practices that are premised on a self-governing operation in relation to the art network and other overlapping and closely related spheres of activity. Specialized art knowledge, sales dramaturgy, technologies and devices can become political - not just in the sense that they are used as instruments in conflicts between political parties or interests (of course they can be), or in the sense that the deployment of expertise offers a way of resolving political controversy (for better or worse, it can do) – but in the sense that technical designs and devices are bound with the constitution of the human and the social. (Barry, 2001, p. 9) In this manner economic and cultural activity like action in the sphere of politics “refers to the ways in which artifacts, activities or practices become objects of contestation” (Barry, 2001, p. 6) within frames particular to those areas.

The ‘ethno-methodology’ of the ANT perspective allows for a universal application that disregards the ‘purifications’ that render designations and categories such as cultural, aesthetic or economic distinct and separate from one another. Nevertheless the dissolution of structure as it is commonly understood in the context of Marxist and post-Marxist debates into varying

forms of in-flux networked associations between actors and actants is a source of consternation for those who find rhetorical and political value in structuring (literally and figuratively) oppositions. As Couldry points out talking in the context of media studies, ANT “close[s] down the possibilities of how we might think about the relationship between ‘social’ and ‘technological’ to questions of network coordination ...ANT cannot offer a total theory of media: these are its insufficient attention to questions of time, power and interpretation.” (Couldry, 2004, p. 11) These issues are partially addressed in an appreciation of the ‘perspectival’ concerns that play a part in social life and social research – an answer provided to some extent by ANT itself. The political utility a ‘black box’ (many micro actors acting as a macro actor) is a consequence of changing perspectives that are a result of differing positions. Being able to understand a ‘black box’ as a grouping of micro actors assumes first and foremost access that allows for and then renders comprehensible the macro as a series of interrelated micro interactions. Understanding power on these terms remains a question of access, as is too often demonstrated by the lack of research of the elite and upper classes in comparison to their brethren further along the hierarchies of power.

An important criticism leveled at Callon’s particular approach to market making is made by Miller who claims that Callon’s form of calculative logic, not only reproduces the ‘virtualisms’ that are perpetuated by the field of economics but in doing so explains away the messy act of enacting markets to ‘purified modes of calculability that do not exist’. (D. Slater, 2005, p. 56). For Miller “...what lies within the ‘frame’ is NOT the market system, but on the contrary a ritualized expression of an ideology of the market...the frame of the market studied by Callon is a moral and ideological system whose intention is to create the normative conditions for exchange rather than a description for practice”.(Miller, 2002, p. 224) As Ben Fine points out “...Callon might reasonably be situated somewhere between complicity with

or conformity to the new phase of economic imperialism, not least because...there are considerable affinities ...to Coleman's rational choice sociology (Fine, 2003, p. 483)" within his argument. The implication for Miller in particular is that the transactions at the center of the market making process are a messy, dirty affair more about re-entangling rather than disentangling objects into new social relations and meanings. As Slater goes on to point out in the same passage, Miller's approach mistakenly attempts to dissolve the market into broader social entanglements, yet there is such a thing as commodity exchange where the quality of entangledness changes – and it is this object/process that is the site of instrumental calculation. (Ibid). This process does not signify a separation of the cultural from the economic at the moment of the transaction, rather it points to a 'reframing of cultural meaningful items that never cease to draw on external meaning...[so that] framing and disentanglement necessarily involve cultural knowledge and actually bring cultural issues into the heart of economic action". (ibid 58) Over and above the 'deliberateness' of the framing process in Callon's theory of markets is an explicit sense of the fundamental interconnectedness of the market making and transactional process.

Callon extends this thesis in a way that places mediation and aesthetics at the fore by arguing that markets are fundamentally economies of qualities where "the product (considered as a sequence of transformations) describes, in both senses of the term, the different networks coordinating the actors involved in its design, production, distribution and consumption. The product singles out the agents and binds them together and, reciprocally, it is the agents that, by adjustment, iteration and transformation, define its characteristics" (M. Callon et al., 2005, p. 31). In this approach "economic and cultural categories are merged within the structure of market relations and micro-economic action" (Don Slater, 2002, p. 60) bringing "...market analysis in line with a perspective in which it is inconceivable that any social sphere could be

without culture and still persist as a social order.” (ibid, p. 61) The language and framework employed by Callon focuses “ on the impurity of market behavior – including the mixture of economic and cultural calculation involved in constituting economic action.” (D. Slater, 2005, p. 64) The substance of marketing efforts and the performance of the role of cultural mediator and entrepreneur are through exchanges based on engineering and managing relationships between producers and consumers as well as a host of relevant other mediators operating in the city’s art world and beyond.

The “...central strength of the notion of cultural intermediaries is that it places an emphasis on those workers who come in between creative artists and consumers...more generally production and consumption...” (K. Negus, 2002 p. 503). In practice the mediating role enlists or at least attempts to enlist the support of a large number of other mediators operating in government, journalism and art institutions whose participation and endorsement are valuable to economic and symbolic success. As social actors, cultural mediators do not simply move product between producer and consumer, but modify and change aspects of the object as it moves between two poles by positioning, modifying, and/or associating themselves with the object or service along the way, “they are an essential link, an irreplaceable coupling between theoretical work and economic practices.” (M. Callon, 1998, p. 28) This role is heightened in the context of markets like primary art markets where the utility and status of the product are in formation and where ‘straight forward’ utility is trumped by the complex mechanics of expert knowledge, status, fashion and history in creating distinctions between interchangeable and competing goods.



## Creative Economy – The City and Cultural Intermediaries

The economy of small business in the primary art market is formatted by an acute concern for local political and social imperatives that are brought into the calculative frame of entrepreneurial activity and innovation. Effectively harnessing and demonstrating a particular kind of knowledge and facility through the ‘taken for granted’ knowledge and assumed rules of the game become central to effectively negotiating the symbols and signs at play within that field and in particular the network of relationships that fill its porous boundaries. The highly entangled, social character of market activity in this sector of the cultural economy is shaped by ‘the strength of weak ties’ (Granovetter, 1973, 1983) and the ‘rules and roles’ (Abolafia, 1996) that format activity. The discussions with actors in the primary market reveal the ongoing tension between innovation and familiarity that frame entrepreneurial action and cultural mediation in the Québec context. The details involved in the complex relationship between specialized business practice and the particular local conditions that shape that practice expose the ‘socio-technical networks’ that shape and are necessary for entrepreneurial activity and cultural mediation in the primary art market to take place.

The significance of the cultural mediator’s role in ‘translating’ between art producer and art consumer involves what Latour calls the process of ‘association’ rather than ‘sociation’. This extends cultural mediation beyond the intrinsic character of interaction between actants as a process of ‘...not transporting causality [but] inducing two mediators into coexisting’ (Latour, 2005, p. 108). The fact that “there may be translations between mediators that may generate traceable associations” (Ibid) is a deliberate and desired outcome of the process of cultural mediation. ‘Sociations’ by cultural mediators are performed and enacted to deliberately and consciously generate ‘associations’, perhaps not those outcomes that had been predicted or wished for but outcomes nevertheless, a process that distinguishes their role in the translation

circuit as something generative, productive and distinct from the role of the simple intermediary where ‘...there is no mystery since inputs predict outputs fairly well: nothing will be present in the effect that has not been in the cause’.(Latour, 2005, p. 58) Nevertheless, the act of tracing ‘sociations’ amongst cultural mediators in the local network through the research process is not a question of imputing motivation but discovering and uncovering the linkages between actors in the local network.

With the increasing relevance of culture and cultural production to civic and political life, the cultural mediator plays an increasingly important role in cultivating civic participation and spurring economic development. The international explosion of interest and value in the contemporary visual art market that preceded the recession of 2008 reflected these changes. Access to the more rarified sections of the cultural economy was rendered possible by a demand for cultural capital through the distinction afforded by ‘craft consumption’ (Campbell, 2005) on the growing part of those with new money generated by ICT technology, financial services and its corollary industries. This demand was accompanied by a need to open up the doors of state institutions to money making opportunities in face of government cutbacks and the possibility of developing new markets for key sectors of the commercial art world, in particular through the growth of international auction houses and commercial gallery operators (Mason, 2005; Stallabrass, 2004). The field of contemporary art was made familiar through its association with mediatised spectacle akin to other kinds of luxury branded goods, show-business and star making and the drive to a populism that was inherent in the aesthetics of the post-modern turn and the logics of the cut’n mix ethos (Hebdige, 1987).

In the global centers of Anglo-American culture the discourse around the cultural economy, understood as "...the processes of social and cultural relations that go to make up what we conventionally term the economic", (Amin & Thrift, 2004, p. xviii) came with a new found concern for the formative role and economic value of different fields of cultural and creative production. Along with the idea of a cultural turn within capitalism itself (N. Thrift, 1999) and the 'soft capitalism' (N. J. Thrift, 1997) of new paradigms of management practice and business education built around the experiential and emotive, came a heightened concern, through economic wealth and the centrality of consumer experience, for the whole realm of aesthetic experience as being integral to the wellbeing of the individual and the quality of civic life. The general demise of industrial production and its replacement with creative and service oriented businesses linked, in particular and with a new found importance, the issue of cultural economy with the larger changes going on in the geography and economic life of the city. In doing so, the issues concerning the art and cultural life of the metropolitan space become more acutely politicized and not only "reflect decisions about what – and who – should be visible and what should not, on concepts of order and disorder, and on uses of aesthetic power...[but are also part of a] more symbolic economy devised by 'place entrepreneurs' (Molotch, 1976), officials and investors whose ability to deal with the symbols of growth yields 'real' results in real estate development, new businesses and jobs ." (Zukin, 1995, p. 7) Drawing from a tradition of analysis around metropolitan life that can be traced back to the work of Simmel, the processes of visual art production, education dissemination, sales, promotion and celebration unifies a 'symbolic economy' concerned with 'pictures', through the very material practices of finance, marketing, labor, performance, and design (Zukin, 1995, p. 9) that now mark contemporary metropolitan development. Ethnicity and its power as a "cultural strategy for producing difference" (Ibid, p41) also operates within this repertoire of material and symbolic practices.

Those actors involved in the jockeying for position in the art market are therefore both cultural entrepreneurs and intermediaries trying to lock down meaning and value into objects that they can move along a networked hierarchy to hopefully create more value and generate greater significance and meaning which spills out from the local art world to the city at large. The competition over floating signifiers that consumer society makes possible (Baudrillard, 1998 [1970]; Featherstone, 1991) is nevertheless continually ‘materialized’ through the acts and performances of economic activity (Entwistle, 2002, p. 321) and mediation by this class of cultural intermediary. In practice the mediating role enlists or at least attempts to enlist the support of a large number of other mediators operating in government, journalism and art institutions whose participation and endorsement are valuable to the economic and symbolic success of the business. In playing the network in this way cultural intermediaries are involved in

an active structuring of classes of products and their relationship to forms of exchange. This commercial practice classifies and reclassifies in a dynamic way, making and remaking the relationships between different types of products, between brands and between consumers and those products....” (Cronin, 2004, p. 362)

that extend through and beyond the urban space.

Most of the actors I talked to are first and foremost entrepreneurs who along with artists, operate in a way that satisfies Schumpeter’s ‘entrepreneurial function’ where ‘being entrepreneurial’ is broadly defined as the synthesis of ‘innovation’, ‘creative destruction’, ‘new combinatorial logics’ and ‘individual and group endeavor’ (Schumpeter, 1951, pp. 258-261). Along with their colleagues in the public sector who may take an entrepreneurial approach to their work within an overriding institutional context, the gallery owner is the archetypical entrepreneur in the sense of leading a small to medium sized business in a

context where they “...create an institution [the gallery] to make markets between...[themselves] and other transactors...” (Casson, 1982, p. 17). The role of creating both firms and new markets increases the scope of issues concerning which the entrepreneur has to make judgements, and places entrepreneurial innovation and the gatekeeping capacity of the cultural intermediary in a privileged place, often amongst a civic elite, who help create “the symbiosis of image and product [and the] scope and scale of selling image on a national or even global level...”(Zukin, 1995, p. 8).

The individuals I approached represent a cross section of primary market actors. Each one is trying to deliver on different degrees of decorativeness or ‘pure gaze’ along Bourdieu’s autonomous and heteronomous axis. The success of the gallery and associated artists is linked to an entrepreneurial and mediating role based on nurturing and cultivating the ‘qualities’ in the market that ‘translate’ into varying degrees of symbolic and financial success through marketing and sales strategies and connections with influential buyers and critics. The gallery owners are in the business of serving the ‘dominant fractions of the dominant classes’ (Pierre Bourdieu, 1993, p. 281), but unlike the artists and bureaucrats, they are in the frontline of maintaining meaningful and significant connections with this bourgeois elite to ensure the success of their business. Collectively this elite group of gatekeepers, mediators, bureaucrats and buyers serve as agenda setters and the battles they wage amongst themselves shape art worlds and the politics of metropolitan Montréal and the province of Québec.

In this sense the cultural mediator generates meaning, not simply through the direct sales of service and merchandise to individual end users but through the aggregate effects of the whole group of intermediaries who are able to generate symbolic effects linked to the city and nation. As illustrated in the research done on cultural intermediaries involving A&R staff in

the music business (Keith Negus, 1999), fashion designers, bookers and buyers (Entwistle, 2002; Entwistle, 2006; McRobbie, 1998), account managers in advertising agencies (Cronin, 2004; Sean Nixon, 2003; Sean Nixon & duGay, 2002; Don Slater, 2002) and gatekeepers in the book publishing industry (Greco, 2005) (Curran, 2000), calculation and deliberation over strategies and choices are designed to induce behavioral change, facilitate the navigation through choices by aggregating information and objects, and serve in the ‘translation’ between expert and non expert audiences. The consequence of these calculations, driven by the ‘banal’ concerns of building a business, serving clients and cultivating audiences, plays a key role in shaping public culture at the metropolitan level. Cultural mediators therefore exert “...a certain amount of cultural authority as shapers of taste and the inculcators of new consumerist dispositions” (Sean Nixon & duGay, 2002, p. 497). The distinction between the effects of the gatekeeping function and the processes specific to particular areas of gatekeeping activity often fails to take into account the link between the performative and the reproduction of discourse within a specific geographic setting.

The activities of these mediators in a peripheral art center like Montréal are relatively geographically localized and the network they operate in is less international in scope. The city is the site for these activities and as a result the linkages between “...place, culture and economy [which] are highly symbiotic with one another... are... expressed in the cultural economy...” (Scott, 1997, p. 325) so that the broad array of cultural services, amenities and products associated with the city serve to define the character of the city and the product on offer. (Clark et al., 2003) The process of generating a ‘creative city’ implies the cultivated linkages between cultural industries and a creative class (Pratt, 2008b) who dominate these economically and symbolically important roles. There is a clear relationship that forms between a field of cultural production, the performance and negotiation of market activity,

and the relevance of these factors in the manufacturing of the all essential 'buzz' "important to financial investors, cultural consumers and the careers of cultural producers" (Zukin, 2001, p. 261). Art markets like other "...outputs of cultural-product industries are almost always susceptible - actually or potentially - to a sort of convergence of place-specific product design contours and cultural content...they are subject to the influence of peculiar imageries and sensibilities rooted in place and appropriable by individual firms as competitive advantage." (Scott, 1997, p. 333) Given that "objects are constituted through the discourses used to describe them and to act upon them" (duGay & Pryke, 2002, p. 2), the role of the cultural intermediary is key in generating the warranted and appropriate linkages that reproduce 'doxa' through funding and policy patterns and media pushes generated by the city and the province's political actors that contribute to the ongoing legitimacy of the field itself.

Not unlike Molotch's urban growth machine thesis (Molotch, 1976), a key element in understanding a local creative economy involves an uncovering of the coalitions, in this case, of cultural capital based elites – the cultural mediators and gatekeepers, producers and consumers and other actors who actively produce and attempt to respond and direct the city's creative economy and art market in particular. The discourses generated from the 'tightening the space of relations that contemporary art generates' (Bourriaud, 2002, p. 15) and the multiple regimes of mediation they employ and their outcomes, play an active role in shaping the urban ecology.

### Cosmopolitanism and Elite Governance

The function of mediating in the cultural sphere not only involves generating a politics of value that situates and shapes art works or artistic careers but also has a substantive and

symbolic significance in engineering what the city looks like by operationalizing discourses of inclusion and ethnic and racial diversity. As Keith argues, the ‘curating of the multicultural’ happens in and through the changing relationship between city and state that renders the cultural industries and its practices increasingly central to the organization of the social and economic spaces of the city. (Keith, 2005, pp. 114-115). The primary art market in Montréal becomes a site where the actors involved in the business of contemporary art and its promotion, local history and politics, brand building for the city and international trends in the artistic field and in urban politics come together and are at play in generating ongoing narratives of citizenship and inclusion. Yet the discourse of citizenship and inclusion outside the realm of the familiar Anglo/Franco ethno-linguistic politics of the city remains undervalued by actors trying to sustain on one hand a ‘pure gaze’ under conservative market conditions and on the other by a handing off of diversity issues to an arena of bureaucrats and policy makers.

The framing decision of actors in the city’s art field contributes to a very substantive idea of Montréal realized through gate keeping decisions and the specific characteristics of the art experience and engineering of market activity in the public or private sector. Demonstrations of the multicultural or cosmopolitan are made visible through the framing consideration that accounts for sociological fact filtered through the choice making of gatekeepers in the field. Trying to contribute to the civic ‘buzz’ and maximizing symbolic and financial capital creates the “...rhetorics of cultural industries and the practices of their promotion [that] render comprehensible the social and the economic spaces of the city.” (Keith, 2005, pp. 114-115). The disparity between the ‘flows’ of artistic and cultural practice and nationalist containment raises the question of how cultural intermediaries in art worlds attempt to navigate through the fact that theirs is a site where the “... new products and new identifications link explicitly



to notions of creolisation and exchange” (Keith, 2005, p. 124) in the context of the overwhelming dominance of consumer culture and the cultural economy. The local variants of a ‘banal cosmopolitanism’ - “the side effect of global trade or global threats that unfold beneath the surface or behind the façade of persisting national spaces” - (Beck, 2006, p. 19) are played out through the ‘translations’ and strategic choices of this class of mediators.

This process is not populist, in as much as players in the visual arts field are mediating within a group of elite actors who trade and compete over degrees of money, knowledge and prestige in the area of art, finance and politics. Cultural mediators operating in the artistic field may be a dominated dominant class in society but their associations to key political and economic actors in the city puts them in a strategic and influential position in privileging and generating a particular image of the metropolitan space. Their role in ‘reassembling the social’ has ‘always to do with politics in the sense that it collects or composes what the common world is made of.’ (Latour, 2005, p. 256) The characteristics of this ‘common world’ in the context of primary art markets in Montréal as elsewhere concerns the important level of capital, both economic and cultural, that actors operating in this network wield and influence. Their position as cultural mediators places them in the role of “governance agents [who] play a strategic role in brokering sector networks and in providing institutional leverage such that informational, technical and financial resources can be mobilized via these networks...this array of measures offers up something of a wish list for the effective governance of cultural sectors as an economy of networks...(Tonkiss, 2002, p. 124). The relative position of key mediators who curate for major local museums, own and operate commercial galleries and write for specialized and mainstream journals on the visual arts reverberates through the art field, the cultural economy and the flows of information that help generate the urban brand. These are issues we can link in part with what Hall identifies as a ‘politics of representation’

the events, relations, structures [that] have conditions of existence and real effects, outside the sphere of the discursive; but that only within the discursive, and subject to its specific conditions, limits and modalities do they have or can they be constructed within meaning...how things are represented and the 'machineries' and regimes of representation in a culture do play a constitute, and not merely a reflexive, after-the event role. This gives questions of culture and ideology, and the scenarios of representation – subjectivity, identity and politics – a formative, not merely an expressive, place in the constitution of social and political life.(Hall, 1992, p. 252).

These discursive 'overflows' extend out from the particular nodes where they may have originated and taint actants throughout the extended network of the larger metropolitan economy.

The link between specialized cultural production, competitive practice in private or public sectors, and the engineering of distinction for the city are mutually entangled considerations that generate identity for the associated actors and actants. Cultural intermediaries are at the center of this translating process, negotiating and capitalizing on demands of artists, bureaucrats, consumer and audience. They refract the broad range of political concerns through banal forms of business practice. However the concern in this context is not specifically to genealogies of commercial art practice or the structuring of amenities to boost civic 'performance', but the way in which power is constituted in an ongoing exchange within a network of relationship involving multiple discourses that always *retains* the potentiality to move and transform itself through the decision of its actors. Knowingly or unknowingly the strategies at play in the creative economy by intermediaries in the fields of art and culture at any given moment remains one of the important ways that social change is operationalised and multicultural and cosmopolitan dilemmas are addressed. The specialism and reification of the visual arts world in a peripheral market like Montréal warrants scrutiny because within its limitations it is a key site for the production and reproduction of value for a political and economic elite with far reaching influence within the city of Montréal and the province of Québec.

Given the role of art worlds as generators of national symbols and Québec's ongoing struggle for cultural security and preservation, it is the cultivated perception of the autonomy of art worlds - their distinction in the symbolic order from other realms of activity - that make them such important sites for the reproduction of plural and cosmopolitan values. In this sense agents and mediators in particular play out a moral and political drama through the jockeying for symbolic power in the cultural field that occurs in the competition over scarce resources within a network of calculating and strategic actors. The decision and choices of these entrepreneurs reverberates through the creative economy, engineering labour markets and modes of aesthetic cannonization that shape the contours of life within the city.

### Conclusion

This chapter provided the theoretical discussion that frames the substantive analysis of government policy and the operation of the primary visual arts field and its network of actors in the subsequent chapters. The reliance on the work of Bourdieu, Callon and Latour to understand the relationship between the economics of the visual arts field in the context of Montréal's creative economy is driven by the utility of their work in highlighting the political and performative dimension to economic practice and the significance and consequences of these actions within the network of relations operating in the field. Of key importance in this thesis are the links between the mechanics of different modes of economic practice and history as forces in enabling certain discursive and performative strains of a cosmopolitan ideal within an ideological shift that looks to cities as key engines in nationally bounded economic growth.

In Québec and Montréal the shifting context between city and state in the drive to generate a significant cultural economy that will be celebrated as an international ‘capital of culture’ concerns the changing dynamics of the Québécois nationalist struggle and a history of conflicting demands between the local and the cosmopolitan. What I have tried to stress in this chapter are the theoretical mechanics that link the field of cultural production, economic performance and urban governance to, not simply, the operation of the cultural economy but to the generation of cosmopolitan and plural metropolitan spaces. Within the complex assemblage of Montréal’s primary visual arts network the role of a ‘straightforward’ mediation between production and consumption is trumped by a far more subtle and complex “performed relationships through multiple regimes of mediation, bringing those relationships into being and constantly redefining them”. (Cronin, 2004, p. 365). The politically volatile and in flux position of actors in the field affirms the dynamic nature of what is fundamentally a competition over symbolic and material resource by individuals in a realm that plays an important role in the organization of the social and political space.

## Chapter 3

### Methods, elites and ‘appartenance’ in the Montréal market

*...elites are, by contrast, relatively unstudied, not because they do not have or are not part of existing social problems but precisely because they are powerful and can more readily resist the intrusive inquisition of social research...(Hunter, 1993, p. 55)*

*Don't focus on capitalism, but don't stay stuck on the screen of the trading room either: follow the connections, 'follow actors themselves'. No cold objectification has taken place there, no superior reason is being unfolded. Everywhere, blind termites are busy cranking out data. Just keep sniffing through their galleries, no matter how far this takes you. (Latour, 2005, p. 179)*

#### Introduction

Researching an ‘art world’ is about exploring a ‘black box’, that operates on the basis of discreet networks, specialised vocabulary, expert knowledge and sums of money that operate as barriers for entry in as much as they serve as the distinguishing traits of this field. This is particularly the case in primary art markets where histories and pedigree of work and artist cannot be relied on to shore up significance and therefore value. The dealer critic system that established itself in Paris at the turn of the last century and that continues to dominate commercial art markets today is very much about “...groups of micro actors seated on top of many (leaky) black boxes” (M. Callon & Latour, 1981, p. 286) which from the outside appears as a complex, unitary closed system, a macro –actor, or as Bourdieu would describe it, a field . The various commercial galleries, public institutions and funding bodies, and academic and popular press that constitute an art world in a regional metropolis like Montréal are very much in the business of creating the impression of being larger, more complex, more influential than they actually are. Forcing open the black boxes which they create becomes the

prime task of the research project because markets like these, built on issues of status, also rely heavily on the manufacturing of complexity. The impression of macro-actor ‘Leviathans’ in this context is not about being an IBM or EDF type corporation, but about enlisting principles that encourage obfuscation which ‘discourages analysis ...and prevents the secret of the macro-actors growth from being revealed.’(M. Callon & Latour, 1981, p. 299)

Art worlds like the primary art market in Montréal are complex social assemblages that appear as black boxes but they are not a seamless whole. As DeLanda points out “community networks and institutional organizations are assemblages of bodies, but they also possess a variety of other material components, from food and physical labour, to simple tools and complex machines, to the buildings and neighbourhoods serving as their physical locales... an important component of an interpersonal network is the expressions of solidarity of its members, but these can be either linguistic (promises, vows) or behavioural, the solidarity expressed by shared sacrifice or mutual help even in the absence of words.” (DeLanda, 2006, p. 26). The impact, as in the case of regional art worlds, of the historical contingent interactions between individuals and entities in the territory “...leads to the formation of more or less permanent articulations between them yielding a macro-assemblage with properties and capacities of its own”. (Ibid, p.32). The role of history and policy serve as important tools in containing the what are in reality porous and fluid boundaries that mark the limits of the analytical field that are extended even further by the self-reflexive imperatives of the research process.

The following chapter, like the larger writing up process, moves between ethnographic realism and a confessional tale, “...combining [a] partial description of the culture alongside and [an] equally partial description of the fieldwork experience”. (Van Maanen, 1988, p. 91)

The first section deals primarily with issues that came from my choice of interview subjects and the harvesting of documentary evidence. Concerns around fieldwork techniques, such as my role as participant observer and interviewer, are situated within the methodological assumptions implicit in ANT. The section revolves around a discussion concerning these actors and their role as part of a municipal elite whose influence and position within the larger political and social networks of the city and province are both powerful and a point of reference - an influence that extends beyond their areas of expertise. The subtleties of confronting this elite in the interview setting is examined from a reflexive perspective and within the context of recent debates concerning reasonable accommodation, notions of Québécois essentialism and the changing and complex linguistic and ethnic terms of belonging and citizenship particular to Québec. The dynamics of the interview mirror the concerns that inevitably frame the terms of participation and inclusion in the art market itself. The assemblages of the primary market in Montréal and the 'black box' within which actors in the field operate are centered around the complex interplay between cosmopolitan ambitions of the art community and city and versions of the national culture.

The data for this research project is drawn from a variety of sources that includes interviews, insider information, participant observation and collected documentary evidence in the form of press clippings and promotional collateral. My approach to understanding the operation of the primary visual arts market in the city is based on an ethnographic approach and a period of deliberate investigation as well as evidence drawn from a period as a commercial gallery owner, and a background as a visual artist and bureaucrat operating in the cultural field in Montréal since the 1990's. An important aspect of this project is the reflexive component to the process of fieldwork and questions that arise in the construction and interpretation of the data. The city is my home and the relationship I have with it is an important element that

cultivates ‘native’ insights as well as ‘prejudices’, both of which have to be accounted for in an ethnographic process that involves “...demonstrated and described varieties of local social organization and local cultural formations that draw our attention to the details and complexity of social life.” (Paul Atkinson, Delamont, & Housley, 2008, p. 208) Like most ethnography my goal is to “...adequately display the culture (or, more commonly, part of the culture) in a way that is meaningful to readers without great distortion...” (Van Maanen, 1988, p. 13). The specific challenge in the context of trying to understand art markets in Montréal involves not having to revert back to traditional micro-macro distinctions and take methodological and theoretical positions that view the creation and maintenance of art worlds as a number of inter-related ‘black boxes’. Most importantly Latour’s concept of the social as ongoing associations between individuals (Latour, 2005) links ANT as well as Bourdieu’s field theory (Pierre Bourdieu, 1993, 1997 [1977]; Pierre Bourdieu et al., 1991 [1972]) to methodological principles that acknowledge the importance of reflexivity in the ethnographic research process.

### Following the Actor and Interview Strategies

ANT is premised on the idea that “it is no longer enough to limit actors to the role of informers offering cases of some well known types...” (Latour, 2005, p. 11), instead the research process involves letting the actors “make up their own theories of what the social is made of” and not limiting in advance the shape, size, heterogeneity, and combinations of associations” (ibid). In the context of this research project this ‘follow the actor principle’ was an operative principle that was used as an epistemological frame for the fieldwork process. Did I rigorously adhere to its precepts? In a practical sense, yes. Each interview subject was asked about others in the field they thought would be valuable to talk to. I would then follow these leads and assess their usefulness. Usefulness in the context of the formal interview



process was primarily linked to a concern about ‘triangulating’ suspicions and hypotheses garnered from personal experience and textual evidence in and about the primary art market in the city. In one manner or another all of these respondents were ‘mediators’ that satisfied definitions of cultural intermediary as used by Bourdieu but more fundamentally, deriving from an ANT approach, were in positions that changed and modified information, careers and relationships. Their positions placed them at important nodes in a network (and key discursive elements) that constitute the art field in the city. Their cynicism or enthusiasm, knowledge or ignorance, are all part of the ‘translation’ process that shifts, reproduces, and modifies power within the network of relationships and discourses, and if not modified, are endorsed through their tacit use by a speaker. As in Latour’s power as token metaphor, “each of the people in the chain are not simply resisting a force or transmitting it...rather, they are doing something essential for the existence and maintenance of the token...” (B. Latour, 1986, p. 288). Power in the form of status, prestige and importance in the city’s art world is not simply handed down by an all powerful Leviathan on an obedient and obliging group of underlings but constructed through these linkages and alliances.

As Bourdieu’s work points out, the world of cultural production is a constantly changing performative battleground between agents and institutions within and between different fields. For Bourdieu these ‘genetic’ relationships must be uncovered through the application of a ‘scientific stance’ that does away with the dualism that results in the two extremes of the ‘theoreticist’ perspective on one hand and a simplified ‘positivist’ perspective on the other.(Pierre Bourdieu et al., 1991 [1972])<sup>4</sup> The ‘demolishing of dualism’ is achieved through rigorous empirical research and a process that he describes as epistemological

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<sup>4</sup> The distinction refers to Adorno - “...an arrogant theoretician who refuses to sully his hands with empirical trivia...” and Lazarsfeld (in light of his work in the service of Madison Ave.) who Bourdieu describes as “...a submissive empiricist, ready for every abdication demanded by a scientific order strictly subordinated to the social order” . (Pierre Bourdieu, 1984 [1979], p. 511)

vigilance - ‘the reflection by the scientific subject on his or her own social relations’. (Ibid ix)

It is in Bourdieu’s attempt to do away with micro/macro distinctions, a reliance on empirical research and an adherence to the reflexive requirements of knowledge construction that he also shares an intellectual kinship with actor network theorists Latour and Callon. As Latour points out echoing Bourdieu’s dynamic agent and principles of knowledge construction:

“It is not the sociologists job to decide in the actor’s stead what groups are making up the world and which agencies are making them act. Her job is to build the artificial experiment – a report, a story, a narrative, an account – where this diversity might be employed to the full...if there is one thing you cannot do in the actor’s stead it is to decide where they stand on a scale going from small to big, because at every turn of their many attempts at justifying behaviour they may suddenly mobilise the whole of humanity, France, capitalism and reason while, a minute later, they may settle for a local compromise”. (Latour, 2005, pp. 184-185)

Latour’s boundary for research is constituted, by actors operating in a ‘bracketed’ space decided upon by the social scientist. Given that sociology is the study of the ‘associations between heterogeneous elements’ which we ‘designate’ as the social (Ibid, p5), these associations by virtue of the fact of being driven by individuals, remain dynamic, combative, relational and in flux.

On the other hand ANT is looking to reclaim an empiricism from the positivist school “that is still real and objective, but is [also] livelier, more talkative, active, pluralistic and more mediated than the other”. (Latour, 2005, p. 115) This is still a concern for the same positive world that is out there but qualified by a question that asks: “How could a fact be that solid if it is also fabricated?” (Latour, 2005, p. 112) This approach with its particular movement “a bit *closer* to where agencies are made to express themselves” (ibid), an approach I have tried to follow in this study of the primary art market in Montréal, still poses practical problems that are not so easily resolved. The commitment to observation in ANT, that recalls Geertz’s ‘thick descriptions’ - “our own constructions of other people’s constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to” (Geertz, 1993, p. 9), and the principle of following the actors, and

the inevitable ‘trans-formation’ of the world through observation and writing up of the research process (Latour, 2005, p. 149) does not involve a delineation of the social but a clarity on the part of the social scientist to articulate the ‘frame’ chosen to delimit the network for the purpose of the research and the questions being answered. The common thread between studying Bourdieu’s ‘objective relationships’ and Callon and Latour’s ‘traceable associations’ is the reliance on an epistemology that is grounded in a methodological imperative based on the observation of performed social activity and nowhere more so than in the context of making markets.

### Interview Selection and Data

The interview selection process began with individuals operating in the city’s art world that I knew were relevant through my prior experience in the field. These were starting points that often led to meeting new actors and dealing with issues that I had not considered at the onset of the whole process. The harvested data included 19 transcribed, structured interviews, five of which were with commercial gallery owners with businesses focusing on primary market work by emerging and mid career artists. (See Table 1 at the end of this chapter) The other formal interviews included two prominent journalists writing about culture, one for a major English and the other for a prominent French daily in the city, three curators working at government funded state and university museums, two prominent academics writing about cultural politics in the province, a mid-career artist/art professor, emerging artist/gallery salesperson, a well known art collector in the city, the director of an art ‘union’ group, and two art funding program officers, one at the provincial and the other at the federal level. This was in addition to approximately 50 ‘research related events’ that included art openings, art fairs, exhibits and talks that were a source for observational data through participant observation as well as opportunities for conducting informal interviews. As Becker points out:

...the participant observer gathers data by participating in the daily life of the group or organization he studies. He watches the people he is studying to see what situations they ordinarily meet and how they behave in them. He enters into conversation with some or all of the participants in these situations and discovers their interpretations of the events he has observed. (H. S. Becker, 1958, p. 652)

This part of the fieldwork was an important source for the field notes that also include the personal reflections and ruminations over the research process. This focused fieldwork period was book ended by the Toronto International Art Fair in November 2006 and by the Montréal Biennale in June 2007, two major visual art events with Canada wide significance. Informal discussions with actors I knew personally occurred throughout the writing up process but I did conduct one formal interview with a prominent curator 8 months prior to completion as a way of triangulating the ongoing relevance of the debate presented here.

The fieldwork also included the ‘harvesting’ of a broad range of documentary evidence that consisted primarily of art related marketing ephemera – programs, flyers and catalogues, as well as newspaper and magazine clippings dealing with art related concerns and the general cultural politics at play in the city and Province. I reviewed the local newspapers on a daily basis and created a clippings bag of retrieved articles from hardcopy or the web. The tendency of the French language dailies to devote more space to the political economy of the art and cultural scene rather than simply editorials or reviews of shows or events led me regularly to the pages of *La Presse* and *Le Devoir*. Between late 2006 and early 2008, I harvested approximately 100 clippings that touched on a range of issues tied to cultural funding and development in the province as well as the reasonable accommodation debate. At the time I applied a very broad and loose criteria to the process, choosing material that I thought might be useful in the narrative of the argument I would later construct. This was a partial and selective process and not particularly methodologically rigorous. In defense of this approach I was not trying to create a precise inventory to generate media analytics but rather

find material that referenced and supported the broad lines of debate during the variety of interviews – Montréal’s status as an art center particularly in relation to Toronto and Vancouver, the dilemma of the cosmopolitan and the parochial from the perspective of actors in the primary art market in particular and the local creative economy in general, etc.. I would also review the local art magazines, particularly Canadian Art, Border Crossings and Les vies des arts and ESSE (all of these magazines either in whole or in part addressed both the primary commercial, artist and state run sectors in Québec and Canada) and assemble clippings or go online to retrieve articles that I thought might have some relevance down the line. I also looked at program catalogues from the major local festivals such as the Festivale Internationale de Jazz de Montréal (FIJM) since they occasionally included editorial pieces by senior officials critical of government funding or strategy (as opposed to the more typical glad handing and praise). Alain Simard, director and founder of the FIJM, whose criticism in 2006 of the municipal and provincial governments’ lack of initiative on moving forward with the construction of the Quartier de spectacle in the Jazz Festival catalogue, which I made use of in chapter seven, is a good example. Although very little of this ephemeral material is directly referenced in the thesis it did help provide a broad sense of the network of relationships that inevitably linked up and played a role in art world activity in Montréal supporting many of the positions taken by the interviewees. Issues concerning the reasonable accommodation debate, a provincial election, and a minority win by the federal conservative government at the beginning of 2006 were very much in the air and became part of the overall ethnographic frame and formed part of the clippings selection. In addition to historical and theoretical literature surrounding issues of Québécois nationalism and history, I wanted to give a sense of the role of the mediascape in the evolution of ‘sociological facts’ made apparent through the ethnographic process. Put together I hope this approach touches on what can be described as

‘perspective by incongruity’ (see Hammersley, 1983p163) – the notion of being open to conceptual and intellectual threads offered by atypical sources of documentary evidence.

In the formal and informal interviews relationships were uniformly cordial, yet the commercial actors were generally less generous with contact and leads to others in the network than those operating in the public sector. One has to always keep in mind that the interview process is a form of disclosure where the speaker presents a ‘preferred self-identity which is laden with moral elements...’ (Seale, 1998, pp. 214-215) and though it serves as a key resource it is very important to be mindful of “...simplistic notions that the interview is an unproblematic window on the social world.” Accounting for bias in respondent answers remains a concern in assessing the validity of the interview data. The information gathered in the interview process describes what people *say they do*, not necessarily *what they do* or have done (P. Atkinson, Coffey, & Delamont, 2003p105). Nevertheless, we remain obliged to report these as not somehow outside of a ‘truth’, but as part of the way in which actors choose to construct and describe the world in which they operate in the context of the interview setting. For the commercial gallery owners my past experience in the field may have created some suspicion put together with my academic interests following too closely on from running a business that competed directly with many of these respondents. Contacts in the form of clients and state and bureaucratic operators are valuable resources that are strategically guarded. From the perspective of the respondents, facilitating my access to these individuals could be viewed as placing privileged relationships under risk. The value of ‘gossip’ in and amongst players in the field, what White describes as the vehicle that can “...supply to each producer an estimate of most of the terms achieved by peers...” (White, 1995, p. 62) was regularly made quite clear in the respondents attempts to elicit information that I had garnered in the field from my other interview subjects. Despite the fact that most

had signed disclosure statements, including the right to use their name, I continually refrained from providing any substantial information about individuals or the contents of our discussion to other respondents in the hopes of maintaining an appearance of integrity and distance in a field of competing interests and rivalries. Although one always gives up some morsel to appease curiosity and allay misgivings, looking back on this portion of the fieldwork, I now believe a more strategic approach in managing these details would have better served my purpose rather than the ‘naïve’ approach I did take on many occasions – what Marshall describes as the Chauncey Gardener (playing naïve) strategy to interviewing research subjects. (Marshall, 1984, p. 8) This would have involved acting on the knowledge that my presence in the network was not about preserving a ‘threatened’ ecology, moving in and out and not disturbing a native habitat nor moving in with the attention of fostering change per se, but accepting and assuming the inevitable consequence of being in the game with a larger degree of deliberateness in the persona of ‘social scientist’ and ‘political actor’.

The approach of public sector employees, particularly the curators and administrators I talked to, was far more open than the commercial operators to the idea of sharing their knowledge of the field in an attempt to challenge possible perceptions of ivory – tower perspectives of artistic pretension and bureaucratic aloofness. The security that these positions afford breeds a different form of competitive practice. The fact that status and power are constituted through relationships not tied to an overt commercial paradigm is a reason for a greater comfort in divulging and facilitating access to colleagues and acquaintances in the field. Additionally, there is a public service mandate of promulgating and promoting an interest in the visual arts - a pedagogical function that is an integral part of the curatorial role in the Montréal museums and galleries. What I sensed was a particular enthusiasm and lack of suspicion about my project from these respondents and a desire to connect me to others in the field. Most if not all

of the individuals in these positions also shared a strong academic background, which as spokespersons for visual art history in the Province, was regularly called on to use in the preparation of curatorial statements sharing in the ‘disinterested’ gaze of the scientific stance employed by the social sciences. Given the academic training of those in these positions, there was also a particular sense of trying to share in the critical approach that was suggested by my presence in their offices.

Public or private sector, the examination of primary art markets in Montréal is a look at a particular kind of competition amongst a localised cultural elite. In order to understand the competition over combinations of symbolic and economic wealth one has

“...to take into account their membership... [in a] ... dominated universe and the greater or lesser distance of this universe from that of the dominant class, an overall distance that varies with different periods and societies and also, at any given time, with various position in the..field. (Pierre Bourdieu, 1993, p. 166).

The incumbents and challengers in the city’s commercial art world are a ‘dominated dominant class’ selling to the wealthier members of the population, appearing to uphold the ideals of art and community and vigilantly maintaining defensive positions from the political and economic interests of philistines. This is particularly the case for those that I approached for formal interviews who as curators, gallery owners, bureaucrats or critics hold influential positions within the city’s art world. Their importance even outside the confines of the art world in which they are key operators is that the demand for their knowledge and mediating skills place them within a special category where they are privy to, refract and may even partake in a network position particular to elites in a metropolitan context of

“embeddedness within a broader or more wide-ranging set of community dimensions that include the physical ecology of the community, both its internal variation and its position within metropolitan and regional structures... (Hunter, 1993, p. 37).



The interview material also became an important source in bridging the gap between "...the analysis of government policy documents from the point of view of creators and from the point of view of their recipients without assuming them to be passive."(Sassatelli, 2009, p. 9). The implied active role of these mediators in the generating of collective identity formation was in retrospect too discreetly managed by me in the interview setting. I did not want to enter into debates around differing political perspectives and therefore avoided an overtly interrogative approach to my line of questioning, and instead focused on broader questions concerning the role of respondents and their understanding of the primary visual arts market. Their comments on what was missing in the 'scene' and what needed to change ended up answering some of these questions in a more oblique manner. In the writing up process the interpretive challenge involved making the links between their statements and the analysis of discourse and practice and its relationship to government programs, policy and the competitive field.

Discussions with art students or gallery clients was invariably with a group from a primarily linguistically mixed, white middle and upper-middle class, and in the case of art students, included recent immigrants who, although in Montréal may be struggling in terms of status and income relative to their peers, have grown-up amidst similar upper strata class backgrounds in their countries of origin. In the frame of this research project this latter group were primarily of Middle Eastern, and of South and Central American origin. South - Asians and people of Afro-Caribbean descent were noticeably absent in the city's visual arts spaces as patrons, artists or administrators.

## Inside and Out - The Nous or Vous?

*Employment equity policies intended for members of cultural communities have existed within the public service since the 1980's...Yet it must be admitted the expected results have not materialised; only 3.4% of public service positions are filled by groups targeted within this action plan, despite the fact they represent more than 20% of the labour force. (Québec, 2004, p. 7)*

To understand some of the mechanics of doing research as a locally born, South-Asian-Anglophone-French speaker in Montréal one has to construct a tentative map of the unique trajectory of identity politics at play in Québec. A project about art worlds, and 'high' art as opposed to the false dichotomies of popular or folk art, is about the competition amongst a field of established and aspiring elite cultural workers. In Montréal, these positions are dominated by an ethnically homogenous group of white francophone professionals who are gatekeepers of the visual culture of modern Québec in and through major local institutions, bureaucracies and key commercial galleries. Given the contested but on going ethnic character of the Québécois nationalist project it is no surprise that these coveted and symbolically important positions continue to present barriers of entry that remain relatively unchallenged. The culture wars which attempted to change institutional practice during the 80's and 90's in the Anglo American world never took ground in francophone Québec. By 2004 the provincial bureaucracy as well as the municipal bureaucracies of Montréal were dramatically under representative of the diversity in the general population compared to other Canadian metropolitan centers. (Aubin, 2007; Québec, 2004; VilledeMontréal, 2007a). Recent years have seen a more proactive approach with an array of policy documents that outline initiatives and programs meant to encourage more inclusive hiring practices and levels of participation in key municipal and provincial institutions including those within the cultural sector (CAM, 2006; Québec, 2004).

One of the unique characteristics of cultural change in Québec, and in the context of Montréal in particular, is a complex refraction of any minority demands through a prism shaped by the francophone majority's linguistic and cultural insecurity as well as dominance. The interminable focus on the identity and political security of the majority and the constant re-invention of these concerns through constitutional, cultural and economic debates between competing nationalist and sovereigntist camps have had the tendency to bracket out minority concerns particularly those outside of the typical statist nexus of Québec / Canada played out between "...the two dominant representations of identity, in their different shades and variants: the melancholy nationalist discourse, at times sorrowful and resigned...;and the anti-nationalist discourse, rationalist and cosmopolitan" (Maclure, 2003, p. 11). This tendency in agenda setting is indicative of the terms, a lack of political wherewithal and the sheer numbers required by minority communities to mobilise debate at the provincial and to a lesser extent within Montréal's municipal government. The collective anxiety of potential loss, rather than a triumphant nationalism fosters a protectionism that is most apparent in the institutional make-up of state bureaucracy and high culture.

The recent commission on 'Reasonable Accommodation', a non-partisan travelling public consultation, chaired by Charles Taylor (the well-known political philosopher) and Gerard Bouchard (a pre-eminent sovereigntist leaning francophone academic) served as a political safety valve meant to give a voice primarily to majority anxiety over perceived compromises and threats to the Québécois way of life through displays of religious dress and symbols in public institutions. This became a highly mediatised event where fears around the perceived threats to the social fabric from Non-European immigration were distilled through the triumvirate of kippa, turban and hijab with particular post – 911 fervour. To a large part the

*Commission de consultation sur les pratiques d'accomodement reliées aux différences culturelles* was emblematic of the shift from an anxiety caused from without, the threat of Anglo-American domination, to a threat from within that extends beyond language to an idea of protecting an imagined unitary, French, white catholic identity. At street level race and religion conflate into a general condition of 'otherness' in light of majority fears. Like the infamous speech by then leader of the Parti Québécois, Jacques Parizeau, on the eve of the 1995 referendum, the fundamental unresolved tension within the nationalist struggle itself between ethnic and linguistic conceptions of the Québécois nation returns to haunt the struggle and those within its spectre. In 2006 like 1995, "the cultural conflict has now changed ground [and] the crucial confrontation for the preservation of Québécois culture, it is claimed, is taking place no longer exclusively on the border of the province, but also on the internal frontiers, where some view the combat as between the immigrants and 'authentic' Québécois." (Bataille, 1998, p. 394) .

For the players who constitute an 'elite' within the city's art world, my approach was driven by the premise that from a methodological perspective "understanding elites necessarily involves uncovering the systemic properties of their communal context." (Hunter, 1993, p. 54) At this top end of the city's cultural hierarchy, the 'accommodation' debate was addressed less on terms linked to religion and secularism than to a desire on the part of respondents to disassociate themselves from the flagrant racist and simple minded remarks emanating from the white, French, catholic political right. In downtown Montréal in 2006, simplistic forms of defence of a cultural and identity essentialism - "the entrapment of monistic authenticity" - (Karmis & MacLure, 2001, p. 380) are out of line with globalized aesthetics and the desire for internationally recognised capitals of culture. The inherent cosmopolitanism of this community drew lines that were about the urban and rural schisms that this debate engendered

and the fundamental class differences implied in this distinction. Sovereignist or nationalist, the respondents assume, in face of me, an interpretation of nation that falls in line with a multiculturalist vision of the city and the province. As they assumed my liberal, secularist position by virtue of my participation in the local art world, I operated on assumptions of their adherence to principles of plurality and inclusion. I knew that in most instances though, if the subject of religious symbols was raised, I would most certainly be in the position of defending religious rights in face of what I believed and continue to believe is a particular sanctimonious space upheld by secularists in Québec concerning religious expression. This is particularly the case amongst the city's visual arts community where religion is certainly not 'de rigueur'<sup>5</sup> where the very common conflation between outward religious expression (with the exception of wearing a cross) and fundamentalism or orthodoxy would simply be assumed.

Among both public and private sector players the thesis of 'markets as politics' (Barry & Slater, 2005; Fligstein, 1996, 2001) was not something I explicitly articulated in the interview setting. My goal was to elicit descriptions of the way in which the visual art world was understood to operate by the various participators in the local network. Given that "as a methodological baseline, ethnography should be understood as the study of people in their own 'natural' setting with a focus on capturing and re-presenting the subjects' own understanding of their world, (Alexander, 2006, p. 400) my general strategy avoided creating a controversial atmosphere. I believed that an overt political positioning on my part would force a defensive and therefore protective position on the part of the respondents. The modus operandi was to apply Becker's maxim of asking 'how' questions rather than the 'why' (H. S. Becker, 1998), an approach that would encourage the respondents to answer in any way that

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<sup>5</sup> This is particularly acute in Québec where anti-clericism was a central component of the Quiet Revolution movement. During the recent reasonable accommodation debates this historical legacy was called up regularly as a trait that made religious display particularly problematic for the majority white French Catholics in the Province.

suited them (pg 59). To some degree this tied into the ‘Chauncey Gardner’ approach mentioned earlier, a demonstration of lack of knowledge on the interviewer’s part that would “serve as the basis for convincing informants that they should take the time to inform you of what they know”(Hunter, 1993, p. 51). People like talking about themselves and sharing their knowledge, and having an attentive audience is flattering and encourages an amiable atmosphere and dialogue. Large sections of the formal interviews in particular involved extended passages on Québec or the art market history that were not directly relevant but I did not discourage them, believing that these seemingly innocuous details shaped the contours of the discourse.

One thing which is apparent from living in the city and which remains an unspoken quandary which faces many of the francophone elite respondents I talked to is a situation best explained as the predicament facing white, French, catholic intellectuals in the Province: because

...he [or she] is the member of a small threatened community, a ‘small nation’...the Québécois intellectual feels a moral responsibility towards this community to which he is indebted and provisions?, inscribing his reflexive movement into the thinkable and narrative space which, if let loose, risks putting this community in peril... this is not ideology driven by resentment rather it is one mobilised by urgency...” (J. Létourneau, 1998, pp. 369-370)

The success of the social engineering project in Québec is responsible for the gains that many of this elite enjoy. The fact that these gains have been in place for only two generations and though the remarks from the fringe are a source of embarrassment and represent a dated conception of nation, the loss and threat is tangible and demonstrates a real anxiety, which in the context of the interview setting, I will not in all likelihood be privy to. This is the melancholy nationalism that those seeking to espouse a pluralist vision of Québec identity, with its attendant risks and benefits, are referring to. This is also the veil of ethno-political betrayal that insinuates itself onto the field of francophone power in the city and province. Unlike the accusations of false consciousness by sovereignist when addressing their

francophone federalist neighbors, those arguing for a plural and inclusive Québec engage in a dialogue that is perceived to threaten cultural as well as economic gains and control. As long as references to the ethnicity of Québec's ethnic majority [French Canadian] also signifies a murky and undesirable pre-modernity, it becomes impossible to name Québec's ethnic majority even a so called 'modern nationalism', which means that the history and culture of that ethnic majority comes to over determine the field of culture in Québec." (Abramson, 2001, pp. 96-97). Real attempts at reconciling the shift between ethnic and linguistic nationalism have only begun on the institutional ground level in the Province, in the sense that the reasonable accommodation debate and the ensuing hearing, though at times cringe worthy, did attempt to lay bare the variables at stake and shift the debate up to a new paradigm that was cognisant of the multicultural fabric and history of the province – placing these issues at or near the center rather than on the periphery.

The consequences of these positions are unsaid cleavages that create bearers and non-bearers of the larger cultural mission of the Québécois 'people'. The conception of the Québécois struggle following from Williams' concept of culture as a whole way of life (Raymond Williams, 1958), is built into this essentialist conception of identity and therefore also includes the economic dimension of nationalist self-determination – the Quiet Revolution and state corporatism - Hydro Québec serving as one of the best examples. Economic and cultural protectionism bear heavily on the ability to enact change at the institutional level, policy and history act as epistemological and historiographic frames that typically deflect meaningful political debate around race and inclusion, outside of the historical English/French divide within the province. As one respondent pointed out, a prominent journalist for a French language daily, pushing for change in the Québec context cannot happen too quickly, "...the reasonable accommodation situation... if it created a backlash... people are capable of the

worst...look at the Balkan conflict in the 90's" (Interviews, 2008).

Within this complicated political ecology I am making claim to both an insider interpretation and to the partial condition of an outsider. I do not believe that my engagement with informants, particular in the context of the interview portion of the research project ever moved into the arena of 'subjective involvement' an accusation leveled at insider research (Aguilar, 1981, p. 15), but my vocational interests in the local art scene which had preceded the fieldwork did render me suspect to the commercial gallery owners I talked to.

Nevertheless the outsider condition, given the issues addressed above, remains one important variable of distinction in the context of a number of possible comparative variables. I am 'different', not simply by virtue of physical appearance, but also by the quality of my spoken French and a pedigree that aligns me to the English speaking areas of the city and the historical legacy that implies. Am I outside of or inside "...a homogenous culture and an undifferentiated sub society?" (Aguilar, 1981, p. 25) Clearly both. I am sometimes inside and outside a culture that is in flux and remains permeable. Perhaps it is not permeable enough, or in flux to a degree that suits my social and economic aspirations, but this art world remains a dynamic and fundamentally volatile space – it is not static.

From a reflexive perspective, my difference in the social and research context begets an important ontological question of my desire for 'appartenance' or belonging to this home and to my willingness to participate or at the very least share in the sentiments that inform the struggle of the majority. An outcome of Burawoy's contention that a "reflexive ethnography presumes an external real world, but it is one that we can only know through our constructed relation to it, (Burawoy, 2003, p. 655) demands that I ask how I choose to understand my own interpretations and positionings to the field I have chosen to analyse. Typically for an



Anglophone, and typically for someone emanating from the ‘communautés culturelles’ my positions are outside the realm of ‘doxa’ for the art field - reflected in the dominance of some debates over others. What are the consequences of my own positioning? Do I direct my questions about Québec and its history to a ‘nous’, an ‘us’ – the multicultural plural Québec of which I am a part or to a ‘vous’, a ‘you’ of an assumed melancholy nationalism that exists in a spectre of fear of linguistic and cultural assimilation by the tripartite forces of immigration, low birth rates and geography.

The fieldwork process was about moving between these conflicted notions of ‘appartenance’ that mirror the larger social and political space and play out in the complexities of the city’s art world. In the context of the interviews this manifested itself in an uncomfortable absence of dialogue surrounding issues of diversity and participation amongst the individuals I talked to. The battles between gatekeepers as well as the barriers and terms of entry and legitimacy within their ranks remain entangled within the ecology of the field but most importantly, these actors attempt to control the terms and scope of acceptable debate within the local art field.

What is produced and reproduced through practice in the art world remains a unique ‘governance landscape’ particular to the city (Keith, 2005, p. 83) where Montréal’s cosmopolitan dilemmas and capacity for innovation reflect the ways in which “rights, recognition and discrimination are configured in patterns that are historically and geographically specific” (Keith, 2005, p. 18), sitting alongside majority dominance and insecurity in Montréal.

## Conclusion

This chapter focused on how the methodological principles implicit in Bourdieu's field theory and central to Callon's network strategies guide the overall research project and the approach to the data harvested during the fieldwork process. Given the nature of the artistic field and the particular focus on performance by high level mediators, an important methodological concern touched on the issues linked to doing research on 'elites' who operate in relatively intimate regional contexts. As a onetime actor in the field and a researcher with strong roots in Montréal, an important concern that refracts the way the ethnographic research and writing up process unfolds involves issues around doing insider research, ethnographic distance, and 'appartenance' in face of the specter of Québécois essentialism. The conflict between outsider status in the art field and the process of interviewing elite cultural operators, most of whom are members of the dominant majority, is framed within the context of the dilemma over the unresolved status of 'Québécois', its implications for ethnographic research and the specific challenges faced in engaging the primary visual art field in Montréal for the purpose of a research project.

Table 1

The following is a list and brief description of the individuals that participated in the structured interview portion of the fieldwork for this project.

**Collectors**

*1. L. – Art collector*

A 60 year-old former corporate lawyer and art collector. He is regularly purchasing work by emerging artists in the city and has an in depth knowledge of the contemporary art world. He sits on the board of directors of the contemporary arts museum as well as on the board of a number of local companies.

**Public sector curators / directors**

*2. M. – Curator at one of the local museums*

M is a young 30'ish and recently hired curator at one of the major art museums in Montréal. He took the job after having worked at the association of contemporary art galleries for 4 years. He is very much in the middle of the 'scene' and at one stage worked as a salesperson in the city's most profitable commercial gallery space.

*3. L2 – Director of a major university gallery and the supporting institution for Canada's entry to the Venice Biennale.*

She is one of the most prominent curators in the province, responsible for a number of important survey shows while working for the Musée des beaux-arts du Québec in Québec City. In her 50's, she is the curator accompanying a Canadian entry to the Venice Biennale.

*4. P. – Curator and university art history lecturer.*

P is a curator and an instructor in the art history department at one of the French language universities. At the time of our meeting he was putting together a show as a guest curator for one of the local museums.

*5. S. – Director of a respected regional museum outside Montréal.*

She is one of Canada's up and coming museum directors and is recognized in Québec and in Canada as an important actor on the scene. She was also head of the visual arts selection committee for the Conseil des arts de Montréal.

**Commercial gallery owners**

*6. J. – Gallery director*

A recognized artist in her late 30's, J. oversees the operation of one of Montréal's newest and grandest privately owned art spaces, an exceptional 30K square foot renovated industrial building spread over 3 floors. Working with the owner, a multi-millionaire businessman, they are attempting to create a space that is part private museum, part commercial gallery and a neighbourhood gentrification project. The project is one of a kind for this city and many in the arts community are trying to determine what the vocation of the gallery is, or what it is trying to become. The young director also seems to be working through those same questions.

*7. S. – Gallery owner*

An ex-interior decorator who now owns a humble but successful commercial gallery space focusing on local primary market work, S. straddles the spaces between decorative and high art. She generally works with very young artists, recent graduates etc.. She has been in business for 5 years and opened a storefront three years ago on an exclusive commercial strip that services Montréal's richest neighbourhood. She is in her mid to late 50's.

*8. E. – Gallery owner*

A well respected art dealer in the city who works with mid and late career artists. He recently closed his gallery space and now puts on rotating events in rented locations with his roster of artists, many of whom have well established careers as professors in the local universities. He has also participated in international art fairs and also serves as a dealer in the secondary market. He is in his mid to late 50's.

*9. R. – Gallery owner*

R. and his partner own the city's largest commercial art gallery. Their business rested primarily on framing with an exhibition and sales component that has now taken a more central place in their operation. They have been able to present work that is some of the most dynamic available for sale in Montréal in a new space which is large enough to also include rental areas often used for student exhibitions. In their 40's and after 10 years in business they have managed to establish a solid reputation.

*10. M. – Gallery owner*

M. is the owner of a slightly run down gallery space which he rents out to young artists. Unlike many of the other gallery owners in the city he has managed to cultivate national prominence and an enfant terrible status in Montréal. Always the critic, he has a reputation for voicing opinions that many in the art world share but few are willing to acknowledge publicly.

**Journalists**

*11. S. – Journalist French Language Daily*

S. is an arts and culture reporter for a French language daily. His work focuses on the political and policy issues surrounding culture in the city and the province.

*12. H. – Journalist English Language Daily and College Instructor*

H. has been involved in the Montréal art scene since 1973 and has reported on its history and development. Now in his 60's he writes a weekly art review piece for the major English language daily in the city. His is essentially the only space in the paper dedicated to the local visual arts scene. His main occupation is teaching art history at one of the city's English language colleges.

**Academics**

*13. G. – Professor at the Research Center*

G. is one of the few local academics working in the area of the Sociology of Art. He has published a number of papers dealing with art worlds and recently prepared a study on labour market issues facing visual artists in Québec. He is responsible for a number of reports prepared on behalf of local governments and advocacy groups.

*14. S. – Associate Director of a political science program at an English university in the city.*

S. oversees an interdisciplinary department at the university that helps educate the primarily Anglo student population about Québécois culture. He is an editor of a Montréal based academic political-science journal that stresses a more dynamic and inclusive vision of Québec society.

**Artists**

*15. B. – Young painter and salesman at commercial art gallery*

B. is a young 32 year old Montréal born painter who has been struggling to get into a prominent grade school in the US which he views as a necessary ticket to continuing his career as a visual artist. He also works in a gallery that sells conservative, highly decorative work. Along with the sales job and the fact he recently graduated, he moves between the commercial and the student art scene that plays out in both established and makeshift art spaces in the city.

*16. E. – Painter and Art Professor. at local English language university*

She is a 38 year old, prominent, mid-career painter from Ontario now teaching at one of the English language universities. She is well known in contemporary art circles nationally but hardly shows her work here in Montréal.

**Arts funding officials**

*17. D. – Program Officer at the Canada Council*

D. is responsible for the only program available at the federal level geared to commercial galleries. The goal of the Program is to help established commercial galleries promote the work of professional Canadian visual artists internationally through financial support to travel to art fairs and provide help covering marketing and promotional costs.

*18. P. – A senior coordinator at a museum and former official with the le Conseil des arts et lettres du Québec, the provincial government's arts funding agency.*

The discussion with P helped outline issues from an institutional perspective. He isn't involved in front line work for the museum but has useful commentary on the institutional funding and the strategies employed by his superiors to bring greater attention locally and internationally to the museum and the city. Given his experience as a bureaucrat his perspective takes into account the pressures and concerns of government in meeting stakeholder needs.

**Director of arts lobby/advocacy group**

*19. C– Director of a provincial artist’s lobby and advocacy group*

The 45 year-old director of Québec’s based advocacy groups working specifically on behalf of visual artists in the province. They represent the interests of visual artists at the various levels of municipal and provincial government and played a part in the creation of provincial legislation (S32.01 and S32.1) that gave official legal status to artists in Québec. More recent issues include promoting ‘droits de suite’ laws in the province and spurring government interest in the creation of artist retirement initiatives and benefits.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Art Worlds, Geography and History in Montréal**

#### Introduction

A key aspect of Montréal's changing role in Canada and Québec is the realignment of the city's position as a Canada wide 'command and control' center to one with a more limited regional focus. This came about through a combination of the ascendancy of Toronto and its role in the development of Western Canada together with the economic and cultural re-engineering generated by the Québécois nationalist movement. The history of these political shifts in Québec involves strong links to the artistic and cultural sphere in the province. As early as the 1940's, the artists and signatories who participated in the creation of the *Réfus Globale* manifesto played an important political role in articulating the dilemma of culture, nation and power for the francophone majority. The chapter examines the *Réfus* and the crisis of identity in Québec and its articulation through what Maclure calls Québec's unique mode of 'melancholia' (Maclure, 2003) in relation to the development of the visual arts sector in the city of Montréal and in relation to the larger nationalist exercise in the province.

The frames that mediators employ within Montreal's geographically demarcated ecology are shaped by what Bourdieu has identified as the 'space of possibles...' that are '...immanent within the field itself' (Pierre Bourdieu, 1993, p. 189). The considerations that inform the calculations and strategies of actors within the porous boundaries of the field and the relational networks that constitute it remain a product of the unique history and trajectory of the field and its relationship to the array of differently scaled social assemblages that the primary visual art field engages. As Bourdieu goes on to point out "...what happens in the field is more and more dependent on the specific history of the field, and more and more

difficult to infer or to anticipate from the knowledge of the state of the social world (economic, political situation, etc) at any given moment.” (Ibid) One characteristic of actors in the field is their feeling of being very much ‘apart’ from the quotidian and banal realm of the social that is characteristic of the art world's ‘distinction’. As this research project demonstrates, this distance is a construction that actors in the field attempt to preserve and cultivate. For an avant-garde the maintenance of this separation is crucial in preserving its claim to authority and its role in the production of Platonic ‘essences’ where the “...social alchemy of their specific laws of functioning [the art field’s], tend to extract the sublimated essence of their universal from the often merciless clash between particular interest.” (Pierre Bourdieu, 1993, p. 190) This separation is also part of the field’s political utility in what Barry would describe as the array of ‘technologies’ that operate as political machines (Barry, 2001) used to govern and organize the modern state. An art world and particularly an avant-garde art world plays a functional role as an expression of modernity and cultural sophistication in the state building exercise central to the Quebecois national project as well as within Montreal’s own metropolitan positioning strategy. It does this through the organization of actors and institutions that constitute that field while sustaining the appearance of operating in a realm that exists above the banal and quotidian world of politics.

This functionalist role is an important trait of the art field’s evolution at the level of provincial government jurisdiction in Quebec and the field’s increasing important profile within policy and programs at the municipal level meant to generate a recognizable ‘cultural capital’. The unique characteristics of the primary art market in Montreal are a product of the historical evolution of Montreal in a national Canadian context and its centrality as the economic and cultural capital of the Quebec ‘nation’. Quebec’s evolution in the 1960’s was played out on distinctly ethno-nationalist terms. These developments were as much part of the “...the

baby boom and access to education, the economic gains of the post war era that generated the distance from necessity and the maturation of the welfare state and the critique of an unfettered market system characteristic of Western societies” (Ley, 2003, p. 2536) as the struggles for political independence that informed the narratives of de-colonisation in former colonial regimes in Africa, Asia and Latin America. For the French Canadian majority, the period of the ‘Quiet Revolution’ of the 1960’s was tied to a modernist re-engineering of the Quebec state and the majority’s economic, cultural and political emancipation from anglo-protestant and francophone clerical/statist domination. The narrative of the Quiet Revolution operates as a turning point and an empowering tabula-rasa from which to generate a new national culture, in part through promoting and securing a domestic field for art and artists, mediators and institutions.

The ‘space of possibles’ (Pierre Bourdieu, 1993, p. 189) employed by those mediators bearing the necessary ‘capital for consecration’ (Pierre Bourdieu, 1996, p. 148) in the primary art field operate in reference to this politics, history and geography that generate the unique characteristics of the cultural field in Quebec. Thus the frame that informs labour market practices and artistic canonization is based on a particular orientation and organization of this historical past that in turn informs the strategic considerations of mediators. This concerns commonly shared narratives that are part of the habitus of the mediators I talked to involving the Francophone majority’s struggle for cultural security which operates as an “objectivized and incorporeal history...” that only a social history can uncover (Pierre Bourdieu, 1996, pp. 311-312).<sup>6</sup> The political utility of the Refus Globale manifesto and its artists and the generation of what Maclure describes as a ‘melancholic nationalism’ (Maclure, 2003),

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<sup>6</sup> Though there is a sense in which the habitus is “history turned into nature” and that the “...relating of these two systems of relations, [occurs] in and through the production of practice. (Pierre Bourdieu, 1997 [1977], p. 78). Making the claim that this acts as a singular ‘universal essence’ nevertheless does not do justice to the way actors I talked to, have quite consciously, ‘chosen’ to selectively appropriate history and behaviours.



particular to many of the nationalist narratives in Quebec, serve as framing devices to the development of the visual arts field in the province and the performance of its mediators. The deliberate or unconscious engagement of history inevitably plays out in the strategic maneuvers of mediators and institutions. The aggregate outcomes of these competitive practices, in the labour market and through selection and celebration of art and artists by state and private sector actors, situate these mediators as agents in the generation of the material and discursive modes of diversity and national identity in a symbolically influential field. More recent events like the debate over ‘reasonable accommodation’ continue the slow evolution and deliberation that informs public debates over identity in Quebec that mediators operationalize in their power to filter and position these concerns. This is done in the task of moving between artist producer and consumer and back again as “...a producer and reproducer of objective meaning...” (Pierre Bourdieu, 1997 [1977], p. 79) that has far reaching impacts beyond the porous boundaries of the artistic field.

What follows is a cursory physical and political map of Montreal and its visual arts field. The chapter then moves to a discussion of the *Réfus Globale*, an artist manifesto and movement in Montréal at the end of the 1940’s that, for the respondents I talked to, served as a commonly understood starting point for the modern visual culture in the province. The document’s relevance is historiographic and substantive, in the sense that the *Réfus Globale* text is viewed as a ‘founding document’ (Smart, 1998) of the nationalist struggle and in the manner in which the text raises issues concerning the cosmopolitan and parochial, center and periphery, language and cultural security that continue to play themselves out. It is a rallying cry to French Canadians to shake off the yoke of clerical and corrupt conservative state power in the form of a treatise on the national cultural expression of ‘a people’. But it is in the character of the discourse around the ontological security of the French speaking majority that the *Réfus*

Global shares, in what Maclure has identified, as the preponderance of a uniquely Quebec mode of melancholic nationalist thinking, “at times sorrowful and resigned, often vehement and seditious...” (Maclure, 2003, p. 11) that has come to shape the practice of Quebecois nationalism through a range of practices in the arts, politics and the academy.

The melancholic discourse draws from and supports a historical narrative that also operates as an important technology through the economic geographies and practices within Montreal’s primary art market. This is a city where the conception of a singular notion of ‘habitus’ is very problematic (Lahire, 2003) and social imaginaries are multiple and much more diverse than the binarisms of Francophone and Anglophone within the ‘two solitudes’ of MacLennan’s bygone Canada (MacLennan, 1993 [1945]). Nevertheless, even in the context of the cosmopolitan drive to cultural capital status and increasing ethnic diversity in the city, the history of the cultural and linguistic English/French divisions remains inscribed in its built heritage and neighborhoods. The historical overdetermination of the linguistic debate now sits alongside the rising popularity of a culturalist one in a post 911 context. The culturalist and protectionist appeal to the shared values and history of the majority has always been characteristic of the nationalist struggle, but in recent years plays an increasingly prominent role in light of the perceived threat to the cultural integrity (and the ongoing indeterminacy of the Quebecois identity construct) of the majority posed by non-western immigration and religious practice. The fickle relationship with-in and with-out history that marks so much of contemporary art practice and mediation in Montréal often belies its situatedness in very pragmatic and highly localised political, economic and social dilemmas within which the ‘space of possibles’ frames strategic maneuvers and evaluative practices employed by actors in the field.

## Montréal's Political Ecology

Montréal is the heart of a metropolitan center of almost 3.6 million people in south-western Québec, 80km north of the US border, 300 km west of the provincial capital of Québec City, an hour and a half east of the Canadian capital, Ottawa and 650 km east of Toronto, the biggest city in the Canadian federation. Close to half the population of the province of Québec's 7.7 million people live in the Montréal metropolitan area (Québec, 2007). The city generally rates highly when compared to other cities in North America and Europe in terms of indexes that measure quality of life and infrastructure and offers a multilingual and continental European twist to urban life that is particularly unique by North American standards. Montréal is the financial and cultural center of the Province of Québec, and the second largest city in the Canadian federation as well as the province's most ethnically and linguistically diverse region. Based on recent census figures, 90% of the roughly nine percent of the total provincial population who form the ethnic and visible minority populations in the province make Montréal their home (StatisticsCanada, 2007c, 2007d).

The historical French – English divide still persists but the city has seen the sizable displacement since 1976 of the white, Anglo-Saxon protestant community through emigration and low-birth rates and their replacement by Anglophone, Francophone and Allophone immigrants from the West Indies, South and Central America, Asia and the Arab speaking world. By 1986, “the British ethnic component of Montréal's population had fallen under 10 percent, and over 30 percent of Montréal Island's population was now composed of ‘cultural communities’” (Levine, 1990, p. 217). In recent years this represents a linguistic split based on the language spoken at home that is predominantly French at 67%, English at 17% and other languages at 12% in an overriding context where just over 50% of this total population is also functionally bilingual (StatisticsCanada, 2007b). In the Province as a whole, the white,

francophone, catholic 'French Canadian' population have retained their numerical status and cultural dominance unlike their English speaking historical equivalents in the rest of Canada. The white anglo-saxon population in English Canada have seen their relative numerical dominance challenged by different waves of immigration from other parts of Europe and the rest of the world over the last 100 years (StatisticsCanada, 2007a).

The change in Montréal's status as the banking and commercial center of the Canadian federation is associated with the increasing regional and economic importance of Toronto in the growth of central and western Canada and the rise of the Québécois nationalist movement, in particular the success at the polls of Rene Levesque's Parti Québécois in the 1976 provincial election. After sixteen years of dramatic yet negotiated realignment between Anglophone and Francophone interests, and calculated resistance on the part of Pierre Trudeau's federal Liberal Party and the rest of English Canada to the separatist cause, the political climate was ripe for Québécois separatists. They were obviously not so willing to make the political compromises and negotiations to arrive at a properly francophonised Québec in general and Montréal in particular at a later time in an abstracted future. The possibility of becoming 'the maitre chez nous' (masters of our own home), the slogan which provincial Liberal Party leader Jean Lesage had used to galvanize francophone Québeckers in 1960 at the onset of the 'Quiet Revolution', becoming reality in the form of an independent Québécois country within a generation – was an attainable goal few nationalists, whatever their allegiances to the idea of a Canadian federation, would have imagined thirty years earlier. The rise of nationalist power was coupled with a significant exodus of the English speaking population and a hastening of the displacement of major financial interests 650km west, to Toronto.

The failure of Montréal to secure its place as the economic center in the Canadian federation following the rapid development of the 1960's meant the steady decline of the city from a national to a regional center. The re-establishment of equilibrium in the context of a geographically smaller command and control center role for the city, particularly within key industries in the cultural sector, and Montréal's reduced serviceable 'hinterland', involved a reconstitution of the corporate management structure that now focused on a francophone provincial as opposed to primarily Anglophone national market. The sizable change brought about by the linguistic shifts in the 1970's and 80's represented a significant reconstituting of management and governance structures so that only by 1996 did management occupations in entertainment, advertising and radio and television re-establish themselves to the levels in Toronto. This was done through the emergence of a renewed class of post-sovereignist francophone managerial elite. (Polèse & Shearmur, 2004, p. 18) The relevance of these key sectors to the parallel shifts in government policy and linkages between 'the new entrepreneurialism' and the notion of 'public-private partnerships' in which "...traditional boosterism is integrated with the use of local governmental powers to try and attract external sources of funding, new direct investments or new employment sources", (Harvey, 1989, p. 7) only emerged as a key policy tenet several years after the 1995 referendum on Québécois sovereignty.<sup>7</sup>

The general success of the francophonisation project and the resulting 'counter hegemony' (Meadwell, 1993) of the 1970's and 1980's has been reconciled in the form of a general

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<sup>7</sup> An official office for public private partnerships was created in 2005 called Partenariats Québec by the Liberal Charest government. Now renamed 'Infrastructure Québec', this office is tasked with organizing the various PPP development initiatives, "which vary principally according to the degree of risk allocated to the private sector in return for a revenue stream generated through fees or through the operation of the infrastructure in question. Forms of PPP include Operation and Maintenance (O&M) projects in which the private sector partner operates and maintains infrastructure which otherwise has been financed and constructed along traditional public-sector lines; Build-Own-Operate (BOO) projects in which the private sector partner builds, owns and operates infrastructure at its cost and risk and operates it thereafter for profit, and Build-Own-Operate-Transfer (BOOT) projects which are similar to BOO projects but which are limited by a concessionary period after which the infrastructure is transferred, usually for a nominal fee, to the public authorities." (Dunsky, 2006)

acceptance by English Canada, the federal government and Quebeckers of all stripes of the province's unique linguistic status and cultural fragility in the North American context. The tenor of nationalist debate has been shaped by this reality and now ranges from full-fledged independence from the Canadian federation as the only means of preserving Québec's 'distinct society' to recent calls for a theoretical consensus around a 'nation within a nation' status in the context of constructions such as an 'open federalism' (see Harmes, 2007). Recent developments have been indicative of a general fatigue around the issue resulting in an abatement of calls for a legislated independent Québec and constitutional wrangling following twenty years of political and economic uncertainty through a generally successful project of social re-engineering . In this post-sovereignist environment, a consensus had emerged among the political and business establishment to focus on bringing the province and the city back to life and capitalize on a belated economic boom that had already benefited the other major metropolitan regions in Canada, Vancouver and Toronto. (Kresl & Proulx, 2000) Within municipal and provincial governments there was a desire and momentum on the part of actors to assert Montréal's presence internationally and encourage economic development in the city through direct foreign investment and the tourist trade. Montréal's distinct cultural status, proximity to the US and Europe, quality of life and pool of surplus, educated and relatively low cost labor was regularly touted in documentation as a key unique selling proposition linked to traveling and doing business in the city. (Kresl & Proulx, 2000, p. 289; VilledeMontréal, 2007c)

As the largest city in Québec, Montréal is the financial center of the province and the center for cultural work and production. Shifts in cultural policy are most acutely felt in Montréal affecting a politically influential labor pool and industrial sector as well ambitions for the urban development and the promotion and positioning of the city internationally. The role of

culture is vitally important to Montréal's financial and symbolic economy and the city goes to lengths to cultivate and capitalize on this image, conscious of the importance of, on one hand, large mainstream public events like the Montréal International Jazz Festival, and on the other the promotion of more specialized, critical and rarified arts events such as theatre festivals and Biennales. Recent municipal policies have been shaped by a ten year action plan "...to create the necessary momentum for identifying and launching projects and measures, both public- and private-sector, that could speed the adoption and later realization of the vision of Montréal as a cultural metropolis." (VilledeMontréal, 2007c, p. 6). The PA 07-17 (Plan d'action 2007-2017) involves increasing access, investment and the quality of cultural activity in the city and is also tied to a major urban redevelopment project in the eastern frontier of the downtown core, known as the Quartier des spectacles. This will redevelop the city's red light area into a cultural corridor involving a series of redesign and rezoning projects that will make available a dedicated space for the many annual music festivals as well as for other art and culturally oriented businesses and activities and "position Montréal as an international cultural destination." (VilledeMontréal, 2008). The Biennales and more recent Triennials can be situated with this drive for international awareness and recognition. For members of the visual arts community, expectations of 'trickle down effects' are high and the extent of political attention directed towards the 'creative economy' by government is viewed enthusiastically but with measured skepticism.

### Montréal's Visual Arts Field

The visual arts field in Montréal is divided into two distinct economies based on private sector and public sector initiatives. Like most Canadian cities and most sectors of the arts economy in Canada, the parallel/artist run, government funded system dominates the field at the level of training, production, exhibition and policy. The competing interests of federal,

provincial and municipal governments make available a substantial pool of financial resources through grant and funding mechanisms to sustain museums, not-for profit galleries, artist-run centers and collectives, professional arts associations and individual artistic projects in addition to exhibition and training through the university and college (CEGEP) systems.

The dispersion of the parallel and private galleries reflects patterns of clustering on the basis of a combination of factors that include language, wealth of surrounding neighborhood, proximity to major art institutions, and existing or ongoing gentrification by the ‘creative classes’ within different areas of the city. The old geographic and linguistic divide between the Francophone east and the Anglophone west plays out in terms of perceived associations with either a predominately Francophone or Anglophone clientele. Galleries such as Bellefeuille on Greene Avenue in the Westmount area has strong links with the city’s Anglophone elite while Simon Blais on St-Laurent (adjacent to the old guard French bourgeois neighborhood of Outremont) is associated with a more francophone clientele. As the two most commercially successful galleries in the city, Bellefeuille is known as the more ‘decorative’ and financially successful of the two while Blais focuses on established canonical Québécois contemporary work and is considered a more ‘serious’ dealer, nevertheless both spaces retain a strong contemporary decorative, as opposed to avant-gardist focus, to the work they sell. (In keeping with their ‘status’ both galleries also maintain a strong presence through regular advertising in the more prominent glossy art magazines such as Canadian Art.)

The Green Avenue strip is an important location for decorative work in the city generally, attracting more commercial galleries than the francophone homologues in Outremont, on Bernard or Laurier St. It also has a better reputation than many of, what were once the more



established spaces on Sherbrooke St., near the Museum of Fine Arts of Montréal. Most of those spaces have lost their allure, specializing in traditional still life, faux impressionist and abstract work or older Canadian secondary market work, with the notable exception of Elca London which focuses on Aboriginal and Inuit art and the Maison des art et métiers (Arts and Craft Guild Store). The tourist market is also serviced by galleries in the Old Montréal district, with the exceptions of Galerie Orange and one prominent artist run (Darling Foundry) as well as one well-recognized private museum style space that first opened in 2008 (DHC/Art). These three spaces are very much part of the revitalization of this once banking and semi-industrial section of Montréal where rezoning has encouraged the development of mixed loft style residential and high technology businesses and accompanying culture orientated services such as boutiques, restaurants and hotels.

The city's art and culture heartland is the Plateau Mont-Royal and Mile End area which have the highest concentration of artists of any district in Canada (HillStrategies, 2005). The area is not so much a focus for commercial galleries, Galerie Simon Blais and Galerie des Ameriques are the notable exceptions, but an area where artists and cultural workers live and where many of the artist run and parallel art centers are located. The area is densely populated and peppered by small independent retail, professional and high tech businesses as well as a broad range of leisure services such as bars, restaurants and entertainment venues tailored to the sizable student population, the creative classes and to the wealthy suburbanites who travel in. The increasing gentrification of the neighborhood has moved the bohemian student/artist population north along St-Laurent Blvd. further from the downtown core. Like the Gay Village, which is to the south of the Plateau Mont-Royal and on the eastern edge of the Downtown core, the urban residential community members are predominantly renters who are not wealthy enough to sustain a commercial gallery scene of note. As one gallery owner

pointed out they are, “not willing to invest relatively large amounts of cash to decorate spaces that they may leave in a year or two” (Interviews, 2008). Given the increasingly high cost of street front retail space along key commercial strips, the few commercial galleries that do open are incapable of sustaining themselves in these neighborhoods for any significant period. Additionally, their proximity to the city’s downtown core and the self-appointed commercial contemporary art center, known as the Belgo Building, means that this center remains easily accessible to the creative community of artists and buyers who may live in these areas as well as to the wealthier local and tourist clientele coming to experience the avant-garde commercial and artists' run spaces that operate in the center.

The Belgo Center and the loft style white cube spaces it makes available is a hold out from a period in the 1980’s and 1990’s that saw a number of former industrial spaces revitalized as sites for artistic production and diffusion (see Zukin, 1995). By 2007 art galleries and artist run centers in many of the other locations, particularly those along the St-Laurent strip, sustained on low rents, were inevitably pushed out to make way for higher paying tenants. In terms of commercial primary market work and spaces, the Belgo’s central downtown location, proximity to the Musée des arts contemporains within the limits of the new ‘Quartier de spectacle’ and mix of commercial and artists' run spaces makes it the major node of the local avant-garde art field – playing an important role in the process of clustering or developing a cluster in the arts field within the larger creative ecosystem of the Quartier de spectacles and the city. (D. G. Tremblay & Pilati, 2007, pp. 349-350) Two of the most critically recognized avant-garde commercial galleries are located in this space along with the contemporary art dealers association AGAC (L’Association des galeries d’art contemporain) and several other commercial galleries and prominent artists' run spaces, dance studios and marketing and design companies. Based on the approximately 300 galleries in the province, it

is these contemporary art dealers who are seen as the commercial vehicles capable of accessing local and international art markets.(see RAAV, 2008) All of these commercial spaces are small consignment businesses (or as one respondent described it ‘micro businesses’), run by owner/directors with one to three employees.

This commercial component is one part of the larger visual arts field and an exception to the dominance of state funded galleries and art institutions in the city. The movement of labor and expertise within this larger community is very intimate. The parallel/artist run gallery system has a very important presence and acts as an important training ground and labor pool for the major cultural bureaucracies at the provincial, municipal and federal levels. The province’s university based art history programs furnish curatorial expertise to the state funded provincial and municipal museum system which includes the Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal (Mbam), the Musée d’art contemporains (MAC) and the Musée des beaux-arts du Québec (MbaQ), as well as various community and university based art museums, while studio programs at Concordia University and the Université de Québec à Montréal (UQAM) train local artists and arts administrators. (Montréal has four of the province’s universities– 2 English and 2 French.) The importance of the artist-run centers within the community ensures a privileged place for artists in a system traditionally dominated by curators, dealers and critics, a situation, that as Robertson points out, makes artists “...part of an expanded field of assessment including art juries, curatorial commissions and arts policy studies” (C. Robertson, 2004, p. 32). Those involved in the parallel art system play a key part in the “peer based jury selection systems that legitimate aesthetic value in terms of curatorial relevance and productivity” (ibid) through the art field as a whole. (This is one manifestation of the peer review process within visual arts culture - an evolution of what Thornton(2008) calls the ‘crit’ based evaluation process that begins in art colleges and universities.)

The historic links between the artist run system and the community art center movement in Britain and in Canada in the 1940's concerned attempts to 'decentralize' culture' (ibid, p65) by shifting the bias towards local production and, particularly following the 1960's, local politics. The Québec artist-run system has its roots in this tradition and, as some have argued, it can be situated within a larger history of social contestation present in Québec since the British conquest of 1786. (see Sioui-Durand, 1997, p. 31) The status of artist run centers in Montréal and the Province of Québec was formalized in 1986 with the creation of RCAAQ (Regroupement des centres d'artistes autogérés du Québec), which advocated on behalf of members across the province (D.-G. Tremblay & Pilati, 2008, p. 433). This accompanied legislation at the provincial and federal level that legally formalized the category of 'artist' for the purpose of labor taxonomy and tax status. The francophone nationalist tenor inherent in the local movement has been tempered by a more inclusive, less linguistically polarized leftist humanist tradition that has accounted for the changing attitudes of the arts community in the city. Most of the actors working in these institutions are white francophone speakers drawn from the majority population. Typically, artists' run centers are the first step out of art school for young artists and play a central role in helping to ensure vibrant and dynamic forums for production, exhibition and innovation at a grassroots artist level. This focus on innovation also has the tendency to overshadow the more traditional mediums like painting and drawing. The artist run centers in Québec as well as in English Canada maintain a prominent role in the context of the art world within the Canadian federation, particularly in relation to the provincial, federal and municipal art councils that provide ongoing funding.

The 23 artist run centers in Montréal, whatever their area of specialization, act as the protectors of a creative orthodoxy and operate within a grant seeking economy, typically

viewing themselves as a bulwark against the ‘vulgarity’ of the commercial art market. In Montréal they receive funding from all three levels of government (D.-G. Tremblay & Pilati, 2008, p. 446) and have been implicated in recent major urban revitalization projects within the downtown core. The ascendancy of the artist run/parallel art sector alongside that of the state run institutions, situated “the artist run center movement as alternative culture infrastructure building, juxtaposed within the different flurries of entrepreneurial activity required to build the art scene” but significantly, “...the idea of an artist taking precedence over the circumstances of exhibition is an important institutional reminder for artist-center or museum”. (C. Robertson, 2006) Hence within the discourse of the movement is a hierarchy of importance that begins with the artist, art and then audience. Additionally the two major university galleries operate important art spaces (UQAM and Concordia), and exhibition spaces are also made available through municipal governments and the Les maisons de la culture network located in 10 of the 13 boroughs within the City of Montréal. These are equivalent to local council style community centers in Britain. Founded in 1981 and revitalized in the 1990’s, to include libraries and exhibition spaces, their mandate ranges from community development projects as well as critically recognized art exhibitions and events. Within the more sought after Les maisons de la culture locations, the programming of the various exhibition spaces is done on a competitive basis.

In an environment of dwindling financial support, the lack of focus on audience and markets has compounded the issues of sustainability for actors in the primary market. As recently as 2007, the RAAV (Regroupement des artistes en arts visuels du Québec), the advocacy group for visual artists in the province, lay blame for part of the problem in generating a sustainable market to the fact that the jurisdictional division between SODEC (Société de développement des entreprises culturelle) - responsible for governance and funding of cultural industries such

as TV, film, radio and publishing - and the CALQ (Conseil des arts et lettres du Québec) – the provincial funding body of artists’ based projects and arts organizations - has led to the underdevelopment of the primary art market and the visual arts sector as a whole. (RAAV, 2008, p. 3) The fact that artists are not viewed as entrepreneurs by the state, has meant that the business orientation of SODEC programs does not apply to them, and the one provincial program geared to commercial galleries, with its limited budget, is not sufficient to rectify the ‘missing link’ between the “research/creation step of artists and the need to make production/making accessible - promotion marketing step”, as the document goes on to state, “...we cannot overemphasize both the importance of this program and its lack of funding [to the visual arts sector]”. (RAAV, 2008, pp. 15-16) For the RAAV constituency a shift in government perception is necessary in relation to the role of the artist as not simply a producer but a creator and actor in a competitive and international market that must also take into account the key role of commercial galleries to the livelihood of their visual artist members and the dynamism of the primary market in Montreal - in step with the private – public ethos of the ‘cultural turn’ at the center of the Montreal’s 2005 cultural policy.

Along with the two major visual arts museums and the creation of a major art resource center Artexite in 1981, the art field is supported by a network of art related magazines and revues that focus on contemporary art and the visual arts community in the province. Some, like the recently folded Parachute founded in 1975, sustained a world-class critical reputation. The Société de développement des périodiques culturels québécois (SODEP), an association of Québec periodicals and magazines with a cultural focus, came into existence in the 1980’s and addresses a very active but extremely small local readership. The publications are sustained primarily through a combination of government grants and advertising revenue. The four local daily newspapers, and four local weeklies also provide coverage of the visual arts

scene with reviews and profiles of upcoming shows and artists. *Le Devoir*, the highbrow French daily and the *Voir* French language weekly, generally dedicate the most space to the field with substantive critical reviews and analysis of the political and economic dynamics of the field.

Management of major institutions carries with it considerable symbolic and political weight and is dominated in Montréal by a highly educated and bilingual class of white, Québécois, francophones. A recent appointment to the Directorships of the Musée d'art contemporain with a non-Québécois and internationally trained expert was played out in the press and perceived by those in the field as demonstration of a cultural confidence on the part of museum administrators. It was argued that such a change indicated a desire to de-parochialise institutions that needed an injection of cosmopolitanism and art marketing savvy to improve profile amongst an international and local cultural elite. The appointment as Director of Marc Mayer to the Musée d'art contemporain in 2004 can be interpreted as an attempt to situate the museum within a higher international profile by employing a non-Québécois, Franco-Ontarian with international professional experience to lead a key cultural institution (see Mavrikakis, 2004). This represents an important symbolic shift with the abatement of tensions following the 1995 referendum, a long awaited economic upturn in the late 90's (Montréal's belated dotcom boom) and a general tendency of the arts community towards a particular mode of internationalization – on one hand cosmopolitan, on the other protectionist, strategically avoiding overt political alignment in terms of nationalist politics but like other production sectors clearly sensitive to the trend towards 'globalization' resulting from post-fordist modes of production and the place of creative markets in this new paradigm.

Like the rise of a francophone entrepreneurial class in the Anglo-Saxon dominated Canadian business world (Fraser, 1987) (Chanlat, 1996) the growth of the cultural field in Montréal and Québec is tied to the ascension and engineering of a new professional cultural bureaucracy drawn primarily from a francophone middle class (Fournier, 2004). It is this community that served as the engineers as well as benefactors of the modernization project that characterized Québec's Quiet Revolution. The centrality of the state in cultural production and the importance of cultural production to the project of state building is part of what one curator describes "...as the distance traditionally placed between private money in cultural projects." (Interviews, 2008) The primary art market operates and is framed in reference to this history. The narratives and discourse of 'performing' the art business are therefore tied to the twin forces of cultural and economic development and the real and symbolic capital they generate and to the change that Sennet describes as the 'global growth spurt that has left an enduring trace on non-business institutions, particularly institutions of the welfare state...a stamp which is both cultural and structural.'(Sennet, 2006, p. 7)

### The Role of the Réfus Globale

The crisis around national identity and power in the context of the larger foment of the 1960's heightened the depth and breadth of the radical sweep of the Quiet Revolution in Québec. For respondents that I talked to, the common starting point for a modern visual culture in the province begins with the creation of the Réfus Global manifesto by a group of francophone artists in 1948. "The Réfus Globale is seen as one of the early expressions of need for a new social order and as such it has been acclaimed by Québec nationalists and liberal federalists alike."(Ellewood, 1992, p. xiii) The signatories of the document, included leading painters of Canada's first modern art movement, the Automatistes, went on to become part of a new



pantheon of progressive, rebel heroes and part of the founding mythology of the nationalist movement. (Smart, 1998, p. 9) Though largely forgotten and then re-appropriated as a national symbol in the late 1950's, the *Réfus Globale* outlined the dilemmas of the artist and the creative spirit within the repressive and retrograde atmosphere of state sanctioned and church promoted principles of 'survivance'<sup>8</sup>. In the course of my interviews the relevance of the *Réfus Globale* was situated in what one respondent described, echoing the comments above, 'the undeniable cultural specificity of the written and spoken over the visual within the artistic culture of the province' (Interviews, 2008). As 'une document fondatrice' (founding document) in the Québécois nationalist struggle, the role of the *Réfus Globale* as a political text is indicative of the particular issues at play within the nationalist movement, a "hegemony of language in the fashioning of Québec discourse(s) of identity" that has had a particular impact on the production and reception of the visual arts in the Province. (Lamoureux, 2000, p. 152) Most importantly, the document's articulation of the dilemmas of the Québécois artist raised a broad range of issues that resonated within the larger community.

In the context of local visual arts culture, the publication of the *Réfus Globale* would mirror and presage the debates and discussions between center and periphery and the parochial and the cosmopolitan by articulating the concerns of this generation in manifesto form. The *Automatiste* was an art movement associated with the key signatories of the document, in particular Paul-Emile Borduas and the young painters who assembled around him, who are rightly seen as having been precursors in introducing non-figurative art to Canada. (Ellewood, 1992, p. xiv). The period is marked by an acute self-awareness and celebration of material and

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<sup>8</sup> ...*la survivance*, was a Church-based defensive strategy of cultural survival based on avoiding contamination by urban, English Montréal and maintaining French Catholic purity in the homogenous environment of rural and small town Québec. *La survivance* was not a strategy of linguistic promotion or confrontation with the English... (Levine, 1990, p. 33)

philosophical modernist ambitions. Ten years following its initial release it resurfaced in a commemorative article in a periodical called *Situations* in February 1959 -

Ce numero de *Situations* constitue le premier digne de la creation d'un nouveau pantheon de héros, progressistes et rebelles, qui deviendront au cours des années suivantes les mythes fondateurs de Québec moderne... Saint Martin [the author of the article] fait l'éloge de l'interdisciplinarié des groupe automatiste, ou peintres, écrivains, danseurs et intellectuels partageaient le project commun de contribuer par leurs creations artistiques à la transformations sociale. Une telle solidarité entre artistes existera de nouveau pendant les années de la Revolution tranquille. (Smart, 1998, p. 9)

But one of the key concerns of the *Réfus Global's* romantic and elegiac thesis is a critique of church and the problematic materiality yet celebration of modernity. The socialist undertones, internationalist humanism and calls to emancipation and crisis pepper a document that encapsulates the spirit of revolutionary zeal in Québec. The document expresses a romantic and youthful idealism in the quest for modernity and recognition that continues to characterize the cultural economy in the province. On one hand this is a product of 'peripheral' status and yet on the other it remains part of the very focused attempt to generate unique, distinct and recognizable cultural artifacts that are significant to the population and recognized as such within a 'politics of recognition' (C. Taylor, 1994) in a culture that is under threat. The framing of the *Réfus* as a clarion call echoes the particular mixture of hope, sadness and betrayal that was to become characteristic of so much of Québec's nationalist literature - described as the 'melancholic nationalism' (Maclure, 2003) particular to the Québécois brand.

The utopia and fatalism of so much of the nationalist discourse that seemed to coalesce within the *Réfus* document was embodied in the work and life of one of its key signatories, artist, Paul-Emile Borduas (Weinstein, 1985). Pushed out of his teaching position and 'forced' into exile in Paris and then New York following the publication of the document, his career exemplified the dilemma of the Québécois artist seeking to find a voice that was

internationally recognized yet rooted in the local but not ceding to regionalism and traditionalism. (G. Bellavance, 2000a, p. 14) International recognition and an international education goes hand in hand with the career ambitions and criteria of visual artist, as Borduas points out, “les voyages à l'étranger se multiplient. Paris exerce toute l'attraction...”. (Borduas, 1983 [1948], p. 210) Given that his success in Europe contributed to his canonical status in Québec, this reiterated the colonial condition of the local art world and the fundamentals of the hegemonic relationships that continue to characterize the visual arts economy today. Then as now, even in the context of a vibrant regional art system, the power of the key nodes of international art network to generate capital remains relatively unchallenged.

Yet the legacy of Borduas and his colleagues in the public imagination still rests more heavily on the document they ‘wrote’ than on any of the paintings they may have painted. As one prominent curator I talked to pointed out, “... the art at the time didn't really find an audience because it wasn't really speaking to its audience whereas the performing arts, I find if you would use a parallel, the performing arts’ strength either be it through chanson or theater all wholeheartedly and a lot more successfully spoke local even on the international stage” (Interviews, 2008). At the same time the ‘Réfus’ is also a rejection of the political binarisms, ideologies and Cold War geo-politics that were current during that time in the Québécois and Canadian political scene – this was a humanist version of what Bourdieu calls the ‘critical gaze’ characteristic of the artistic field. However in the Québécois context this was to some degree heightened so that the intensity of the political conflicts at play, between nationalist and federalist, Anglophone and Francophone, after the 1970’s, encouraged a particular aloofness from the political arena that led to a retreat and focus on conceptual and formative considerations in the visual arts by the 1980’s. A disinterest in the machinations of national

and provincial politics continues to be highly characteristic of the field in Montréal and though it shapes labor practices, it has often been glaringly absent from the ‘content’ of artistic production. So although the field may remain fragmented along linguistic lines, it also remains politically impotent in reference to local cultural politics and not simply in work directed to the commercial or decorative market. The aloof condition of art and artist operates in tandem with the risk of being tainted by the dogmatism of constitutional and linguistic party politics that operates within allegiances and cultural affinities played out along linguistic lines. Yet amongst the group of respondents that I talked to the decisive break with a kind of folk and ‘pre-modern past’ that the Quiet Revolution represents went unchallenged affirming the avant-garde tendencies of the artist producer and their distinct place within the larger social conditions of life in Montréal.

The developments leading up to the Quiet Revolution and the changes in the 1960’s were in part a reaction against the ‘elite communal governance’ (DiMaggio, 1987, p. 381) and control by a primarily English haute bourgeoisie in key financial and cultural institutions. These were established in the mid-1800’s existing alongside the often repressive tactics of a conservative and powerful French clerical and political class. The relationships between the two communities, particularly at the level of municipal and provincial politics, can be described as an ‘elite managed linguistic entente’ (Levine, 1990, p. 30). As early as the 1850’s through to the 1960’s a tacit agreement between a French political class and English business class created an understanding between the two groups:

Anglophone economic elites and Francophone political leaders began a pattern of elite accommodation that ultimately would manage linguistic relations in Montréal through the 1960’s...however its operation would...take place within a set of well-understood rules: 1) Francophones would run the provincial political system 2) Anglophones would continue to dominate the economy of Montréal and the province. Francophone leaders would not challenge these linguistic hierarchies and would support ‘pro-business’ policies favored by the English speaking economic elite of Montréal. 3) Any conflicts between the linguistic communities would be resolved through ‘back channel’ accommodations between

Anglophone economic elites and Francophone political leaders. As a minority lacking mass electoral clout, Anglophones tended to abstain from participation in provincial politics and employed their economic power to compensate for their lack of a more direct political influence.” (Levine, 1990, p. 30)

The Montréal art world preceding the 1960’s reflected the social hierarchies embedded in the understood political arrangements between the two communities. The ascendancy of francophone avant-gardistes who moved through commercial and artist run galleries was achieved within an established commercial art market in the city associated, as it typically is, with the patronage of the city’s wealthy, and for the greater part of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century this meant the Anglophone business class. To this day the older established galleries, some of which have maintained their lineage to the ‘pre-modern’ era, still operate in an area once referred to as the Golden Square Mile, a neighborhood that housed Montréal’s Anglo-Protestant elite in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. These galleries gravitated around the Montréal Museum of Fine Arts, an institution with its roots in the Arts Association of Montréal, an English language arts appreciation society founded in 1860 amongst the wealthy Anglo-Protestant community (MMFA, 2009). By the time the present museum was opened in 1912 (though publicly funded it remains a privately administered institution) the linkages between art patronage in the city and Anglophone business interests were well entrenched.

At the same time the visual art world in Montréal has always been marked by a relatively high level of intermingling between Anglophone and Francophone actors in comparison to other sectors of the economy. The lack of ‘linguistic’ specificity of the medium and the very international nature of art systems – during the 1950’s this involved the centrality of Paris and the increasing importance of New York - situated the Montréal arts community within the cultural affinities of the two nodes of the arts economy. As Bellavance points out:

Le milieu des arts plastiques...existes bien sûr des courants régionalistes non négligibles en arts visuels, mais qui se doivent de revendiquer simultanément l’internationalisme et le cosmopolitisme de leur régionalisme. L’une des raisons principales tient sans doute à la place

apparemment secondaire de la langue dans ce domaine de la création. Ainsi, le milieu des professionnels des arts plastiques, tous celui de la danse et de la musique, est-il à la fois plus bilingue, plus cosmopolite et plus fortement incliné vers l'ouest de pays que celui des lettres, du theater, de la chanson populaire ou du cinema., domaines out la langue tient en effet le premier plan. (G. Bellavance, 2000a, p. 18)

Yet, since the 1970's, the increasing institutionalization of the milieu has engendered stronger ties to Europe and to English Canada than to participation and exchanges with the United States.

Contemporary art in Québec is linked to the *Réfus* artists and the Quiet Revolution – an association between modernist aesthetics and socio-political development that plays out through a now dated discourse linking aesthetic proclivities to the arts as part of a larger French cultural tradition. The cultural capital that comes out of this stereotype remains an ongoing claim and hard to sustain prejudice of local cultural actors. (see Latouche & Bellavance, 1999). The commercial galleries of Agnes Lefort, Denys Delrue, Molinari's Galerie L'Actuelle or Max Stern's Dominion Gallery were rarely mentioned and seemed to suggest less a lack of knowledge than a desire to consider the relevant past as having begun with the *Réfus* even though commercial galleries were actively involved in promoting the careers of *Réfus* artists<sup>9</sup>. The situation reflected what Bourdieu has described as the approach of an *avant-garde* that, on one hand, severs its links with a specific past and de-contextualizes the field from it, but still operates in a manner that is highly sensitive to historical change.

The overarching relationship between primarily Francophone producer and Anglophone consumers may have characterized an aspect of Montréal's commercial visual art world (Robillard, 1985), but it is the role of intermediaries and mediators in the context of the

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<sup>9</sup> This is also a demonstration of important francophone participation in a market dominated by Anglophone mediators. This can be situated within larger debates concerning an economic history of Québec that has characterized the francophone community at large as economic laggards a situation that has been challenged by revisionist economic historians (see Ouellet, 1988; Paquet, 1986; Rudin, 1997)

ascendancy of the state sector and challenge to the commercial sector that has most changed in Montréal. To a large part ‘elite communal governance’ of the commercial art world has remained relatively unchanged in the city, in as much as the class of client remains of the same order. In 2007, the owners of commercial galleries represented a more diverse segment of the population than did administrators and curators in the state run and parallel gallery sector of the visual arts economy or the collectives of visual artists (even not including ethnic or racially inflected niche markets such as Asian or Inuit art specialists). Nevertheless, visual arts’ sales were generally attributed to a larger percentage of Anglophone rather than Francophone buyers by the gallery owners that I talked to in 2007, a situation that implicitly affirmed both an ongoing divide at the top end of the income bracket between Anglophone and Francophone, different habits of conspicuous consumption and different habits of legacy making in the form of gifts and endowments to health and educational institutions by wealthy Francophones as opposed to cultural institutions. (Interviews, 2008) Yet most importantly, particularly in the context of the level of intervention within the cultural sphere and the financial gains of the French majority since the creation of the Ministère des Affaires culturelles in 1961, under the aegis of Liberal leader Jean Lesage and his first culture minister, G.-E. Lapalme, “culture, in Québec...” as one curator remarked, “...equals collective, and collective identity, and that is the responsibility of the provincial government”. (Interviews, 2008)

### The Crisis of Identity and Melancholic Nationalism

In an article published in 2007, Gerard Bouchard, a prominent Québécois sociologist and novelist who chaired the National Commission on Reasonable Accommodation with political scientist Charles Taylor, discussed the crisis of identity facing the Québécois people. The document addresses, in particular, the generation that had been witness to the Quiet

Revolution in the 1960's and in doing so is implicitly directed to the white francophone majority of the province. The piece goes to highlight what the author describes as the dilemma posed by the fact that the founding myths of Québec identity and nationalism had lost their bite...

Au cours des décennies 1980 et 1990, il est vrai que la plupart des mythe [la modernité, l'américanité, la laïcité, le développement (le rattrapage), l'ascension des Canadiens français dans le monde des affaires, la souveraineté politique, la 'québecitude' etc.] on perdu leur mordant parce qu'ils avaient en quelque sorte réalisé leur programme, parce qu'ils avaient livré le potentiel de changement dont ils étaient porteurs. (Bouchard, 2007, p. 10).

The problem and dilemma in contemporary Québec was what was to replace this complex, rich and now fragmented mythic tapestry, particularly when the old ones had, in a sense, done their job so well. Where was the new cause to spur, motivate and unite the new Québécois, the third and fourth generation to benefit from the social engineering project of the Revolution Tranquille?

The weight of the past bears heavily in Québec, for nationalists the "Je me souviens" moniker on license plates serves as a vigilant reminder of a distant melancholic past associated with the plight of the Québécois as a subjugated people, operating under the yoke of colonial oppression through the church anointed principles of 'survivance'. Unlike Gilroy's use of the term (P Gilroy, 2004, 2006) which concerns the waning of imperial greatness and the plurality of multicultures in a UK context, Québec's mode of melancholic nationalism (Maclure, 2003) concerns the pervasive legacy of sociologist and public intellectual Fernand Dumont's vision of the white, French, catholic majority of the province as caught within the specter of the trauma of a colonized people. The existential and psychoanalytic dilemmas concern the historical false consciousness and self-colonization of the Québécois and an essentialist discourse that ties the crisis around Québec identity (white French catholic) to abortive attempts at nationhood in both the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. (Maclure, 2003, p. 23)



The failure of the project of New France, the quashed rebellion of the Patriotes in 1837 and the two national referendums in 1980 and 1995 point to the ongoing collective inability to create the ‘rupture’ from a colonial past through political separation and a redesigned participation in the Canadian federation through mechanisms such as sovereignty association. The tensions posed by a sometimes ethnic, sometimes linguistic nationalism on one hand and a cosmopolitan, humanist anti-nationalism on the other, within the context of Québec’s ‘distinct society’ therefore remain unresolved. (Maclure, 2003) Yet the dominance of the “melancholy narration of the Québécois experience” and its “consequent discursive superimposition on the lived experience of the Québécois” flow more from what Jocelyn Létourneau describes as the discouragement and affliction of intellectuals than “from a genuine analysis of the historical evolution of French speaking Québeckers” (Maclure, 2003, p. 76). This dominant narrative that frames discourse in the Province also represents a dated vision of ‘Québécois’ that is being challenged as unrealistic and untenable in a period of apogee for the separatist movement brought on by shifting demographics, the greater sense of economic and cultural security on the part of second and third generation actors brought up in a post Quiet Revolution Québec and general fatigue over issues of constitutional and political sovereignty. Within this ‘waning-separatist’ context, particularly amongst the new younger generation of artists and creators, there is an understanding that the condemnation of “identity ambivalence” that distinguished so much of the sovereigntist discourse is unsustainable in the context of domestic multicultures, global economic and cultural flows and the deep historical ties to the construction and conception of the Canadian federation.

The pursuit of establishing a modern collectivity around a shared ethnic and linguistic identity is woven into the history and evolution of ‘art worlds’ in Québec and Montréal. Since the 1940’s groups of primarily francophone artists have been at the forefront of the modernization

and anti-clerical exercise of the Quiet Revolution. The contribution and effort of individuals that mobilized for these changes concerns the creation of the necessary elements essential to a nation building project. The network of players in the local art world, implicated in production of its proper history and analysis, extends out to the sociologists and art historians that have been so important in documenting the field. The fact that “recourse to human and social sciences is indispensable in that it ensures a cognitive basis for establishing clear social boundaries and specific political demands” (Fourmier, 2001, p. 334) situates Québec sociology as not simply a professional idiom but an active, public record in the making of Québec’s struggle to become a main site for an emancipatory culture... (Weinstein, 1985, p. 26). The Bourdieuan logics of establishing the necessary relationships that foster legitimacy in the field of cultural practice and the legitimacy of the field itself (Pierre Bourdieu, 1993) have been buttressed by the important and formidable body of contemporary art history and sociology of art produced amongst a select group of intellectuals in the province. These groups of actors have played a central role in articulating the discourse of artistic development and its deep connections to the project of modernization and collective identity building for the white, francophone majority.

The historiographic debates concerning Québec are reflected in the analysis of the overlapping discourses that have come out of the research process and the way in which certain historical narratives have taken precedence over other possible historical narratives and approaches. The Québécois ‘modernist’ narrative is “...a lingering colonial symptom of a post-colonial period...” where “...the stark division between tradition and modernity that inform the history and analysis of the national formation have not moved out of the paradigm that conceives of Québec within a stark and dramatic break with its pre-modern past. (Schwartzwald, 2005, p. 6) The critically important place of culture production and

producers within the nation building exercise is, as we know, very well understood. Therefore what Bhabha describes as the “very authority of culture as a knowledge of referential truth which is at issue in the concept and moment of enunciation...a strategy of representing authority in terms of the artifice of the archaic” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 35) insinuates itself within this discourse not so much through the invaluable knowledge of the work but through its role in crystallizing the recent past of Québec. The academic and intellectual connection to the anti-colonialist struggles of the 1950’s and 1960’s, yet disassociation from Anglo American post-coloniality, remains an intellectual reaffirmation of the distinct society status and very particular historical trajectory that many intellectuals assign to the Québécois nation.

The overriding “ethno-symbolist” (Smith, 2000, 2009) strain of the nationalist discourse became apparent through the ethnographic and self-reflexive process that frames the period of field work and participant observation. The unintended ethnic patina to the whole idea of Québec identity has not yet been trumped by the ‘interculturalism’ of linguistic and civic nationalisms so that the experience of moving through the art world in 2007 still refracts the dynamics of an ethnic particularism rooted in the discourse and history of the majority’s struggle for power. The rights enshrined in 1975 by the Québec Charter of Rights and Freedoms remain real but do not operate in the same way in all fields. For example, race and ethnicity remain sensitive criteria within the sign systems of a national cultural order particularly as one moves up along the hierarchies of gatekeepers in the cultural field. Though the sense of moving into a post-separatist phase of Québec political and cultural development is tangible and has been replaced by the lifestyling and neo-liberal inspired global culture of consumerism (as in the rest of the western world), much of the essentialist debate has been supplanted by the growing divide between the needs of Montréal’s urban agglomeration and the rest of the province, and a new found post-911 orientalist strain to the criteria imposed on

citizenship. The tendency towards a continental European style social collectivism has always distinguished the Québec model of social and cultural development from the genocidal *tabula rasa* that one can call forth in the mythologies of possibility built into the history of North American colonization and expansion since Columbus's landing in 1492. The waning relevance of the bi-cultural history (French and English) of the Canadian federation in the context of the numerous multicultural communities in the rest of Canada distinguishes the English Canadian reality from policy and myth making in Québec that draws from a history of 'survivance' and 'rattrapage culturel' and the ethnic particularism and relative cultural homogeneity of the seven million strong French speaking minority and nation of Québec in English North America.

The tension between majoritarian anxiety of cultural displacement by immigrant populations and both the children of Bill 101 (legislation that obliged new immigrants to pursue french language education) and their majoritarian French Canadian equivalents who have grown up outside of the shadow of 'monistic authenticity' (Karmis & MacLure, 2001) that has marked so much of the nationalist struggle, is reproduced in the slow pace of change in the administration of the city's cultural economy. Organizational structures may change but underlying cultural values are harder to shift. As Stuart Hall pointed out a decade ago, the problem of power and exploitation are now "restaged and displaced as struggles between indigenous social forces, as internal contradictions and sources of destabilization with the decolonized society or between them and the wider global system." (Hall, 2000, p. 213) Among some local theorists the problems surrounding the political rhetoric around a linguistic and civic nationalism as opposed to an ethnic one have come full circle to reveal the underlying anxiety of the language based model of citizenship in a post-sovereignist environment. For them the language based approach undermines the cultural preservationist

thread within the Québécois nationalist struggle, which concerns much more than language but the protection of the self-perceived attributes and customs of a historically contiguous community who remain more influential than their historical equivalents in the rest of Canada. The linguistic and civic model of the Québécois national struggle therefore can be understood as undermining the very attributes that render the nation distinct, what Bock-Côté describes as a process of the de-nationalization of the Québécois struggle:

...tout comme la souverainisme progressiste déréalisait la société québécoise en reniant l'identité nationale pour se laisser aspirer dans un utopisme de l'impuissance, une reaffirmation nationaliste que ne poserait plus explicitement la question d'un pouvoir québécois à refonder et risquerait d'entraîner un deinstitutionalization de l'identité nationale... (Bock-Côté, 2007, p. 173)

This brings us back to the problem posed by a cosmopolitan and multiculturalist vision of a contemporary Québec promoted by representatives of a progressive sovereignty movement which is, as this conservative commentator points out, an impotent utopia which leads to a 'deinstitutionalisation of national identity'. The Québec government's mode of liberal multiculturalism, operating under the banner of inter-culturalism has become for some fervent Québécois nationalists a symptom of the illusions of civic nationalism. For them the civic mode of nationalism is a move towards a universal neo-liberal ideology that will pave the way for multinational corporations and their interests. (Bock-Côté, 2007, p. 26) For Bock Coté the progressive multicultural sovereignty movement undoes all historical particularity that renders the Québec nation unique and distinct and therefore undermines the very force required to mobilize for political independence. This tendency is also symptomatic of what the author refers to as the 'montréalisation contemporaine de la référence québécoise...' a situation that undermines the 'densité indentitaire suffisante pour fonder ensuite sa lutte pour l'indépendance politique.' (Bock-Côté, 2007, pp. 25-26). Bock-Coté's attempt to refocus and re-light the separatist flame in Québec around the idea of a preservation of national and in turn institutional identity champions a particular mode of civilizationist (P Gilroy, 2004, p.

25) discourse in a post-911 Québec.

The state sponsored re-examination of the terms of citizenship and the significance of Québécois following the debates surrounding religious accommodation, for example, were in part a reaction to the ‘leveling and homogenizing elements of cultural globalization, [wherein] nation identity and national consciousness have had to become objects of governmental intervention in elaborate ways’ (P Gilroy, 2004, p. 28). Within the divergent currents of Québec cultural politics this has always been an existent yet underplayed and often unpopular part of the Québécois nationalist repertoire. What distinguished this discourse in 2008 was the way in which it was being played outside of the context of separatist Québec politics and within a new normative Québec nationalist condition in step with pan-Canadian and international reaction to visible minorities and in particular the accoutrements of religious Muslims in the public sphere (see Helly, 2010). Trying to operate outside of crude modes of biological racism, the media frenzy and punditry situated this Québec mode of xenophobia within the prism of Québec’s unique cultural status and adherence to secular values in light of the modernist struggle of the Quiet Revolution. This was in effect what Gilroy has described as “the habitual resort to culture... a defensive gesture, employed by minorities and majorities alike when they wrongly imagine that hollow certainties of race and ethnicity can provide a unique protection against various postmodern assaults on the coherence and integrity of the self” (P Gilroy, 2004, p. 6). The appeal to the Québec nation’s modernist values minus the inflammatory civilisationist and protectionist rhetoric is a position that those I talked to for this project shared. In the rare instance where in the interview setting the subject of religious accommodation was broached, respondents drew parallels between the majority population’s own struggle to uncouple itself from the dominance of the catholic church through social and education policy in the 1960’s in the de-coupling of church from state, and the modern assertion of individual rights and freedoms and the need for religious immigrants to accept the

secular values of their adopted home, viewing resistance to these terms as taking unfair advantage of the conditions of citizenship. As one gallery owner pointed out, stopping himself from using the word 'étranger' to describe those who were ethno-culturally different, there was "...a need to limit the influence of radical right-wing Islamists in the province..." and at the same time he was very sensitive to the media exploitation of the issues. At one point he made a general complaint about the low quality of what was on the TV, making reference to reality television and holding it up against the thoughtfulness of the art he was trying to offer in his gallery - pitting the dimming down of culture with the struggle of running and cultivating a market in the city – and also pointing out the manner in which art was a way of putting oneself in a more enriching and fulfilling environment. The response was typical of the liberal values espoused by actors in this field, yet the framing of his argument rested on the threat posed by religious orthodoxy to the secularity and emancipatory project tied to this local history. Those operating outside of this frame posed a problem to this history and threatened its maintenance, rendering a whole class of actors, particularly Muslims, suspect. This was a situation that furthered the stereotypes and suspicions around the 'other' that engenders the closing of ranks and increases the distance between the discourse of cultural difference and inclusion in this as in many other areas of the cultural economy. The implication is the possibility of another ethno-cultural discursive imposition being placed on the calculative frame that guides gatekeeping and governance processes that generate positionality within the local cultural economy.

While the debate rages between competing ideologues in the academy and politics on the depth and breadth of cultural singularity of the Québécois collectivity (to employ Letourneau's vocabulary) and the necessity to articulate a distinct society through nation generating 'ruptures' (to employ Bouchard's vocabulary), there are the ongoing complex

dynamics of daily life in the city. The question of ethnic identity and difference in Québec has not yet been resolved to a 'liberating ordinary-ness' (Paul Gilroy, 2002, p. xxii). This is particularly so in the cultural field where, even in the context of many positive developments, the symbolic breadth and power of the self-referential image making of the art field's products and positions, are skewed along civilisationist positions (P Gilroy, 2004) that operate as referents. These referents reframe the existing ethnic majoritarian concerns of nationhood and citizenship in the guise of preserving a loosely defined Québécois mode of secularism that limits cosmopolitan possibilities and engenders a protectionism and obduracy in the cultural economy. The conflict between majoritarian anxiety and demographic and cultural shifts are played out through policy debates, academic discourse and most importantly through practice and the intricacies of multilingual business practice and a history, in the case of the local art world, that concerns the bureaucratization, democratization and professionalization of a highly specialized and symbolically loaded field.

### Conclusion

This chapter situated the visual arts field within the geography of the city of Montréal, the history of the development of the visual arts field in Québec and in particular the debates surrounding the dilemmas of the Québécois identity construct. The organisation of the art field and its networks of mediators operating in state and private institutions and businesses have been formed by the very particular history of Montreal and Quebec. The 'Quiet Revolution', the 'Refus Globale' and a melancholic nationalism are inscribed in the popular narratives of cultural awareness and institutional development that characterise cultural practice in the province. These narratives explain the evolution of the field but also generate an ordering of values that continues to operate in the present.



As Ley points out in his discussion of art and gentrification in Vancouver, "the field of cultural production has a strong historical dimension, for precedents and traditions establish the rules of the game and the positionality of players on the field." (Ley, 2003, p. 2536) The calculative frames employed by actors operate in reference to this history. The role of influential gatekeepers in the field involves mediating between art and artists, key institutions and positions in reference to the nationalist narratives that operate through the objective and discursive evolution of the field. These mediators are guardians of 'good' works and a specific history, one that they draw from and generate through acts of aesthetic canonization and affiliation and validation with other actors in the visual arts network. This concordance involves the broad understanding that artistic expression and the broad range of institutions that sustain it are materially and symbolically integral to the emancipation, maintenance and promotion of a local culture and the security of the majority population and therefore play an integral role in the material and discursive construction of the Quebec state. Other debates play themselves out within this fundamental premise. This relationship to art and art worlds in a nationalist context is not atypical, but in Quebec, as in many other national states, the complex and obtuse criteria that allows for integration and acceptance by those outside of the majority population, operate within tightly guarded networks of key mediators who maintain strong ties to key state institutions. The role of key mediators and artistic canonization retains the discursive and material threads to the ethno-cultural and not simply linguistic particularism that is rendered through a historical narrative of national liberation that plays itself out in the debates around citizenship and belonging in the Province and city.

As Bourdieu points out, history operates as an instrument of thought that organises and orients our present perception of the historical past (Pierre Bourdieu, 1996, p. 311) and "it is habitus, history turned into nature, i.e. denied as such, which accomplishes practically the

relating of these two systems of relations, in and through the production of practice." (Pierre Bourdieu, 1997 [1977], p. 78). Though we do not accept Bourdieu's unreflexive prescription of the habitus, the habitus as a product of history that is then enacted through practice sits comfortably alongside an understanding of history as an instrument or tool employed as a technology in the Callonian sense that formats and shapes economic practices. This approach is reinforced by local management theorists (see Chanlat, 1996; Dupré, 2008) who discuss business practice in Quebec as being shaped by the particular history of the francophone majority and the engineering of a corporatist technocracy with close ties to the Quebec state.

The role of government policy in shaping the competitive practices of actors in the primary art field is a form of socio technical arrangement that frames activity on more than one scalar level. The 1992 Quebec cultural policy is one governance technology that serves as an important reference for the scope of government involvement in the fields of art and culture in the province. It also articulates the strong ties that state culture policy in Quebec plays in articulating the condition for cultural participation and the organisation and architecture of the cultural field. The next chapter examines this document and the slow evolution of the nationalist construct towards more plural modes of engagement as well as the development of a Montréal cultural policy 13 years later. The urban policy document is a response to the post-industrial alignment between city and state and the championing of a measured cosmopolitanism in the drive to cultural capital status within the competing and contradictory challenge of cultural preservation and protection for the city of Montréal.

## Chapter 5

### The Visual Arts Sector and State Policy – Engineering Mediators and Practitioners in the Québécois Art Field

*The evolution of Québec's cultural policy is markedly distinct from that in Canada as a whole, in terms of trends and dynamics and through federal action as well as the initiatives in other provinces. In Québec, the level of intervention compared to the central and local governments is much more critical than elsewhere in Canada and even in most Western countries. The major part of federal cultural policy can moreover only be explained in light of cultural dynamics in Québec, especially during the 1960s and 1970s, decades marked by heightened cultural and constitutional rivalry between the two levels of government. (G. Bellavance, 2005)*

*Les idées maîtresses apparue tant au cours des débats que dans les journaux, se développaient par rapport aux axes suivant: nationalisme/internationalisme, historicité/production actuelle, intervention/panorama, artiste/société. Ce sont en fait, et depuis toujours les axes de pensées à la base du 'système' qui prévaut ici au Québec, dans le domaine des arts. (Pontbriand, 1975, p. 32)*

#### Introduction

This chapter examines the 1992 *Notre culture, notre avenir* Québec cultural policy document in relation to the idea of local citizenship and art sector development in Montréal. The policy represents the most comprehensive and important articulation of provincial cultural policy since the 1970's. The scope and remit of its directives have had an important role in shaping the cultural ecology in ways that have been significant to the arts and culture sector. The 1992 document has yet to be replaced by a new global policy and shifts in policy and programs at the provincial and municipal level continue to operate in reference to its underlying principles. The development of Québec cultural policy will be situated in reference to Canadian arts policy that took shape with the Massey Commission on Arts and Letters in Canada in 1951. Entrepreneurial activity, passive or active, consciously pursued or unconsciously pursued, operates within a frame that is bounded by the terms of policy documents that have been produced in consultation with, and in response to the concerns of

the actors and institutions within the field. In Québec, the results have generated a level of concordance between the fundamental directives within cultural policy at the provincial and municipal level and the actors in the field.

The cultural policy document is a key instrument within the array of technologies of governance that organize the artistic field in Quebec and the actors in networks that constitute it. What is particularly interesting about Quebec cultural policy is the scope of its remit and its centrality in the systematic engineering of the Quebec state on the basis of a very broad ‘anthropological’ definition of culture (Handler, 1988, p. 124). This perspective has been reinforced through the material organization of the bureaucracy of the Québec Ministère des affaires culturelles that for a period, under the first separatist Parti Québécois government in the late 1970’s, organized departments with a cultural vocation into a ‘super ministry’ by placing arts and cultural affairs, education, communications, sport and immigration within one ministerial portfolio (Diane Saint-Pierre, 2002, p. 160). Though this bureaucratic juggernaut was unsustainable, it represented a political and organizational perspective that understood that an array of technical instruments were needed to promote and protect French language and culture in Quebec. This is part of what the sociologist and important architect of Quebec’s language and cultural policies during this period, Fernand Dumont, deemed necessary for the realization of the ‘société globale’ that francophone Quebec should become.

Le fondement du Québec à construire reste pensé comme corps social. Comme le dit l'énoncé de politique culturelle du gouvernement péquiste publié en 1978, énoncé largement redevable à Fernand Dumont, il faut maintenant que « les grandes structures et les grandes institutions de la vie collective (de la société globale) soient modelées selon leur être profond », c'est-à-dire la culture sociologique de la majorité francophone. La culture d'expression française, poursuivra l'énoncé, est le « foyer de convergence »... Les autres doivent s'y greffer comme la branche sur son tronc. (Thériault, 1997, p. 11)

The Quebec ‘total society’ and the modern technocratic principles driving its development, and in turn governance, involved the harnessing of what Rose calls intellectual technologies -

“assemblages of ways of seeing diagnosing, techniques of calculation and judgment.” (Rose, 1998, p. 120) Thus built into the policy instrument is a particular frame designed to exert an intellectual mastery, isolate a sector, identify certain characteristics and processes and render them explainable according to them ‘certain explanatory schemes’. (ibid) Within Rose’s development on the Foucauldian idea of *dispositif*, the technologies of governance generate both the physical organization of the field and the mechanism for the field’s provisioning in a manner that has an influence that extends beyond direct government jurisdiction. Policy is a rather standard instrument in the tool kit of liberal democratic governance in as much as it is drawn up, assembled and resides in history as a written testament - an attempt at clarity and admission of the political intention of government. In as much as the policy document remains a declaration of government purpose, action and understanding in relation to a field and the issues that are relevant to those who constitute and operate in relation to that field, it is its role in shaping the practice of actors that is significant. In Quebec arts and culture funding from all three levels of government is a key resource in the maintenance and livelihood of art networks in a context where arts and cultural production is understood as being an essential mechanism in generating the expressions of a national culture. Network dynamics amongst actors draw on strong ideological and historic ties that have sustained a high level of concordance around key principles that govern the sector and the symbiotic relationship between direct and indirect government involvement. Most importantly this has involved the creation and maintenance of a precarious but significant labour market for cultural mediators and producers working in the province and most importantly in the city of Montréal.

The production of policy documents involves a process of filtering and construction that is an assemblage of party politics and state agenda setting engineered through discussions, public

hearings, round tables and expert reports which are in and of themselves technical instruments of information management and gathering that are designed to take account of, and implicate a range of ‘stakeholders’. In the case of the *Notre culture notre avenir* document it is the ‘externalities’ and ‘overflows’ linked to the large frame that the document delineates in relation to the field of art and culture in the Province which gives an indication of the document’s importance and influence. As Rose goes on to point out:

the ‘private’ domain defined by such rationalities [liberal democratic political rationalities] – whether in ‘civil society’ of associations and organizations, in the ‘market’ interactions of enterprises and entrepreneurs, in the world of work itself, or in the ‘family life’ of citizens – are not subject to continuous scrutiny, judgment, and normalization by political authorities. Public authorities act on them not simply through law, through establishing an education system, a social work system, and so forth, but also by altering the financial or cultural environment within which organisations and persons make their decisions, and by encouraging them to think and calculate in certain ways... Liberal democracies increasingly depend on these indirect mechanisms through which the conducts, desires, and decisions of independent organizations and citizens may be aligned with the aspirations and objectives of government not through the imposition of politically determined standards, but through free choice and rational persuasion.” (Rose, 1998, p. 122)

The document does not influence a discrete arena of practices but formats through direct and indirect influence of ‘its rationalities’ a broad array of relationships and practices that are central to the economies and market dynamics of the primary market and the larger art and cultural sphere in Québec and Montreal.

It is both the inputs that have gone into creating the Quebec policy through the important role played by coalition advocacy frameworks (Diane Saint-Pierre, 2003, 2004) and the outputs of the policy through an ‘incorporation’ by actors in the primary market who operate knowingly or unknowingly in terms of the principles, goals and governance structure the document has helped generate. The movement of the document from a template for the governance of the cultural field in the province to a device that frames the terms of practice in the field concerns the fundamental movement of policy from a governance technology to a much broader and far

reaching 'socio- technical agencements' (M. Callon, 2006, p. 13) with an influence on a much broader network of relations.

The document also exists as an explicit expression of the historical continuum of 'national expression' and Quebec identity through the practice of art and culture and its deep relationship to the larger assemblage of Quebec politics. The document encapsulates the evolution of the arts and culture field since the 1960's, and addresses the concerns of the 'stakeholders' operating in the field. It also suggests a strategy for communitarianism and civic participation that incorporates Quebec's model of 'interculturalism', to encourage and incorporate an increasingly ethnically diverse population in the art and cultural scene in the province. The substance of the document belies its genesis as an instrument to engender the support of a vocal art and well organized arts and cultural constituency based primarily in Montreal. This is in a period of heated constitutional negotiations between the provinces and the federal government in the late 1980's and early 1990's that would culminate with the 1995 referendum on sovereignty in the Province.

The role of policy in shaping both habitus and field dynamics in Quebec is fundamental given the very important role of the state in the genesis and ongoing maintenance of its entangled networks. The inscriptions of a specific historical interpretation and trajectory are written into these documents. The priorities and programs that are articulated represent attempts by the state to generate a 'legitimate national culture'... "universally imposing and inculcating (within the limits of its authority) a dominant culture..." (P. Bourdieu, Wacquant, & Farage, 1994, p. 8). Cultural policy operates as a key instrument in what Bourdieu describes, in his overly deterministic way, as "... the construction of a sort of common historical transcendental, immanent to all its subjects..." particular to the role of the state, "...through the framing it

imposes upon practices...[it] establishes and inculcates common forms and categories of perception and appreciation, social frameworks of perceptions, of understanding or of memory, in short state forms of classification. It thereby creates the conditions for a kind of immediate orchestration of habituses which is itself the foundation of a consensus over this set of shared evidences constitutive of (national) common sense. (P. Bourdieu et al., 1994, p. 13) This fact becomes particularly important in the context of the evolution that we trace in this chapter between Quebec cultural policy's handling of art and culture practice and ethno cultural diversity and that of the Montreal cultural policy document developed 13 years later in 2005.

An important aspect of the document twenty years on is how it presages attempts at resolving the now familiar dilemma of cultural particularism and multiculturalisms in the West, through the very specific history and optics of the Québécois national struggle. The tone is very much a product of a more optimistic time in terms of inter-cultural relations and a manifestation of what Latour describes as 'cosmopolitics' (Latour, 2004) where one vision of a ethno culturally diverse Québec, including a more plural and inclusive arts and culture sector, is being articulated. The discourse concerning Quebec interculturalism synthesizes the debate concerning Quebec identity and the shifting terms of citizenship and participation during this period.

This chapter also examines the more recent *Montreal, cultural metropolis - Cultural Development Policy for the Ville de Montreal 2005-2015*, and the follow-up *Action Plan 2007-2017* that brought cultural advocacy and lobby group Culture Montréal, municipal, provincial and federal governments and the Board of Trade of Montréal together to further collaborate on the objectives set out by the city's cultural policy. The city's cultural policy



comes out of a particular localised variant of bureaucratic reorganisation that reflects the tenets of a neo-liberal, entrepreneurial ethos within the imperative set by global, post-industrial economic exchange. Most importantly, the civic policy formulation, with its recurring references to ethnic diversity, cultural entrepreneurialism and to international cultural metropolises, represents a post-sovereignist break from the psychological and institutional limits imposed by the melancholia of Quebecois essentialism apparent in the 1992 Provincial policy document.

The document also reflects a particular Montreal –centric evolution of the relationship between economic development and the cultural field within the new found imperatives of the cultural economy and Richard Florida's contentious thesis of creative classes (R. Florida, 2002) and the engineering of a globally recognized cultural capital. The Montreal cultural policy is a particular metropolitan and post-sovereignist reworking of the city's historic role as the site for the cosmopolitan within the province and its role as the economic and cultural center within the Quebecois national project. This template for bureaucratic reorganization, new funding initiatives and priorities also involves a discourse that articulates a new frame for cultural participation and, by extension, citizenship in the city.

Montréal's cultural policy is positioned as an evolutionary byproduct of the provincial policy developed thirteen years earlier. Unlike the 1992 *Notre culture, notre avenir* document, the 2005 *Montréal Cultural Metropolis – A cultural development policy for the Ville de Montréal*, attempts to situate issues of diversity, the importance of arts and culture for economic development and the access to culture and built heritage within the strategic concerns of metropolitan cultural capital brand building. In her study of the UNESCO city of design designation for Montreal, Rantisi raises some of the key vectors at play in this specific

initiative that can be justifiably extrapolated to cultural policy at large in Montreal since 2005:

Montréal is presently pursuing two parallel objectives with respect to design [of which primary commercial galleries later came to play the role of program partners]. On one hand, state policies stress the need for competitiveness and value-added production in an era of globalization. In accordance with this aim, initiatives are constructed to discipline local firms into new forms of rational economic behavior. On the other hand, the state also aims to preserve French Canadian culture through the establishment of a vibrant and distinct design culture. These contradictory discourses underpin the current policy nexus... (Leslie & Rantisi, 2006, p. 319)

The metropolitan policy follows on from the international trend towards a focus on cities and urban agglomerations as key sites in national economic planning and development, the increasing role of arts and culture in that process and the devolution of a centralized model for cultural development that was outlined as a policy goal in the 1992 provincial document.

In the context of the 'cultural fatigue' surrounding the condition of the Quebecois separatist struggle, the Montreal document presents itself as an STA that reformulates the optics of a more diverse model of national citizenship but in doing so also serves to further crystalize the distinction between a state based parochialism and an urban cosmopolitanism built into the discourse of urban promotion and development. As the discussion of the work of Bock- Cote in the previous chapter suggested, the 'Montrealisation' of the national debate presents a challenge to the integrity of national institutions and their values i.e., a condition that threatens the ethno-cultural homogeneity of the state and its purpose as the locus for French-Canadian symbolic and material promotion and protection.

In the interviews, and particularly in the case of the respondents working outside of government and advocacy agencies, the content of provincial and municipal cultural policy was not necessarily fully considered, but there was a clear consensus over the need for, and utility of government participation in the arts. Concerns were financial, most often appeals for increased funding, but they also touched on the terms of state governance and participation.

Most mediators working directly in the primary market felt that the active participation of government agencies in the commercial and state sector was warranted particularly through support for marketing initiatives that would grow the visual art market locally and internationally and contribute, first to the international promotion of city, and then to that of the province/nation. In this sense the respondents that I talked to see themselves as playing an important role in sustaining and promoting a local visual arts economy. Along the spectrum of allegiances between federal and provincial nationalisms, all of the actors, whatever their position on linguistic and constitutional questions, view themselves firstly as champions of a metropolitan orientation built around the success of a Montréal based art scene. For commercial operators in particular, the focus on the metropolitan orientation is doubly important as a mechanism to avoid polluting relationships with prospective buyers and artists with the messy world of constitutional politics. As merchants they are at the frontline of catering to a moneyed and linguistically mixed clientele. It is not in their business interest to express political leanings in an overt manner, additionally, like their colleagues in the state, parallel and institutional sector and the linguistically mixed artists working in Montréal, it has been much easier in recent years to cast party politics aside in service of the common goal of fighting for increased government funding in the arts and improving the local and international profile of the local market.

These gallery owners, curators and collectors I talked to were all between 30 and 70 years old and all primarily of French Canadian descent who represented either the third or second generation of Quebeckers to benefit from the changes that occurred during the Quiet Revolution. Government policy always came up in the interviews but in very general terms and most often in relation to the lack of funding and lack of understanding of the operation of arts worlds on the part of senior bureaucrats and politicians. The underlying protectionist and

preservationist ethos of Québécois nationalism and federal Canadian nationalism was viewed as a necessary condition for the ongoing survival of local and not exclusively francophone cultural production in the province. In our discussions these actors, with the exception of the curators operating in the larger state funded museums, understood the broad lines of current political debates but did not want to view themselves as ‘active’ agents of policy or as mediators and curators for modes of cultural participation and citizenship. The attempt to neuter ‘pro-active’ political engagement outside of very loosely bounded federal and/or provincial nationalist terms was not unexpected, but I was surprised that the commercial operators, in particular, were not more conscious or forthcoming about their role in not simply responding to, but in shaping the symbolic ethnic ecology of the city outside of a simple process of gentrification. Nevertheless, all the commercial and state actors were quite conscious of their roles in bridging the linguistically based English -French divide by working with Anglophone and Francophone local artists and clients in their efforts to harvest new product and increase their customer base. However both greater knowledge and attachment to the Québécois nationalist discourse and the accompanying cultural history was something particular to the Francophone respondents. In the interview setting, once the tape recorder was off and the glass of wine was finished, the role of gallery owner as ‘agent civilatrice’ suggested something beyond the concern for education and increasing public knowledge about contemporary art to an unarticulated self-awareness and pride in reproducing an ill-defined, cosmopolitan and contemporary Montréal (first) and Québec (second) that was largely contiguous with the aspirations set forth in provincial and municipal government policy.

## The Federal Government and the Massey Commission

The active participation of the state in the engineering of the cultural sector was one outcome of the Keynesian style economics of many western governments following the end of the Second World War. In Canada the federal government favored the initiatives geared to the promotion of Canadian identity and national unity while the Québec Government situated culture more directly as an affair of state, central to the issue of national sovereignty and cultural survival. (Diane Saint-Pierre, 2003, p. 167) Not only did these policies mark the ascendancy of the state and parallel sector and the creation of an arts economy constructed on arts grant funding, institution building and the acquisition of art works through provincial and federal arts banks, they, along with the growing importance of new modes of artistic creation such as performance, installation and conceptual art, placed commercial operators more clearly at odds with a class of institutions not affected by the imperatives of profit and financial gain. In particular, the strong association between professionalization of the arts sector and public education was central to the development of the creative economy in Québec and its function within the community. The role of the state and union sector as a Francophone locus of managerial jobs and a training ground in the 70 and 80's during the period of francization, (Fournier, 2004, p. 33; Levine, 1990, p. 152) was also a very important aspect of labor dynamics within the cultural sector as it was in many other areas of the economy.

In the federal arena it was cultural producers participating in the Canadian Conference for the Arts (1945) and the Kingston Conference (1941) who mobilized the then St-Laurent federal government towards the creation of the Massey-Levesque Commission to deal with 'intangible elements' that 'may serve to inspire a nation's devotion and to prompt a people's action' (Canada, 1951). The attempt to foster an 'appetite for works of genuine merit in all

fields' and stem 'the American invasion by film, radio and periodical' culminated in the creation of the federal Canada Council for the Arts, an instrument geared to 'administer scholarships and stimulate and help voluntary organizations in the arts, letter, humanities and social sciences'(Canada, 1951, p. 377). The Commission "equated the interests of a cultural elite with an instrument to guard against the incursion of 'mass culture [sic – America]" (Nicks, 1994)] and along with the move towards a more democratic and inclusive remit continues to essentially play that role today. Most importantly, for artist and arts organizations operating outside of the 'industries' of television, film and radio, the Canada Council's system of grants and financial support for project based and operational funding ensures the very existence of 'art worlds' in large parts of the country particularly where provincial funding is limited.

The formative role of the federal Massey Commission set the ground for a relationship with the arts community that has framed Canadian federal culture policy and served as a tool in the federal national building exercise that continues to play a key role in shaping the various regional creative economies. In a parallel fashion to the discourse in Québec, the obsession with sovereignty and identity in the Canadian federal context has obscured the analysis of forms of governmentality that concern a set of tactics dealing with the security of the state through cultural regulation and administration. In Québec this involved the 'emancipation' of the French speaking majority from the tyranny of church, corrupt government and economic and cultural subjugation by an Anglophone minority. In English Canada the notion of state security also carried an ethno-cultural component as a bulwark against the threat posed by Central European immigrants to Canadians of British origin to the west of the federation in the 30's and 40's. ((Wark, 1992) in Dowler, 1996, p. 329) At the core of the protectionist exercise is the fear that political inaction against the cultural threats risks a slide into

barbarism in one of two forms: the possibility of anarchy (as in Mathew Arnold's contrast of culture and anarchy) or the overwhelming of the Canadian state by American mass culture. (Dowler, 1996, p. 336) The events unfolding in Québec ten years later in the 1960's involved a heightened sense of urgency that was also motivated by issues of ensuring the security and defense from outside elements – a familiar and quite common protectionist response - but on the basis of the ethnic and linguistic affiliations of the French speaking community in Québec rather than as a function of preserving an existing political unity built on a highly dispersed Anglo-Saxon community. In Québec the integrity of nation has always been *more easily* defined along ethnic and linguistic lines. In English Canada this approach is present in the political landscape but is much harder to sustain in face of the scale and diversity of immigration.

Federal cultural policy has focused on promoting local interests in the cultural economy by acting against demands for a stronger market driven framework for the cultural industries in the country. The protectionist thread in relation to film production, television and radio broadcasting, print publishing and telecommunications ownership in Canada has generated exemptions for cultural industries under the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and elaborate point systems to establish 'Canadian content' and ownership criteria for funding, tax credits and licensing requirements for media producers, broadcasters and telecoms. The broad umbrella of federal cultural bureaucracy and policy under the Minister of Canadian Heritage (now called the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages that also oversees a Minister of State for Sport and a Minister for Status of Women)<sup>10</sup> extends out to an arm's length oversight of agencies such as the CRTC (Canadian Radio and Television Commission) which implements the Canadian Broadcasting Act and the Canadian

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<sup>10</sup> Since 2006 and the coming to power of the Conservative Harper government, oversight of the 1988 Multicultural Act and its attendant programs has moved out from the Department of Canadian Heritage and into the hands of the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism.

Telecommunication Act, Telefilm Canada which oversees the Canadian Feature Film Fund and the Canadian Media Fund, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and of course the Canada Council for the Arts responsible for funding to arts organization and project based funding to artists.

In Québec the federal moves following World War II towards centralization and modernization that included the Massey Commission on the Arts put “Québec progressives in a bind because they sympathized with the idea of provincial autonomy, but they believed that Duplessis’ [the premier of Québec at the time] manner of pursuing that ideal harmed rather than helped Québec.” (Handler, 1988, p. 86) The official provincial response took the form of the Tremblay Commission (1953) that addressed the threat posed by federal incursion into areas of ‘general non-academic education’ in the areas of French Canadian culture from a perspective of ‘clerical-conservative nationalism’. As Handler goes on to point out regarding the Tremblay Commission Report,

... Just as the Massey Commission had stressed Ottawa’s responsibility for Canadian national culture - a global reality that could not be constitutionally confined to one level of government – the Tremblay Commission suggested that Québec, as the national government of French Canada had responsibility for French Canadian culture throughout Canada. But by denying the existence of a Canadian nation and culture – since it saw Canada as a bi-national state with no unitary culture – it could dispute federal government claims to global cultural action, and particularly cultural action on behalf of French Canada. The Commission did not reject Canadian federalism, but subordinated it to the preservation of the two [linguistic] nations which compose it. (Handler, 1988, pp. 93-94)

The Report’s ‘neo-catholicism’ and the critical commentary from progressive forces such as anti-nationalist federalists (like Trudeau) and nationalist modernizers (like Lapalme and Lesage) foreshadowed the global cultural issues surrounding French-Canadian nationalism that would take a central place in mainstream Québécois politics by the 1960’s. However the conservative religious nationalism and attitude of elite oversight and popular ‘survival’ of the document represented an ‘anti-stateism’ (Kwavnick, 1973, p. xvi) that reflected the values



and goals of the traditional conservative leadership within the provincial government of the period.

Central to the development of the French-Canadian community was the approach to education. As an area of provincial jurisdiction, education and educational institutions were the primary instruments for the dissemination and promotion of the visual arts outside of the Anglo dominated commercial gallery network in Montréal, the Montréal Museum of Fine Arts and McGill University (1821). The professionalization and the bureaucratization of the sector had already begun through the creation of the *École des Beaux-Arts de Montréal* in 1922<sup>11</sup>. This was a period that saw the beginning of a very slow movement of francophone public education away from church control and into the hands of the state. In addition to a number of laws in support of arts development and built heritage in the province, the *École* was very much part of a drive in the 1920's under the Liberal Taschereau Government to move towards the creation of industrial expertise in Québec with the requisite designers and architects which the school trained in the French language.

À cette volonté progressiste s'associait un discours fortement nationaliste. ... La génération montante pouvait se montrer optimiste, puisqu'il lui était désormais possible d'accéder aux arts et à la culture française. L'éducation était le fer de lance de ce développement et c'est au nom de la Patrie, comprenons le Canada français, que cette évolution allait s'accomplir. (Légaré, 2003, pp. 15-16)

Like the *École des Beaux Arts*, the *École Polytechnique* which opened in 1873 and the *École des Hautes Études Commerciales* opened in 1907 (both of which were united under the *Université de Montréal* umbrella in 1920) represented a general move towards the

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<sup>11</sup> The *École des beaux-arts* of Montréal and Québec City was founded...in response to a felt need for a more structured, practical education in the arts for young people of the province. Before this, a career in art usually meant studying with a working artist and then going, along with thousands of other North Americans, to Paris for development in one of the established studios specializing in academic training...In painting, as in other arts, Québec was trying to catch up with what was happening in France, but often the chosen model was already outdated...[Directors of the school often came from France] and colonialism was not unusual, but to make matters worse, it was highly conservative, so that students were not exposed to what was actually happening in French painting after the First World War, but to nineteenth century academic models. (Ellewood, 1992, p. 5)

development of a highly trained technical and professional class within the francophone population. Without directly challenging the authority of the clergy and the religious community in their responsibilities over secondary and higher education, nor the orientation of the classical colleges and the dominion of the Université of Laval in Québec city as the only French language training ground in the province for doctors and lawyers, and the religious seminaries for the training of priests, these parallel institutions focused on professional and technical skills' development. (Fournier, 1982, p. 5) The focus on educational development by the political class addressed an acute skilled labor shortage that inevitably stimulated the creation of a locally trained francophone white-collar professional class.

In Québec the principles of art and accessibility, culture and technocracy, a refrain of many of the interviews I conducted, were entrenched as principles in the policy and institutional dynamics that took hold in the 1960's. These changes represented a formal reorganization of cultural power outside of clerical and Anglophone controlled or dominated institutions by an active and sophisticated urban francophone cultural scene -

...de relations entre le monde de la télévision et du cinéma, celui du journalisme (*Le Devoir*) et de l'édition, celui de l'art et de la littérature et, enfin, celui de l'enseignement universitaire. Ceci a permis la constitution d'un milieu intellectuel et artistique et la formation d'un public cultivé, largement indépendant de l'institution cléricale et, à un moindre degré, des institutions traditionnelles de la bourgeoisie anglophone montréalaise." (G. Bellavance & Fournier, 1992, p. 8).

Within this ecology, the growing "Francophone middle class, neo-nationalism – with its Francophone assertiveness and de-legitimation of Anglophone power in Montréal – would represent an important declaration of collective self-worth in response to a history of cultural stigmatization". (Levine, 1990, p. 45) The role of educational institutions in the ascendancy of francophone 'middle class power' "...represented a two-fold movement: on the one hand, the upward mobility of young people out of the working class, and on the other hand, the 'social

reconversion' of young people from the petty bourgeoisie and bourgeoisie, creating a transformation of economic capital into 'cultural capital' through education." (Fournier, 2004, p. 33) As Levine goes on to point out, quoting Fournier, "this class was largely composed of ... 'travailleurs du langage': teachers administrators, journalists and policy analysts, whose occupational skills involve the manipulation of knowledge and information...the persistent status of English in Montréal not only offended the cultural sensibilities of Francophone travailleurs du langage, but it also directly limited their employment prospects in the city...(Levine, 1990, p. 45). By 1960 a critical mass of educated middle class francophones was in place to realize the full possibility of creating the rational and modern institutions and networks, primarily through technocratic governance structures with a specific focus on culture and language, that would emancipate the community from Anglophone economic domination, a corrupt political class and the the dominance of the catholic church.

The legacy of this narrative of emancipation from a particular mode of colonial subjugation for the Francophone majority in Québec still frames the discourse on culture and security in a significant way. The actors that I talked to were generally sensitive to the difficult place of French speakers in North America and proud of the historical trajectory and political and economic realignment that the Quiet Revolution had achieved. This is the assumed and dominant historical discourse of actors within the field and one that carries a deep attachment. Individuals may not be aware of historical details but the importance of the nationalist and modernist shift in establishing the enabling conditions for the community at large, remains a strongly held historical narrative. As one gallery owner pointed out when I asked him about increasing his francophone customer base, he referenced this history explaining to me that "les Québécois on juste sorties des bois il y a 40 ans" and that he and his generation were the

first to be educated while many parents of his generation had been uneducated laborers or agricultural workers and that given these circumstances change had nevertheless happened exceedingly quickly. (Interviews, 2008) Being overly ambitious in indoctrinating a population to art, notwithstanding spending large sums of money on it, was not just a very slow process but an unrealistic proposition because as he went on to say “ we are not in Europe you know.” The narrow and limited appeal of visual art, and the limits of his market particularly for contemporary work, is answered in part by the limited period that the community has been ‘modern’.

The sense of the fragility of the field on the part of mediators is tied to an understanding of the limited historical span of the field as an endeavor for domestic and francophone governance, expertise and professionalization particularly when compared to the depth of European traditions in the field. The implication also moves on to the demands that one can make of the visual arts field and its actors. It is a delicate area underappreciated by the population at large and viewed and often treated in a cursory manner by politicians. The translation of this narrative of fragility is an important aspect of the mediating function of many of the respondents in this study. It has retained its importance as a framing device that plays within the complex assemblage of factors within the competitive economies of the primary art market and more generally throughout the art and culture field in the city of Montreal and the province of Quebec.

#### The Creation of the Ministère des Affaires culturelles.

A publicly funded orientation and a suspicion around private sector support is built into the habitus of actors in the arts field generally, and the visual arts field in particular, in the Province. As a young curator for one of the major local museums pointed out to me, “Just the

fact that I would talk about marketing when I'm talking about art still raises eyebrows because art is not something that you market in Montréal...[particularly] with older people that have been working since the 70's and 80's in the art media and in the contemporary art field in particular. They find it very odd. Because the dominant structure disseminating art in the city has been a non-profit one, the idea of marketing anything just falls on deaf ears or raises eyebrows and suspicions.” (Interviews, 2008) The unraveling of these social-democratic ideals through reduced funding and support by government has not shifted the historically deep ethno-linguistic underpinnings to government policy and programs responsible for cultural protection and promotion. The technocratic shift at the heart of the Quiet Revolution involved an important move away from the discretionary approach of the Duplessis regime to statutory funding for arts and education in the Province through modern and rational bureaucratic institutions and mechanisms.

With the demise of the Duplessis government in 1959, the articulation of the nationalist exercise unfolded through the various iterations of cultural policy in the Province since the adoption of the Loi créant le Ministère des Affaires culturelles du Québec in 1961<sup>12</sup>. The focus on education coalesced in the Parent Commission Report (1963-1966) whose principal effect was “...la rationalisation institutionnelle, organisationnelle et administrative du système scolaire québécois sous la juridiction d'un ministère de l'éducation” (Couture & Lemerise, 1992, p. 6) - essentially the wrestling of education away from the hands of direct church control and management (though the denominational school framework would only finally be abolished in Montréal in 1998) and fostering educational access and availability for the largely undereducated francophone population. The first *Livre Blanc de la culture*

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<sup>12</sup> The creation of the MAC was inspired by parallel developments in France with the creation of the French Ministry of culture under André Malraux. “France’s mission, according to Malraux, was to renew the cultural heritage of occidental catholic civilization in order to counter an emergent world culture that had lost its soul - ...a french humanism that would stand up to Anglo-American materialism”. (Handler, 1988, p. 119)

produced under then liberal Ministère des Affaires culturelles du Québec (1965), Pierre Laporte<sup>13</sup>, articulated the centrality of identity building to the cultural exercise initiated in 1961 with the creation of the ministry. Although many of the recommendations were not formalized, the institution building of the 1960's promoted the underlying principles and spirit embodied in the report. This was very much within the policy trends of 1960's Québec that saw the creation of a number of key agencies that continue to shape arts, language and cultural policy in the province, including the Office de la langue française (OLF), an early manifestation of the Conseil des arts du Québec (under direct Ministerial control), the provincial arts funding body, Delegation generale du Québec à Paris (1962), Direction general de l'immigration (1966) and Radio Québec (1968) (Breux, 2004, p. 42). This also led to the creation of new cultural oriented ministerial portfolios such as Immigration in 1968 and Communication in 1969. (Diane Saint-Pierre, 2002, p. 159) The relevance of arts and culture production in the education arena was absent in the Parent report and it was the Rioux Report (1969) that attempted to fill this gap motivated by an attempt to address the grievances raised by students at the École des beaux-arts de Montréal in 1965 concerning teaching conditions in their school and the larger issue of the place of arts and arts education in the school system and Québec at large. (Couture & Lemerise, 1992, p. 7). By the end of the 1960's the broad scope of the cultural bureaucracy was in place. The next major shift within this bureaucratic and technocratic engineering of the field involved the issue of clarifying the primacy of the French language in terms of daily usage, education and visibility. By the 1970's, art, culture, language and education policy would be understood collectively as intertwined and interdependent elements within a political strategy to secure the rights and long term cultural security of the majority francophone population.

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<sup>13</sup> This was the same Pierre Laporte, who in 1970, was kidnapped and executed by the Front de liberation du Québec (FLQ), also responsible for the kidnapping of British Trade Attaché James Cross. The activities of the FLQ led to the October Crisis and Pierre Trudeau's implementation of the War Measures Act in Montréal which limited civil liberties and the right of movement and assembly and became infamous amongst Québécois nationalists as an example of Federal and Pierre Trudeau's strongarm and repressive tactics.

A second major report in 1976, once again under the auspices of a provincial Liberal government, and then Minister Jean-Paul L'Allier, entitled the *Livre vert Pour l'évolution de la politique culturelle du Québec*, called for a prioritization of initiatives to increase participation, distribution and accessibility to culture in Québec. This was to be achieved through “un transfert de différents secteurs de l'administration à des organismes parapublics” (Diane Saint-Pierre, 2002, p. 159) leading to the creation of a number of arm's length government agencies. The goal was to challenge the marginalization and incapacity of the cultural sector and clarify the role of the Ministry as “la conscience culturelle de l'Etat”. (Quebec, *Livre Vert*, 1976, 95 quoted in Diane Saint-Pierre, 2002, p. 159) Once again many of these recommendations were scuttled because of a general election which would see the separatist PQ take power for the first time.

The Parti Québécois's White Paper on Culture designed by the Minister of Cultural Development (Ministre d'État au Développement culturel) Camille Laurin in 1978 and sociologists Fernand Dumont and Guy Rocher was the most ambitious and broadest in scope when compared to earlier incarnations of Québec's provincial cultural policy. “It brought together all the ministries with a cultural vocation, Cultural Affairs, Education, Communications, Sport and Immigration under the auspices of one super ministry that could rival federal equivalents in budget and in scope.” (Diane Saint-Pierre, 2002, p. 160) The underlying principle of Laurin's vision also involved a much broader and ‘anthropological’ definition of culture – as a ‘milleux du vie’ wherein ‘l'ensemble de l'existence est produit de la culture’. (Quebec, *Livre blanc*, 1978, p.9 quoted in Diane Saint-Pierre, 2002, p. 160) As Handler points out, “the introduction of an anthropological conception of culture fits logically with the growth of a governmental apparatus whose leaders were increasingly thinking of Québec as a total society – a territorially bounded unit that had replaced the pan-Canadian...entity suggested by the term “French Canadian nation.” (Handler, 1988, p. 123)

The gains secured by this government were fundamental in re-organizing the federal landscape, asserting Québec's distinct linguistic and cultural status and entrenching the emancipatory process through broad and powerful legislation meant to secure Francophone majoritarian power and the nation building program.

As a period which saw the formalizing of Bill 101, the Charter of French Language, the most rigorous manifestation of Québec's language laws to date which included the key educational component of the larger 'francisation' programs and the creation of the Société québécoise de développement des industries culturelles (SODIC)<sup>14</sup>, the scope of the 1978 White Paper articulated the depth and breadth of 'cultural ecology' as the preeminent ground for the formation of identity and citizenship. The scope of the 'cultural ecology' is a central component of the discursive construct around identity in Québec, as Allor and Gagnon point out,

...the discursive articulation of l'identitaire Québécoise are auto-referential in that they take language, history and citizenry as the defining elements of identity... the interaction of these formations then account for the productivity of the cultural field as the terrain where the tensions and contradictions facing the sovereign actions of the Québec state are contested and contingently resolved. (Allor & Gagnon, 1994, pp. 45-46).

The imperative of this re-self – identification within the paper clearly articulated the highly interventionist role of the state within a very broad definition of culture and cultural production.

Although the document did not offer a key recommendation geared to the visual arts community nor ended up receiving the approbation of parliament (though it was a subject of

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<sup>14</sup> SODEC is an agency that operates under the auspices of the Ministère des affaires culturelles and is charged with funding and business development to support the film, television, recording, publishing, multimedia and craft sectors. Founded in 1975 as the Institut québécois de la cinémathèque to oversee adoption of the Acte sur le cinéma, and dismantled and incorporated into SOGIC (Société générale des industries culturelles) and renamed Société des entreprises culturelles in 1994. The concern for international economic exchange and promotion has resulted in one program geared to helping commercial galleries show work outside of Québec – this program had an operating budget of \$280,000 in 2004/2005 (Québec, 2005b, p. 16).



debate), the spirit of this report and the directives that came out of the scuttled Livre vert, two years earlier, shaped the government's intentions in face of the arts and cultural communities. As a result of the broad sweep the cultural portfolio took, it diminished the profile of the Ministère des Affaires culturelles within the enlarged nexus of government cultural activity by the separatist government and its ability to address the particular demands of the artistic community (G. Bellavance & Fournier, 1992)<sup>15</sup>. As one prominent journalist I talked to pointed out, the broad scope assigned to culture by the PQ often translated into fewer real resources moving to the arts and culture sector. Although the claim is not entirely supported by the evidence, major institutions and governance structure were implemented by the provincial Liberals including the founding of the Cultural Ministry and the development of the 1992 Cultural Policy which we will discuss in the next section.

The state corporatist and collectivist thread behind cultural development in Québec addressed the sectors fragility and inability to be self-sustaining and the threat posed by external producers in shaping local taste and demand. However a protectionist ethos is central to both federal and provincial government policy. In tandem with federal resources, the heightened concern around art and its production in Québec became a boon for cultural producers, allowing them access to a larger pool of resources than was available in the other provinces within the Canadian federation<sup>16</sup>. (HillStrategies, 2006) The federal and provincial approaches to cultural development and policy in the visual arts have historically gravitated towards project based support of artists and institutions. For commercial operators that has meant a

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<sup>15</sup> What comes out of the literature and media reports of the period is a sense of disjuncture between the role and political rhetoric of policy concerning arts and cultural development in Québec and tangible financial support and support for infrastructure building targeted to the sector. Therefore what appears to be an organized and evolutive growth was actually a piece meal, hard fought, cobbled together process of development but within an overriding bureaucratic and political culture sensitive to and aware of the underlying importance of the arts and culture sector.

<sup>16</sup> Additionally, the presence of art and design figures prominently in Montréal's labor profile, with key neighborhoods in the city representing the greatest concentration of selfidentifying artists in the federation according to recent census figures (HillStrategies, 2010).

general disregard for promoting and building markets for the sector both internally as well as internationally. The schism between the ‘cultural industries’ and the relative size and highbrow specificity that is linked to the visual arts sector adds to the sense of the sector’s lack of relevance and political utility in face of the more pressing concerns in other political portfolios. On the federal level in particular, outside of one specific program run by the Canada Council of the Arts and another by SODEC, support for the sector has involved unfocused, one off, international promotional forays in conjunction with the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, or through events sponsored by the Québec Delegation Offices of which there are seven around the world, with important exceptions that included the creation of a federally funded gallery for Canadian visual artists in New York called the 49<sup>th</sup> Parallel Center for Contemporary Canadian Art between 1981 to 1992.

By the late 1980’s the Provincial government had already begun to move away from a classic French style cultural policy where the state serves as ‘maîtres d’oeuvres’ of culture, to a more arm’s length style, a hallmark of the British approach, while maintaining a central role for the ministry of culture. (Gattinger & Saint-Pierre, 2010, p. 284) The government’s commitment to the governance of the cultural field was entrenched. The understanding that “...culture is not so much commodified in Québec society...” and “the market [for visual art ] remains very discreet” (Interviews, 2008) as one curator I talked to articulated it, remains a product of the continental and Keynesian approach to cultural development that shaped the cultural field during this period. The strong links between education and professionalization in the creation of the local art world, was described to me as one of the differences between Montreal and Toronto...

That’s why there’s a big difference here [from Toronto]. You see nice galleries, storefronts, and they’re not even that nice, whereas here it’s all about studio, it’s all about Concordia, it’s all about UQAM, the schools are very prominent but they aren’t international at all...(Interviews, 2008).

The engineering and institutionalization of the key nodal points of the local network needed to sustain a viable artistic field and a particular state orientation around the primary market remains a product of the early state building initiatives that took hold in the 1960's and continue through to the present.

The more focused drive in Québec to culture development in and out of the arts to a symbolic and material self expression, cohesion and citizenship for the Francophone majority, asserted terms for calculative framing over competitive material and symbolic capital by actors in the art field. The breadth of cultural policy involved the creation of what Bhaba describes as the 'historically congruent space' (Bhaba, 1996, p. 56) upon which culture and cultural difference is then expressed and in Bourdieuan terms, the creation of the new doxa for participation within the field. The criteria for the 'feel for the game' involved sensitivity to both the cultural and linguistic concerns of the French majority as well as a particular approach that placed a greater moral value to patronage over collecting which was cultivated in the operation and governance of the visual arts field generally and the primary market in particular.

#### 1992- Notre culture, notre avenir

Since its adoption in 1992 Notre culture, notre avenir remains the most comprehensive arts focused cultural policy when compared to interventions at the municipal or federal level in Québec. Following from the shifts in educational and language policy that marked the francization programs in the 1970's, the 1992 document operationalized the issues of francophone cultural identity within the broader influence of a post-fordist and post-industrial rationalization of the arts and culture sector in Québec. Within the four pillars of the policy -

affirmation of cultural identity, support for creators and the arts, encouraging access and participation in cultural life and the creation of new management and funding structures – the policy mapped out the role of government in arts and culture and positioned the demands of cultural producers and artists in the province. This was demonstrative of the fundamental link between cultural security and artistic production and dissemination in the climate of constitutional and sovereignty debates waging prior to the Québec referendum in 1995. The utility of arts and culture in galvanizing nationalist sentiment and support is key to the genesis and high profile of the document, as St- Pierre points out, “...ce n’est lorsque que le débat constitutionnel atteint un point culminant avec l’échec de Meech [Meech Lake Constitutional Talks] que la culture et, incidemment, les problèmes ressentis par les associations et les regroupements du milieu des arts et de la culture deviennent prioritaires dans l’agenda gouvernementale du Québec. (Diane Saint-Pierre, 2003, p. 281). The political relevance of articulating a broad cultural policy in 1992 still resonates in so far as the document operates as a framework for discourse and participation in the local art world twenty years later, serving as a point of reference for ongoing debates concerning the broad scope of activities that fall within the purview of ‘culture’ within the Province.

The links between the affirmation of cultural identity and the holistic view of culture as a ‘whole way of life’ that was articulated in the language and educational policies that evolved from Bill 63 in 1969, Bill 22 in 1974 and most importantly in Bill 101 in 1977 which “refines an overall strategy for ...francization and formulates sanctions to enforce compliance...” (Handler, 1988, p. 170) is reaffirmed in the 1992 cultural policy. However an underlying principle of the Québécois approach to cultural identity and production articulated within this policy document is the understanding that “plus un peuple affirme son identité culturelle, plus il peut s’ouvrir au monde...” (Québec, 1992, p. 24), an implication that cultural affirmation

and by extension solidarity is a necessary precondition to openness onto the world and not a radical pluralism. The principle of the affirmation of one's cultural identity extends out beyond the terms of a linguistic collectivity built on the valorization of the French language, to a more complex construct built around traits such as customs, beliefs and holidays. The specific policy objectives concerned with 'valorizing the French language as a means of cultural expression and access' and the 'valorizing of cultural heritage' are explained in these majoritarian collectivist terms:

“Cet axe s'adresse à la société québécoise comme collectivité et fait appel à la préservation et au développement d'acquis originaux sur lesquels se fonde l'identité des Québécois: la langue, les coutumes, les croyances, les fêtes et les rites, par exemple, créent des racines et lient les individus, ce qui leur permet de se reconnaître dans leur collectivité.” (Québec, 1992, p. 23)

The quote highlights the complex variables that are brought into the discourse around the word 'collectivity'.

The complex indeterminacy between linguistic and majoritarian ethno-cultural expression within this pillar of Québec's cultural policy are readily apparent. In the conflicting imperative to “endeavor to promote Québec as a Francophone civic polity with French as the language of citizen-belonging...” in the context of aboriginal cultural and linguistic preservation, for example, the linguistic imperative is obviously at odds with the rights of expression of this minority population (Oakes & Warren, 2007, p. 173). However the delicate problems of promoting a particular conception of cultural identity have been glaringly apparent in those contexts where cultural expression concerns not language use but religious symbols. Recent debates over 'reasonable accommodation' and recent legislation concerning Muslim 'veiling' and Sikh 'ceremonial daggers' are attempts to address what are viewed as holes in the directives set up in a cultural policy in the province. If the document were written now it would have certainly included a section on laicity which is currently being up held as a defining characteristic of the highly politicized and contemporary majoritarian affirmation of

Québécois cultural identity.

The cultural dialogue component of the policy can be interpreted as setting the terms for cosmopolitan dialogue both internally and with the rest of the world. The section addresses the contribution and role of the Province's Anglophone culture, First Nation communities as well as the presence of Québec art and artists in international cultural forums and networks. There is an acknowledgement of the contribution of the Anglophone elite's vital role in creating cultural institutions in Montréal prior to the 1960's. In addition to ensuring financial support to cultural producers working in the English language, the document aligns the interests of the government with those of this community and its producers in terms of protecting local interests from the "forte pénétration des produits étrangers, américains en particulier, dans le marché..." (Québec, 1992, p. 51). The position reiterates the 'menace' of American cultural hegemony that has been a distinguishing trait of cultural and communication policy at the federal level in Canada. In the section that follows on from 'les communautés culturelles', the need to effectively integrate immigrants into the cultural fabric is understood through a reiteration of cultural affirmation and clarification of the French fact of the province:

Cette intégration sera grandement facilitée si l'invitation lancée aux immigrants est claire, si le visage culturel du Québec est riche et accueillant, si son caractère francophone est manifeste et si l'appartenance à la francophonie, sur le plan international, est valorisée. (Québec, 1992, p. 52)

Those other traits that constitute cultural identity that were addressed in earlier sections of the document are not really addressed in reference to the non-European character of new arrivals other than situating Québec within the 'dilemma' of dealing with differences that contemporary immigration poses to most western nations, as the document states. "Par ailleurs, toutes les cultures occidentales ont à s'ajuster au pluralisme de plus en plus évident des sociétés et aux métissages culturels plus nombreux qu'il suscite". (Québec, 1992, p. 53)

Most importantly the document assumes an essentialist and collectivist whole for the majority population which newly arriving minority populations enter into.

The policy and one of the key threads of the nationalist project lends itself to a condition that Gilroy identifies where “the idea of culture has been abused by being simplified, instrumentalised, or trivialized, and particularly through being coupled with notions of identity and belonging that are overtly fixed or too easily naturalized as exclusively national phenomena.” (P Gilroy, 2004, p. 6) The coupling of definitions of majoritarian cultural identity with the sovereign nation state is a key trait of the Québec brand of nationalist politics which by its nature lends itself to the civilisationism (P Gilroy, 2004, p. 25) so popular in a post 911 context. The scope and amplitude of the frenzy surrounding ‘reasonable accommodation’ in 2007-2008 in the Province involved the articulation of defensive measures posed to the operational and discursive integrity of an idea of Québécois identity held by the majority of the population. The shifting terms of ‘doxa’ of the Québec identity construct suggested by the 1992 document was insufficient. Displacing a simple and crude biological racism, the debate around reasonable accommodation reaffirmed the ethno-cultural underpinnings of policy and programs of the Québécois re-engineering project. Concurrently, reconsideration of the discursive field of identity politics in the province and the emboldened expressions of resistance to the possible outcomes of a multiculturalist project also began forcing an articulation and re-evaluation of more specific local terms for the plural reality of Québec and the limits and shifts necessary to make operational Québec’s version of the multicultural project.

## Interculturalism and Multiculturalism

Although the term, 'interculturels' is only employed once in the document (in a sidebar on pg. 51), the inference that one should draw from the language of the discussion on cultural dialogue and in particular the absence of the term 'multiculturalism' is the provincial government's official stand against what is viewed as federal policy aimed at undermining the strength and value of the francophone claim to distinct cultural status. At the time of the Arpin commission hearings that served as the basis of the cultural policy document, the MCCI (Ministere de la culture, communication et immigration) was also in the process of articulating a citizenship policy. The now fashionable denunciation of multiculturalism in Europe (Merkel, Cameron) was a key trait of Québec nationalist policy since the early 1970's, driven by an understanding that the principles upheld by the federal conception of multiculturalism were fundamentally at odds with both the preservation and recognition of French Canadian cultural security and historic contribution within the federation. Although there is debate as to whether the application of Québec's model of cultural pluralism produces radically different outcomes than the federal policy of multiculturalism championed in English Canada (see Gagnon, 2000), the political and philosophical positions of these two policies are divergent. The origins of Québec's policy of 'interculturalism' has its roots in the federal government's rejection of the recommendations from the Bicultural and Bilingualism Commission (Laurendeau-Dutton) in 1969 that led to the creation of the federal multiculturalism policy in 1972 and into an act of law in 1988. Driven by opposition from the descendants of Eastern European immigrants in Western Canada to the dominion of the English and French cultural contribution to the development of the country, a new understanding was arrived at that saw the adoption of English and French as the two official languages of the federation and of the services available through the central government but a rejection of the two founding cultures' argument. The federal position championed by then



Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau drew fire from Québécois nationalists who viewed the federal position as a direct attempt to undermine the contribution, distinct status and demographic power of the French-Canadian community (see Rocher, 1973, pp. 93-103). For many Québec nationalists, the multiculturalism policy undermined their unique cultural and political contribution and therefore power within the federation by diminishing the distinct status of French Canadian to the same level as that of the many other ethno/cultural groups who have contributed to the country's development.

The 1992 *Notre culture, notre avenir* document's approach to cultural pluralism in Québec represents the slow evolution of the position adopted officially since 1978 in the *Politique québécoise de développement culturel* of a common project "...centrer sur l'épanouissement de la culture du groupe francophone majoritaire." (Helly, 1994, p. 23) The challenge of reconciling cultural pluralism and the project of building the collective culture since 1978 has seen the slow attempt at shedding the language situating cultural participation and social cohesion in Québec simply within the lens of ethnic singularity. The political strategy dealing with ethnic and racial diversity that came out of the Parti Québécois', *La Politique québécoise du développement culturel* in 1978 was one of

... convergence culturelle autour d'un pôle prédominant en raison de sa force et de son histoire, [qui] doit servir la consolidation de la société francophone. Elle implique trois normes. La culture québécoise est francophone. Les individus doivent participer au projet culturel collectif décrit pour être Québécois. Les traditions culturelles particulières doivent enrichir et féconder ce projet, car tous les individus, quelle que soit leur origine, « doivent désormais ensemble savoir lier indissocialement fidélité à leurs origines et participation à un projet culturel collectif » (Helly, 1994, p. 24)

Although the policy affirmed that the "pôle premier de référence collective, [est] le groupe francophone majoritaire" (Ibid 38), programs linked to this policy were built around supporting ethnic communities and their institutions much like the federal multiculturalism policy at the time.

The following stages of the provincial government's policy on integration and cultural pluralism were developed chiefly through the Ministère des communautés culturelles et d'immigration (MCCI)<sup>17</sup> who were generating policies geared to supporting equal participation in public institutions and the 'cultural convergence' of new immigrants and members of cultural communities (Helly, 1994, p. 24). Under the provincial Liberal government from 1985 to 1990 the focus was primarily on institutional inclusion and the support of anti-racist initiatives meant to address the increasing diversity within the city of Montréal (Ibid, p.37). These measures remained symbolic, not activating any considerable change at an institutional level in and through the different tiers of provincial and municipal government. They also represented an important shift away from the earlier PQ initiatives that favored supporting ethnic communities and their institutions.

The changes surrounding the 1992 *Notre culture, notre avenir* cultural policy document, such as the 1993, *Gérer la diversité dans un Québec francophone, démocratique et pluraliste* (MCCI, 1993) and *Au Québec pour bâtir ensemble: Énoncé de politique en matière d'immigration et d'intégration* (MCCI, 1990) continued with three key shifts initiated by the provincial Liberal government that involved a 'contract' with the community based on three tenets of social cohesion – "promotion du français et non d'une culture francophone majoritaire, droit individuels et...acceptation par l'ensemble des résidents de la pluralité ethnoculturelle issue de l'histoire québécoise et de l'immigration." (Helly, 1994, p. 38) The implication, as Helly goes on to point out, is a historical configuration that views cultural pluralism as a cosmopolitan byproduct of the Quiet Revolution (ibid), but as the 1992 cultural

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<sup>17</sup> The new ministry was created in 1981. A key document they produced was *Autant de façons d'être Québécois. Plan d'action à l'intention des communautés culturelles* (gouvernement du Québec, 1981).

policy document suggests, the tidy uncoupling of linguistic promotion and preservation from the historical and lived heritage of the majority is not so easy to do. The movement in the 1990's toward an emphasis on the linguistic orientation in the social compact between residents remains tied to the historical trajectory and factionalism drawn from the reorganization of the French Canadian majority into the Québécois nation. The government is quite explicit about the centrality of 'integration', as distinct from the principals of assimilation or federal multiculturalism (MCCI, 1993, p. 4) but the shape of 'citizenship' is conditional on terms of an amorphous 'public culture'. The Québec mode of interculturalism is as Gagnon argues is an attempt at achieving...

un équilibre entre les droits individuels du modèle américain et le relativisme culturel du modèle canadien est ainsi recherché en mettant l'accent sur la convergence culturelle. C'est en favorisant la délibération et la participation de tous les groupes à la sphère publique, visant l'atteinte du plus large consensus possible établi en fonction de la quête d'une plus grande cohésion sociale et de la protection des droits individuels, que l'interculturalisme est pensé et implante. (Gagnon, 2000, p. 6)

The tension in 2007 around religious accommodation and the shape of cultural pluralism and 'convergence' in post 911 Québec, invariably raised the question of the integrity of a purely civic conception of citizenship and the constitution of that public culture, which in turn reiterated the importance of the ethno-cultural component to the survival of the white, Francophone, Catholic majority as a primary narrative in the expression of the nation building exercise.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> In a series of eleven points meant to clarify an operational definition of interculturalism, the 2008 report from the Commission de consultation sur les pratiques d'accomodement reliés aux différences culturelles (Bouchard-Taylor) concluded -

Members of the majority ethnocultural group, i.e. Québécois of French-Canadian origin, like the members of ethnocultural minorities, accept that their culture will be transformed sooner or later through interaction. (Québec, 2008, p. 41)

As the document goes on to summarise -

"interculturalism as an integration policy has never been fully, officially defined by the Québec government although its key components were formulated long ago. This shortcoming should be overcome, all the more so as the Canadian multiculturalism model does not appear to be well suited to conditions in Québec, for four reasons: a) anxiety over language is not an important factor in English Canada; b) minority insecurity is not found there; c) there is no longer a majority ethnic group in Canada (citizens of British origin account for 34% of the population, while citizens of French-Canadian origin make up a strong majority of the population in Québec, i.e. roughly 77%); d) it follows that in English Canada, there is less concern for the preservation of a founding cultural tradition than for national cohesion. (Québec, 2008, p. 39)

Charles Taylor's well known essay on multiculturalism (Charles Taylor & Gutmann, 1994), published near the time of the 1992 cultural policy and heated constitutional battles in the country, represents in part a sympathetic Anglophone Montréalers reading of the Québec dilemma. What Bhaba has called Taylor's "'presumption of equality', presenting the multicultural or minority position as an imposition coming from the 'outside' and making demands from there" (Bhaba, 1996, p. 57) is reiterated in the Québécois mode of intercultural discourse. The anxieties of demographic decline and the need to adopt a linguistic and purely civic model for Québec citizenship, as exemplified in the recent work of Jean Francois Lisée, *Nous* (Lisée, 2007), is an excellent example of the reiteration of this optic—

Non pas l'hégémonie ou la supériorité, mais la prédominance. Prédomine au Québec un groupe [les franco-québécoise] qui a défini et continue de définir l'espace historique, culturel, linguistique et économique. Il prédomine par la force du nombre, la vitalité, la volonté du durer... Pour discuter de ce qui est raisonnable ou non dans les accommodements à venir, il faut que la majorité franco-québécoise établisse de façon plus nette les repères de sa prédominance sur l'histoire, la langue et la religion" (Lisée, 2007, pp. 12-13).

For Lisée, a sovereigntist driven by a liberal tradition, not only are the vagaries of hybridity a challenge to his political project but like Taylor whose understanding of majority cultures faced with the dilemmas of plural populations "... involves a dismissal of partial cultures," and a "... presumption on 'whole societies over some considerable stretch of time' [that] introduces a temporal criterion to cultural worth that elides the disjunctive and displaced present through which minoritization interrupts and interrogates the homogenous, horizontal claim of the democratic liberal society." (Bhaba, 1996, p. 57). The assimilationist tendency built into this liberal democratic model of Québec interculturalism has to a large part sadly proven its political worth in the context of multiculturalism's supposed failure in the post-911 world.

The scope of labor market and evaluative practices in the primary market has been shaped by

the optics of inclusion and citizenship that have been set forth in the provincial cultural policy document. The unraveling of these socio-ethnic variables particular to Quebec becomes an element at play within the ‘little hegemonies’ that, as one curator described it, are “...inevitable and symptomatic of small markets like Montreal.”(Interviews, 2008) The possibilities of new hybrid identities taking ground in Québec and the greater possibilities of ‘multicultural drift’(Hall, 2011) remain checked in Québec by the complex criterion that the cultural field writ large deems capable and appropriate, given the overriding concern for cultural security that over determines the mediating function within the field. Although this dilemma manifests itself through localized particulars, it is by no means unique, and has inadvertently placed Québec at the forefront and vanguard of managing majoritarian anxiety alongside multicultural change and demographic shift outside the Anglo-American world.

For primary market actors, these identitarian nationalist concerns are the counterpoint to the cosmopolitan ambitions of the field, highlighting the underlying tension that governs the optics of cultural engagement. The frame for the discourse around participation in the field and the evaluative practices that are employed by mediators, happens within the conflicting demands for a cosmopolitan model built on the principle of a diverse and plural French speaking citizenry and a cultural space that celebrates the ethno-cultural particular of the majority population. These are fluid and ongoing processes (as we explore in the following chapters) but the overriding tension of cultural loss and dissipation frames strategic calculation. The claims by those I interviewed seeking to invigorate and render the local primary market more dynamic possesses risks to the power of cultural authority and gatekeeping in the Province. Québec’s model of interculturalism helps explain the way in which ethno cultural markers shape evaluative and labor market practices in a complex political environment. It also helps to explain the pace of change in cultural economy where

art worlds and primary art markets play a part in representing culture and identity, and its monetization through modes of commercial practice and promotion. Identitarian concerns are embedded within the large state and artist run institutional apparatus and network of actors needed for its maintenance, and the viability of the primary market and the larger artistic field.

### Arts Community Advocacy and Mobilization

For primary market actors, the 1992 Notre Culture, Notre Avenir cultural policy's official articulation of identitarian concerns operated alongside the reification of the key technologies that continue to govern the visual arts field. It entrenched the primacy of cultural advocacy groups and artistic coalitions within the arm's length management of the state subsidized art sector in the city and Province. On the basis of the second pillar of the policy, 'support for creators and the arts', the funding structures employed in the newly established Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec would ensure funding and support for emerging artists within arts organizations, as well as programs to support professional associations and advocacy groups acting on behalf of the sector through the province. SODEC, the Société de développement des entreprises culturelles which replaced SODIC, the Société de développement des industries culturelles in 1994, would be responsible for sectoral development in the capital intensive areas of the cultural economy such as publishing, music, film and television and craft. This period also included the opening of a purpose built structure to house the Musée d'art contemporains de Montréal in the downtown core that had languished in various locations throughout the city since its creation in 1964.

The principles outlined in the first section of the 1992 Notre culture, notre avenir policy explain, in part, the terms of cultural citizenship in the Province by framing the role of

government support for art and cultural production within specific terms for collective identity affirmation and articulation. The issues of implementation, economic development and management of the arts and culture sector and its stakeholders is the focus of the rest of the document. The major institutional change that the document set forth is the establishment of the Conseil des arts et lettres du Québec (CALQ) which marked the shift for the government from architect to patron of the arts with the creation of an independent arm's length funding body similar to the Canada Council for the Arts in Ottawa. Within an umbrella of government support for art and artists that included legal and fiscal recognition of the status of the artist, the goal was to develop a separate entity responsible for the development of the culture industries through a newly amalgamated agency called SODEC (Société de développement des entreprises culturelles), and CALQ, which was designed to ensure the livelihood and sustainability of individual artistic production and artistic organizations within the province that did not operate in the 'mass media' arenas of film, television, radio and the publishing industries.

From the perspective of artists and arts organizations, the policy represents an apogee in the links between the artistic community and policy makers which had been growing increasingly important in light of the failure of the Meech Lake and Charlottetown rounds of constitutional talks and the ensuing 1995 Referendum on sovereignty. But the linkages between the provincial government and art and cultural workers and mediators, as a political constituency, are built into the fabric of arts and cultural development in the province since the beginning of the Quiet Revolution.

By the 1960's local painters and gallery owners believed that a unique Montréal School of Painting had emerged that equaled the importance of what was going on in New York and

Paris and that ‘certains Québécois seraient découverts par les pontifes du grand marché international’. (Robillard, 1985, p. 12) Although there was some important international success and some local galleries managed to establish strong relationships with galleries in New York and Paris, one of the lasting legacies of these painters was their role in the creation of the first group of art practitioners to have organized and been received by the provincial government as a culture based NGO arts advocacy group. The Plasticiens artists organized themselves into the Association des artistes non-figuratives de Montréal (AANFM) with their own manifesto written in 1956 in reaction to the dominance of the Automatistes. Following the creation of the Musée d’art contemporains in Montréal in 1964, they were encouraged by Ministerial officials to organize themselves into an advocacy group for visual artists that then became the Associations des artistes professionnels du Québec. (Robillard, 1985, p. 9) The Kingston Conference of Canadian Artists in 1941 had already assembled English and French visual artists into an advocacy group (Federation of Canadian Artists renamed the Canadian Conference for the Arts in 1958). They made a successful bid in bringing culture to the political table through representation along with 15 other major cultural organizations of the Brief Concerning The Cultural Aspects of Canadian Reconstruction presented to the House of Commons Special Committee on Reconstruction and Reestablishment (Turgeon Committee) in 1944, as part of the Canadian Delegation to Unesco in 1946, and most importantly to the Massey Commission in 1950. The Québec variant of the arts advocacy group shared a different pedigree from the federal group. The interest in democratization and access that characterized cultural development in the period was bolstered in Québec by the depth and breadth of nationalist fervor within the overriding context and scope of specifically francophone economic development, bureaucratic modernization and educational access.

The engineering of the visual arts field brought together the principle of educational access



and co-operative style institutional development built on direct support from the state. Art production and exhibition were part of a relatively closed circuit, removed from commercial practice, addressing, involving and sustaining most importantly the experimental and avant-garde actors in the field. The relevance of what was becoming a middle class artist constituency took ever more political importance in the ascendancy of the parallel and community visual arts programs that benefited from all three levels of state funding in Québec. The prominent artists' run spaces in Montréal such as Powerhouse and Optica were nurtured in the late 1960's and early 1970's through the combination of funding programs made available by the creation of the Canada council for the Arts in 1957 and the creation of a provincial arts funding arm in the form of Conseil des arts du Québec in 1961 and the Conseil des Arts de Montréal created in 1957. (Fournier, 1986, p. 82)

The organization of artists as a political constituency in Québec after the 1960's marked the increasing importance of artists and creative workers in the Québécois nation building exercise, and the sector's role amongst an increasingly educated and middle class post-industrial economic actor. Hence between 1971 and 1991 individuals working directly or indirectly within the arts or media sector increased by 116% in comparison to 59% for most other labor markets in the economy (Diane Saint-Pierre, 2003, p. 130). The implication of studies conducted at the time such as the Rapport Coupet (1990) was that activity in the sector and its institutions had increased dramatically, but that government spending and support was not reflective of these changes and based on decade old criteria. The result was increasing precarity of employment, low or negligible salaries and a lack of new opportunities within the sector. At the same time the 1980's saw an important consolidation of legislative change and the increasing role of publicly funded artists associations through the drafting of new laws on copyright at the federal level and provincial recognition of the status of the artist that affected both professional development and taxation. (Diane Saint-Pierre, 2003, p. 147). The

increasing importance of stakeholder power in the form of advocacy groups and arts organizations cemented the shift to an arm's length mode of governance and distributed the broad sweep of gatekeeping authority to 'independent' government sustained actors in the visual arts field and within other important sectors of the cultural economy.

### Cultural Policy - Ville de Montréal

The city of Montréal's cultural policy, Montréal Cultural Metropolis, A Cultural Development Policy for the Ville de Montréal formulated in 2005, is an evolutionary byproduct of the 1992 Notre culture, notre avenir document and can be situated within contemporary trends towards the ascendancy of metropolitan centers as key engines in national economic planning and development, the increasing role of arts and culture in that process of development and the devolution of a decentralized model for cultural development that was outlined as a policy goal in the 1992 provincial document. In the period following the 1995 referendum on provincial sovereignty, the full force of a neo-liberally inflected coalition style municipal politics, articulated from a City Plan adopted in 1992, saw the application of a 'willingness to reconcile the vision for Montréal as a francophone center and the desire for 'internationalization'. (Shaw, 2003) Built into this discourse is the increasingly important role of the private sector in arts and cultural development in the city. The city's cultural policy comes out of a particular localized variant of bureaucratic reorganization that reflects the tenets of a neo-liberal, entrepreneurial ethos within the imperative set by global, post-industrial economic exchange. Most importantly, the civic policy formulation, with its recurring references to ethnic diversity, cultural entrepreneurialism and to international cultural metropolises, represents a cautious post-sovereignist break from the psychological and institutional limits imposed by the melancholia of Québécois essentialism apparent in the 1992 Provincial policy document.

This move and sensitivity to culture amongst city of Montréal policy makers can be situated within an ‘artistic mode of production’. This involves the revalorizing of the built environment around cultural consumption and historic preservation, restructuring the labor force using art and nurturing a new’ set of meanings that value urban space and labor for their aesthetic rather than productive qualities. (Zukin, 2001, p. 260) The 1986 Picard Report constituted a first stage in Montréal’s transition towards an economy of knowledge and its aesthetic modes of production. The significance of the report can also be measured by its silences on certain key urban issues such as poverty and the integration of immigrants. Instead the development strategy put forth in the report concerned new ‘Schumpeterian’ entrepreneurs in charge of emerging economic sectors. The ‘targeted’ population were those with a high level of cultural and economic capital, coming from other parts of the world who would be attracted to Montréal, vaunted for its quality of life, its security, its proximity to the United States, the relatively low cost, on a North American scale, of housing and property and the quality of its public services – marketing elements that constituted a distinct Montréal ‘brand’. (Hamela & Jouveb, 2008, p. 25) A key implication of this post-industrial, post-fordist approach is a twinning of an ‘urban-entrepreneurialism with a post modern penchant for design and urban fragments...and the eclecticism of fashion and style...”(Harvey, 1989, p. 13). Hence these new forms of urban governance and the shift to urban entrepreneurialism are in keeping with the ‘macro economic shift in the form and style of capitalist development since the early 1970’s’ (Harvey, 1989, p. 12), and engagements with the private sector through private-public initiatives. They place entrepreneurialism at the center of a relationship where ‘local boosterism is integrated with the use of local government powers to try and attract external sources of funding, new direct investments, or new employment sources” (Harvey, 1989, p. 7). An important element in the spectacular growth of many western

metropolitan economies in the past twenty years has been the way in which these modes of ‘urban entrepreneurialism encourage the development of those kinds of activities and endeavors that have the strongest localized capacity to enhance property values, the tax base, the local circulation of revenues and... employment growth’.(Harvey, 1989, p. 13) All of these were key concerns of metropolitan policy makers, particularly following the economic downturn in Montréal in the first half of the 1990’s.

Like the city itself and the ambitions of its cultural funding arm – the Conseil des arts de Montréal (CAM), the 2005 policy attempts to map out the particular cultural policy goals of a city that remains both central to economic development in Québec and ethno-culturally distinct from the overwhelmingly homogenous white French catholic population living in the rest of the province. Montréal’s economic importance and demographic realities have made it the primary and most dynamic site for the discursive battles over competing visions of Québécois self-identification and the “center stage for Canada’s unceasing constitutional debate” (Germain & Rose, 2000, p. 255). The 2005, Montréal Cultural Metropolis, A Cultural Development Policy for the Ville de Montréal document, represents a concerted attempt by the municipal government to move beyond the frame historically set by a “...national question [which] polarizes positions between recognizing the specificity of Montréal or simply treating it as one of Québec’s many regions, with the latter position usually winning out.” (Germain & Rose, 2000, p. 255) The document affirms Montréal’s distinct status and political trajectory outside the familiar lines of the provincial nationalist debate.

Montréal’s entry to UNESCO’s Creative Cities Network in 2006, as a city of design, was part of this drive and saw the culmination of over a decade of political sensitivity to the linkages between urban and aesthetic development. (A commission for design was established within

the urban government in 1991 that oversaw annual competitions and showcases for local design initiatives and since the 1980s, “design” has become a buzzword in the official discourse of various institutions and levels of government in Montréal. (Leslie & Rantisi, 2006, p. 319)) The title meant to serve as neither a ‘label’ nor a form of ‘recognition’ but was meant as ‘an invitation to develop Montréal around its creative forces in design’ (Ville de Montréal, 2010b). The Design Montréal Office and the \$1.2 million three year initiative, Building Montréal, has been created to further these aims through an ongoing series of design oriented workshops and competitions. Throughout the rather low-key character of the initiative, visual arts was initially visibly absent from the operational definition of ‘designing the city’ – separating out of the high arts from the industrial and commercial orientations of fashion, interior and architectural design. Since the period of fieldwork, promotional initiatives have made the visual arts community and local Biennale and a number of parallel and commercial galleries partners in this public – private government led initiative. It was only in 2009 that a number of key commercial galleries became partners in the promotion of Montréal UNESCO City of Design Program, - an “initiative to enhance the design quality of the objects, buildings and public spaces intended for Montréalers through better upstream integration of project designers in various disciplines.” (Ville de Montréal, 2010a) This program enlisted partnership with a broad range of institutions and events that shared a design sensibility in the city.

In the context of Montréal’s entry into UNESCO’s creative cities network and designation as a UNESCO city of design in 2006, the 2005 Cultural Policy attempts a far more comprehensive approach to the formulation of the cultural economy. In addition to the opportunities for ‘creative tourism’ and ‘the creation of public/private partnerships that help unlock the entrepreneurial and creative potential of small enterprises,’ the design designation

celebrates a “cultural landscape fuelled by design and the built environment...design-driven creative industries, e.g. architecture and interiors, fashion and textiles, jewelry and accessories, interaction design, urban design, sustainable design, etc.” (UNESCO, 2008) Not unlike what Sasatelli identifies, in the European context, as an “increasingly post-industrial scenario: [where] gradually, the language of subventions and access gives way to that of investment and the promotion of cities’ image... The focus on economic impacts means that this wide definition of culture can be at the same time reduced to an expanded notion of what constitutes ‘cultural consumptions’.(Sassatelli, 2009, p. 95) This approach highlights what has traditionally been in Montréal, an absence of strategies that address issues of consumption and participation that are now being replaced with a broader view of cultural activity understood within a framework designed to stimulate both urban economic and social development through attention on retail and other spaces where goods and services are accessed and delivered.

Montréal’s cultural development policy attempts to address these issues, and in a parallel fashion to the 1992 provincial policy, it examines cultural citizenship, participation, inclusion and development from a municipal perspective within a broad umbrella of cultural activities. The document takes a more thorough approach to the imbrication of culture and economic life as key factors in metropolitan economic growth – “in terms of three major concerns?: the accessibility to and support of arts and culture, and culture’s impact on the living environment of Montréalers.” (VilledesMontréal, 2005, p. 1) The issues of quality of life within the urban environment, international appeal and positioning and market driven innovation and development are all considered within an approach that sees ‘culture’ as the “key driver of [Montréal’s]...development, economic vitality and future prosperity.” (VilledesMontréal, 2005, p. 1) Within the broad range of overlapping and often amorphous ‘commitments’

expressed in the document, there is nevertheless a clear sense of wanting to link metropolitan development around industries and services tied to culture and the aesthetics of the city – public art, arts organization, built heritage, libraries – and highlight the principles of diversity and inclusion within the larger drive towards cultural metropolis status.

In a follow up document produced two years later, the 2007 PA 07 -17, Action Plan 2007 – 2017 Montréal Cultural Metropolis, meant to operationalize the commitments expressed in the cultural development policy, the issues of ethnic diversity and plurality are played down within a general category for the future vision of the city entitled ‘Francophone and cosmopolitan’ (VilledeMontréal, 2007b, p. 8). The key concerns for quality of life, creative industries, public art, heritage and design and international standing are reinforced in the context of a variety of directives meant to increase accessibility and the ‘right to culture for all residents’, as well as increasing investment in the arts and cultural sector and improving the cultural quality of the living environment. (VilledeMontréal, 2007b, pp. 10-11) However the tenor of the Action Plan for the 10 year period leans heavily towards the chief goal of cultivating the international status of the city and ‘securing for Montréal the means of a cultural metropolis.’ (Ibid)

What is implied in these linkages is a particular version of the cosmopolitan city that sees the intrinsic characteristics of the built, social environment and political environment, in terms of public/private funding and organizational partnerships, as a precondition to achieving the status of cultural metropolis. Ensuring the diversity and financial wellbeing of the arts sector is therefore concomitant with the branding exercise of the city itself. As the document points out, “the ‘Montréal brand’ consists of a number of ‘products’...the quality, quantity and diversity of festivals; development of the Quartier Internationale district...and our built

heritage...the vital partnerships between the arts, heritage, design and urban planning...” (Villedemonttréal, 2007b, p. 16). For artists and mediators, the municipal policy has not necessarily meant specific financial or program benefits to the sector, but rather a greater willingness on the part of the metropolitan bureaucracy to attribute the international profile and urban atmosphere to the work and presence of the arts and cultural sectors within the city.

For primary commercial operators the schism between public and private remains ever present but within a shift in policy approach that views culture and the arts as an integral aspect of urban economic and social development. The relative optimism of those I interviewed in 2007 was in part a response to the combination of the effects of increasing local wealth for a sector of the population and the policy shifts within municipal governance that placed arts and cultural operators closer to the center of economic development and the urban branding exercise.<sup>19</sup> Hence the ‘trickle down’ effects of sectorial awareness and attention by policymakers were interpreted as important framing devices in the self-perceived role of primary market operators as cultural and economic bearers of the city’s distinct personality and cosmopolitan outlook. Although in the context of consultation and policy-making their role, for demographic, political and ideological reasons, remained tertiary to those of artists and publicly funded arts organizations.

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<sup>19</sup> An important voice in the shaping of the policy document and one of the key capital projects associated with it, the development of the Place des Arts - Quartier des spectacles project, consisting of the creation of new venues and revitalization of the former red light district, of which the Belgo building is part, comes out of the demands placed on municipal and provincial governments by actors such as Alain Simard, founder and president of the Festival Internationale de Jazz de Montréal, the not for profit organization that oversees the annual jazz festival in the city. By 2012 Quartier des spectacles included the Place des festivals a permanent installation and re-organization of space for the annual music festivals, a new symphony concert hall and a cultural center with visual arts inclination called 2-22 at the eastern end of the Quartier des spectacles housing the new offices of the RCAAQ (Regroupement des centres d’artistes autogérés du Québec), Galerie Vox, Artex, Radio CIBL and a cultural information center called la Vitrine Culturelle - all organizations with strong links to the local artist run movement.



### Arm's Length Bureaucracies

Two local organizations that are part of this changing bureaucratic and governance landscape in the cultural sphere, and play an active role in the city's art field in operationalizing the more inclusive and internationalist policy ambitions of the city are 'Culture Montréal' and 'Culture pour tous'. Both are independent citizen based movements with very strong links to grassroots arts and culture organizations that began as ad hoc coalitions and have grown into state funded not-for-profit cultural organizations. The former serves as an advocacy group to promote access, participation and cultural rights through lobbying and advocacy efforts locally and internationally for Montréal, and the latter, is a province wide organization that puts together events that include 'Les journées de la culture' and awareness programs tailored to the general public meant to foster greater participation and awareness of the arts. Culture Montréal has a greater policy and advocacy orientation, with a stated mission "to assert the central role of arts and culture in all areas of Montréal's development: economy, business, politics, land-use planning, education, and social and community life while encouraging cultural diversity, emerging artists and practices and public art" (CultureMontreal, 2011). Culture Montréal also acts as and is recognized by the provincial government as the Regional Cultural Council for the Montréal area, bringing together key actors from across the field.

These developments represent an increasing distance between the provincial government and actors in the cultural economy. They also reflect the increasing metropolitan orientation and the role of powerful stakeholder groups that are composed of public and private sector actors who are taking a more important place in the shaping of the artistic field and the larger cultural economy. Unlike the advocacy groups central to engineering the artistic field since the 1960's, explored earlier in this chapter, these actors serve the role of advocates and agents responsible for implementing government policy. As opposed to challenging bureaucratic

structure, they represent a new class of mediator operating on the principles of a ‘soft-touch’ and a de-centralised bureaucracy. They mediate between stakeholder groups, individual actors and private sector interests championing metropolitan concerns and are responsible for generating new para-public hierarchies.

Culture Montréal also acts as the metropolitan champion of the Agenda 21C initiative, a culturally inflected, city based program with roots in the 1992 Rio Earth Summit. The program draws from UNESCO’s Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (UNESCO, 2001) and the province’s<sup>20</sup>, alongside that of the federal government’s role as a signatory to the 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (UNESCO, 2005). The Convention sets out a governance framework for a vision of sustainable cultural development as an integral aspect of economic and social development, including legal recognition to ‘promote and protect the diversity of cultural expressions’ while taking into account access, participation and international cultural exchange. Barcelona Agenda 21C is the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) Association program that applies the UNESCO principles on cultural diversity as a pillar for sustainable local city based economic, social and cultural development. In Québec, the Ministère de la Culture, des Communications et de la Condition féminine (MCCCF) is using the Agenda 21C concept as the basis for a province wide public forum to engage the population in the development of a long term vision of ‘culture as an essential dimension of our society’s economic, social and land development.’ (Québec, 2010 ) Culture Montréal acts as a local partner for the provincial Agenda 21C public consultation, operating as a not for profit cultural organization that takes public donations and receives funding from major local companies like Cirque du Soleil as

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<sup>20</sup> Since 2006 Quebec sits as a separate entity within the Permanent Delegation of Canada to UNESCO. In the matter of conflicts between Quebec and the federal government at UNESCO, “the federal government is responsible for ultimately justifying itself to Québec, not the inverse. In the event of an impasse, the Government of Québec alone will decide if it proceeds with implementation in areas of its responsibility.” (Québec, 2009)

well as provincial and municipal governments. As an advocacy group for cultural interests throughout the local economy, Culture Montréal has assembled a membership that includes key actors throughout government and the creative economy in the city. Agenda21C is obviously a comfortable fit for this group and, like the workshops and colloquiums they organize, is an attempt to activate actors in the local creative economy to national and international trends in key themes and governance issues surrounding the 'buzz' and repackaging of possibility and economic gain. This is within the banner of localized redefinitions of culture and the metropolitan cultural economy in distinction from a national Québécois one. Underlying the Agenda21 C program is the drive, by both the provincial and municipal governments, to articulate an updated version of domestic cultural policy within an international movement that links the preservation of distinct societies, cultural diversity, and the idea of cultural expression as a human right, while also working collectively as a countervailing force to global cultural hegemonies.

It is too soon to tell if the local manifestation of the program will bear the fruit of significant policy changes but the 'global' character of the program and the organicist position of viewing cultural diversity as politically analogous to ecological diversity - 'as both culture and the environment are common assets of all humanity' (UCLG, 2004, p. 5) resonates within the public imagination. As a branded policy tool, operationalized six years after its inception in 2004, the Québec version of the program is in keeping with the spirit of a slow, cautious and sometimes amorphous evolution of the localized identity construct at the institutional level. The tenor of the consultation process is very grassroots, built around a website that encourages public participation through the organization of local 'Cafés culture et développement' events that are meant to generate community dialogue and gather the public discourse about the role of culture in Québec society. The framework and marketing spin for

the consultation process goes to lengths to situate this 'self-generating' public sphere dialogue within an international movement and discourse around the centrality of the cultural economy and discourse of cultural identity, preservation and counter hegemony, where government serves as facilitator rather than in the role of prescriber in keeping with the trend towards decentralization.

The intimate ties between Culture Montréal's advocacy work and government policy is paralleled in another province wide 'grassroots' organization that implements arts awareness and access events, the most important of which is the annual Journées de la culture. For three days in the early autumn, cities around the province bring arts and culture to new audiences through the coordinated marketing and promotion of artistic events and activities. The access and educational component of the provincially and federally funded 'Culture pour tous' mandate also includes the administration of annual contests such as the Charlie Biddle prize, geared to honor recent immigrants who have worked in the Québécois cultural scene and have made an important contribution locally and nationally. The para-governmental nature of these organizations and their role as agents of government policy extends the effort towards cultural diversity in the arts, like the Biddle prize, to a new non-governmental professional class of cultural administrators.

One of the products designed to sensitize the public, but particularly, burgeoning cultural actors to the fundamental role of cultural mediation in the ongoing imbrication of cultural and civic life, is the cultural mediation program and website run by Culture pour tous,. The politically neutered presentation of the broad scope of possibility linking culture to art, to health, social inclusion and interculturality and youth, does not belie the strong links that are fostered in Québec between art and cultural life and civic identities within an overriding

ecology of newly harnessed 'hands off and light touch' bureaucratic populism and rationality.

Like the provincial government's, *Pour voir la culture ensemble* (Québec, 2005a), a discussion paper to explore increased private sector funding in the cultural sector, these para-governmental agencies are part of the general neo-liberal trend toward decentralization...characterized in greater measure by funding partnerships and relationship-building between the state and the private sector. (Gattinger & Saint-Pierre, 2010, p. 298)

These cultural NGO's have taken a more prominent place, not simply in the role as advocate and critic, but as key actors in implementing policy goals and programs as 'partners' and 'sponsors' of government initiative such as diversity, inclusion, access and awareness in the cultural sphere. Their existence is indicative of important changes in the governance structure, but also serves to disperse government accountability and responsibility and generates a new class of state endorsed para-public mediators in the field.

In Montréal one interesting manifestation of the shifting terrain of the cultural bureaucracy, beyond the familiar provincial versus federal grandstanding, involves the Conseil des Arts de Montréal's (CAM) role in the protests against Conservative federal government cuts to a number of arts and cultural programs operated by the Department of Canadian Heritage in the summer of 2008. As the local daily *LeDevoir* pointed out:

Le Québec n'avait pas vu un tel rassemblement politique de créateurs depuis les grandes manifestations du Mouvement pour les arts et les lettres dans les années 1990, une union voulant forcer la hausse des budgets des conseils des arts. L'appel à la nouvelle mobilisation lancé par l'organisme Culture Montréal et le Conseil des arts de Montréal a été tellement suivi que la foule d'artistes et de professionnels débordait bien de la très grande salle de la SAT, jusque dans un parc adjacent du boulevard Saint-Laurent. (Baillargeon, 2008)

The mobilization of protesters was greater in Montréal than anywhere else in the country, and the direct participation of the mayor, the cultural arm of the metropolitan bureaucracy (CAM) and the presence of key cultural actors across sectors of the local creative economy sent out a very important message. It affirmed the new tenets of an economic development policy in the

city as synonymous with cultural development and the health of the arts sector by using the civic as opposed to specifically provincial cultural apparatus as a political arm against federal actions (which would have been typically dealt with in a provincial- federal framework), and it demonstrated the growing and powerful political influence and role of the city's creative and artistic labor force. The event affirmed the schism between metropolitan cultural development and Québécois nationalist cultural development framed simply within the terms of the Québécois nationalist struggle. Though many of these protests and assemblies of key artists were sadly not representative of the diverse civic culture of Montréal's aspiring 'cultural capital' status and its 'cultural capitalists' (Interviews, 2008), the terms of the protests shifted the concern from the simple defense of national culture to one where cultural linguistic distinctiveness was understood as one element of a very active and powerful cultural economy that was an engine for local development, and a key vehicle for the international recognition and branding of the city. The offensive position of economic possibility trumped the once familiar position of francophone cultural anxiety and preservation. The familiarity and centrality of the cultural debate in Québec and its new role in metropolitan economic development allowed for a shift in strategy that was exemplary of the post-sovereignist environment being cultivated by the new breed of municipal politics and actors.

### Conclusion

In Québec the generative role of cultural policy in articulating the broad and central role of culture in the nation and in the community building exercise reiterates the key role of government in establishing the discursive and operative frames for competitive action by actors within the field. Perhaps more importantly, the terms of policy are to a large extent a response and reflection of actors' concerns and the different coalitions involved. The shifting role of interculturalism and multiculturalism in the Québec context has been an important pre-

occupation of provincial cultural policy. Actors operating in the state run and commercial end of Montréal's primary visual art market have historically been and continue to be implicated in the discourse and practice that generates diversity in the primary market and the cultural economy.

The decentralization of cultural power and increasingly important distinction of Montréal in the Québécois national context, historically, demographically and economically, is manifest in the city's cultural policy document. Most importantly, the civic policy formulation, with its recurring references to ethnic diversity, cultural entrepreneurialism and international cultural metropolises, represents a post-sovereignist break from the psychological and institutional limits imposed by the melancholia of Québécois essentialism apparent in the 1992 Provincial policy document. For those in the visual arts field, the cosmopolitan ambitions of the city sit quite comfortably alongside the need to grow markets internationally and stimulate local consumption through trickle down effects that are a result of branding and the various promotional efforts of those operating in Montréal's government and cultural field.

In Québec, cultural policy has been a cornerstone of the nation building project understood within the broadest of Williams' definitions of the term culture as 'a whole way of life' (R. Williams, 1981). Culture from the standpoint of policy and politics in Québec functions within Williams' operational definitions of the term as both idealist and materialist – the idealist form is found...

“in the informing spirit which manifests over the whole range of social activities but is most evident in ‘specifically cultural’ activities – a language, styles of art, kinds of intellectual work...” and the material form “...an emphasis on ‘a whole social order’ within which a specifiable culture, in styles of art and kinds of intellectual work, is seen as the direct or indirect product of an order primarily constituted by other social activities.” (R. Williams, 1981, pp. 11-12)

The imbrication of culture and economics that is at the center of the activity of actors that I

talked to, therefore involves a process of translation between these ideal and material orders of culture that Williams talks about. In as much as 'the macro political order of the state is built up from a complex network of localised technical practices and devices...' (Barry, 2001, p. 9) that unfold through often banal forms of practice, policy serves as a key formatting and enabling technology in framing, directly or through strategic overflows, the strategies that actors employ in a field that maintains such close ties with government and its agencies.

For policy makers responding to the demands of advocacy coalitions (Sabatier, 1988; Diane Saint-Pierre, 2003) that make representations before committees and perform lobbying functions that shape policy, commercial operators play a secondary role to the para-public institutions and artist organizations that serve the visual arts field in Montréal. Understanding the responsibilities and challenges faced by actors in the visual arts field in the city involves situating their role within the nexus of the national and civic building exercise and the maintenance of this category of work in the city. In Montréal, and for commercial operators in particular, the more influential the actor in the primary market, the more likely that he or she is actively mediating at the porous boundary of the public – private divide, courting curators at state museums and corporations and working with artists whose career success involves navigating between the prestige of state funded public and parallel galleries, and the financial remuneration and international promotion associated with the role of the commercial galleries in the city.

As one artist I interviewed explained, “ the commercial galleries ‘trawl’ the parallel and small state funded galleries for ideas and artists...” (Interviews, 2008) in a context where the trajectory for art and artist within a local art network involves the increasingly important symbolic hierarchy that relies heavily on institutional endorsement. The movement is from



graduate show to parallel /artist run gallery, to commercial gallery, with ongoing presence in increasingly reputable state funded regional and international events, as well as increasingly reputable commercial galleries, and eventual purchase by key state institutions such as the Musée d'art contemporain and the National Gallery of Canada. On rare occasions this continues on to inclusion in internationally celebrated museum collections where the work enters an international artistic canon. A successful commercial gallery will attempt to keep in step with the burgeoning career of artists, mutually benefiting from the accolades, but in Montréal, as careers progress, artists will move on to more prestigious and influential commercial galleries outside the city while maintaining a relationship with a local commercial dealer.

The strategies to maximize economic and symbolic capital at the disposal of primary art market actors operates in reference to the political ecology shaped through the various levels of government policy. The organization and recognition of actors and technologies in the local network by the state, through policy and programs, serves an active role in establishing the criteria for local legitimacy and terms of recognition of the players within the art field, as well as ensuring the long term viability and utility of the field itself. The art field remains a key component in the cultural sector's role as an important generator of national symbols and as the site for the creation of important urban communities and scenes that generate recognition and economic effects.

The fieldwork affirmed the value of provincial cultural policy in particular, for actors who saw it as a means to safeguard Québec's fragile place in relation to Anglo-American cultural hegemony, and to support and develop indigenous forms of cultural expression. Interview subjects may not have identified a specific policy or directive but they all took comfort in

knowing that government did take an active role in protecting and funding culture in the city. The role of policy at the national, provincial and municipal level is central to both the engineering of and the frame for evaluative practices of mediators in the field. Over and above the drive for more financial resources, the complex links amongst education, culture and a very literal need for existential security, is a key precept of cultural policy and a strongly held belief of most of the mediators that I talked to for this project. The protectionism built into the work of the Massey Commission and the 1992 Notre culture notre avenir document reiterates the perceived fragile condition of the cultural field and its actors.

## Chapter 6

### Gallery Owners –Mediators and the 4p’s.

*I consider it the gallery’s obligation to function as a sort of museum, to show the most important works of art while at the same time providing a reliable base where artists can count on support and exposure. Sales will hopefully come as a consequence...  
(Leo Castelli in De Coppet & Jones, 1984, p. 103)*

*Who will win in an agonistic encounter between two authors, and between them and all the others they need to build up a statement? Answer: the one able to muster on the spot the largest number of well aligned and faithful allies. This definition of victory is common to war, politics, law, ... We need, in other words, to look at the way in which someone convinces someone else to take up a statement, to pass it along, to make it more of a fact, and to recognize the first author’s ownership and originality. (Bruno Latour, 1986, p. 5)*

#### Introduction

In Montréal every gallery owner is looking for their own bankable artist but in-between the creation of a bricks and mortar space and the dream of finding the artist that will lay the golden egg is the more mundane task of simply establishing and then articulating a presence in a competitive marketplace. The goal of the gallery owner is to go beyond cultivating a series of disconnected transactions and to offer an ongoing service that satisfies and shapes the aesthetic sensibilities and needs of customers built around a core client group. As one respondent put it, “ running a good gallery is like running a good bar...you have five or six alcoholics...but they’re going to be there if it’s God’s last judgment...because they gotta have it...those guys pay the rent...you hang onto those guys...you tolerate a bit of bullshit...you let’em run up a tab...and on top of that you build your business...” (Interviews, 2008).

Securing a customer base involves the articulation of a position and identity for the business that happens through the ongoing strategic calculations of its owners who negotiate the city’s fractious political history, relative poverty and cultural and political networks.

The cultivation of relationships with a broad range of players within a network, so important to the success of the business, involves complex entanglements of specialized and highly local forms of knowledge. As a gallery owner or as an artist “you are,” as one gallery owner pointed out, “guilty by association, whoever you ‘compose’ your career with – if you are an artist and show your work from café to café is one thing, but if you go from museum to museum...it makes who you are... c’est le monde de plusieurs milieu, le réseautage est importante...[it is a world of several communities, networking is very important...]”

(Interviews, 2008). The implication is that, like the artists whose career trajectory is tagged to particular symbolic associations in the field, for mediators within the economy of small business in the primary market, successful business practice is formatted by the linkages that are generated by an acute concern for local political and social imperatives that are brought into the calculative frame of entrepreneurial activity and innovation. Effectively harnessing and demonstrating a particular kind of knowledge and facility through the taken for granted knowledge and assumed rules of the game of the ‘habitus’, becomes central to effectively negotiating the symbols and signs at play within the field, and in particular, the network of relationships that fill its porous boundaries.

The focus on the operation of commercial primary actors and the strategies they employ to maximize symbolic and financial capital happens within the larger assemblage of municipal and provincial cultural policy, governance, history and funding. In Montreal's small and localised art economy, commercial operators, particularly those at the cutting edge galleries, are promoters of regional talent. The networks they operate in and the other actors they interact with are never too far removed from both provincial and municipal government policy and initiatives, whether through the local artists they work with, clients they serve, the press and funding and trade agencies that they engage, and the government consultation

committees they may have participated in. As Bourdieu points out, 'there is a total coincidence between official success and specific consecration, between temporal and artistic hierarchies, and thus acclaim by the official instance of approbation, where the highest artistic authorities hob-nob with the representative of political power.... (Pierre Bourdieu, 1993, p. 243). The relative proximity within the network of a broad range of actors in such an intimate art field ensures a level of political concordance for economic practice to unfold. The rules and roles that format legitimate action within the network through modes of professional behavior and maneuvers operate with a keen awareness of the broad powers for financial and symbolic consecration that the state maintains. It is in this sense that actors operate as forms of policy brokers - interpretive agents - mediating the broad tenets of policy, art world fashion and local market dynamics. This socio-technical agencements of doing the economy of art in the primary market often through banal strategic moves belie the political effects that are generated.

What this chapter will do is examine strategies employed by gallery owners to cultivate sales and status in Montréal's primary commercial art market. The highly entangled, social character of market activity in this sector of the cultural economy is shaped by 'the strength of weak ties' (Granovetter, 1973, 1983) and the 'rules and roles' (Abolafia, 1996) that format activity. The discussions with gallery owners in the field reveal the ongoing tension between innovation and familiarity that frame entrepreneurial action and cultural mediation in this part of the visual arts field in Montréal. Like all ethnography, this account of the interrelation of cultural and economic activity is partial and selective and affirms how micro-social activity sets up the repetitive taken for granted interactions that constitute larger macro concepts like culture and economics (Collins, 1981). The details involved in the complex relationship between specialized business practice and the particular local conditions that shape that

practice, reveal the 'socio-technical networks' that shape and are necessary for entrepreneurial activity and cultural mediation in the primary art market to take place.

Commercial gallery owners oversee and orchestrate “ an organizational function and a set of processes for creating, communicating, and delivering value to customers and for managing customer relationships in ways that benefit the organization and its stakeholders”. (AMA, 2008) The American Marketing Association's definition of their 'raison d'être' is premised on what marketer's refer to as a service orientation built on managing relationships between a range of stakeholders that in our context include buyers, artist suppliers, journalists and bureaucrats. The 4P's of the marketing mix serve as a key 'technology' and 'instrument' used to 'disentangle' the multi-dimensional reality of the artwork and associated actors (M. Callon, 1998, p. 26). The focus is not on transaction based exchanges - “one time exchanges of value between two parties that have no prior or subsequent interaction” - but the cultivation of longer term relationships, “...where there is an expectation of continuing exchanges and future interactions between the two parties” (Chong, 2008, p. 118). The gallery owner works to establish these relationships of trust, confidence and meaning that will translate into repeat purchases from customers and loyalty from the artist suppliers, an income stream and symbolic gains in the form of positive recognition and status within the field.

The gallery owners I approached represent a cross section of primary market dealers who run businesses that attempt to deliver on different degrees of decorativeness along Bourdieu's autonomous and heteronomous axis. Issues of gallery location, promotional strategies and choices of work and price operate together to distinguish business, as well as indicate their similarities in a process typical of product markets (Aspers, 2001; White, 1993). The success of the gallery and associated artists is linked to an entrepreneurial and mediating role based on

nurturing and cultivating the ‘qualities’ in the market that ‘translate’ into varying degrees of symbolic and financial success through marketing, sales strategies and connections with influential buyers and critics. Gallery owners operate in an ‘economy of qualities’ (M. Callon et al., 2005) where the ‘qualifications’ of the art product involves the ongoing manipulation and promotion of characteristics that are both intrinsic and extrinsic to the art object itself, orchestrating both legitimacy and distinction in the field. The process of demarcating subtle and nuanced difference and similarities between the actors and actants in the market occurs within the overriding rules and roles permitted or tolerated within the field itself. Legitimacy for gallery, artist or art object is, in the first instance, about conforming to the ‘performance scripts’ that act as “...a toolkit of strategies that is culturally available [and permissible] in the market...” (Abolafia, 1998, p. 72). This kind of role playing also “reduces uncertainty and risk” (Ibid) on the part of customers, clients and peers within the city’s art world. ‘Scripts’ serve as the framing devices for the depth and breadth of marketing activities on the part of gallery owner in the city and set the terms by which actors in the field collectively demarcate themselves from one another as well as from those in other fields of expertise.

The significance of these socio-technological networks is that they facilitate the operation and help explain the terms of engagement in the city’s commercial art world and particularly the scope for innovation. Commercial art sales, even on the more autonomous and avant-garde side of the market, remains a conservative affair that serves as an indicator of the city’s small pool of buyers and the limited means of a population only recently turning to home ownership within the overarching history of the French and English cultural divide. The centrality of cultural enterprise and cultural production to Montréal’s economy and cosmopolitan image, yet its particular substantive relationship to nation building and state enterprise, still plays out in the discussions with gallery owners who yearn for a mechanism to extend their markets and

reach beyond the confines of the city and province. Given this context, my attempts at encouraging overt discussions about marketing strategy in the local market came across as too ‘demystifying’ and/or ‘revealing’ and more often remained veiled by the scripts governing professional etiquette and behavior.

### Place – Retail Geographies

The process of ‘value creation’ is at the heart of commercial art sales in a primary market context since value must be generated and is not carried over through a prior history and knowledge of art and artist. The sensory experience of the work has to be effectively positioned and made intelligible to the prospective buyer and a range of factors can be brought into the calculative frame to generate this value. Innovation within this context involves often subtle shifts in the expected retail dramaturgy. In Montréal, performance scripts that break too far away from the expectation of the relatively conservative buying public incur the risk of compromising sales by not fulfilling customer expectations and not garnering the necessary approbations of other mediators in the field. One respondent, a couple who run a gallery, have ‘undertaken adaptive and creative response to conditions’ (Schumpeter, 1951, p. 259) by situating themselves away from the traditional retail strips for contemporary commercial galleries in the city, trying to capitalize on and be on the vanguard of the growing gentrification of the Rosemont / Jean Talon Market neighborhood (art galleries and cafés, yuppies - shocktroops of urban renewal!). The atypical location made it possible for the pair to purchase a large space with an extremely visible street level presence. The style in the gallery was pressed collared shirt and jeans, a look that is tidy yet informal and more relaxed than the typical look in the more established primary market galleries in the city. The owners are a gay couple that live above their retail space and over the years have garnered the recognition and respect of the local art world.



They deal primarily in early emerging and mid-career cutting edge work on the more 'autonomous' side of the city's commercial art scene. They moved to their present space in 2005 and have been faced with, and have slowly been shaking off, a stigma of also doing framing on-site (although a central aspect of commercial sales since it serves as an important value added component that offers a large margin of profit - it is frowned upon as a mark of 'impurity' that undermines credibility though they have been relatively successful at getting rid of the negative associations. The issue came up on at least two occasions when talking to other older actors in the field). At the core of their strategy is an approach driven by a desire to capitalize on the 'buzz' (Zukin, 2001) around art markets that (however limited) takes up space in the local media and the desire for contemporary aesthetics that drive conspicuous consumption around a growing elite and cosmopolitan minded cultural worker class in the city at the center of 'omnivorous forms of appropriation' (G. Bellavance, Valex, & Ratté, 2004; Peterson & Kern, 1996). This is in addition to tapping into the more established local collectors and institutional curators operating in the regional museums. Their goal is to encourage and initiate the curious but uninitiated into the world of contemporary visual art. Their rather unaffected appearance - dressing as their customers would - is part of a strategy geared to render cultural capital in the form of visual art accessible and normative for a strata of consumer not accustomed to buying work in the city. This assumes an interest and some knowledge but not the habit or experience of translating the pleasure of art, as would be experienced by going to a museum, into the act of purchasing work for one's own home.

They have opted for a strategy that sets them apart from more established contemporary art spaces in the city by focusing on a more accessible approach, while being mindful of the inverse relationship in the field between accessibility and credibility. Avoiding the danger of

self-identifying as too 'populist' they have opted for a subtle tack –prices are marked discreetly, not limited to a price list that one must ask to see, and most importantly they have a street level presence where there is an immediate association with the surrounding environment. This is a break from the commercial galleries that are on the more expensive retail strips of the city or in the six storey, turn of the century (1912), industrial space in the downtown center called the Belgo Centre where a third of the reputable contemporary commercial galleries in the city are located. This strategic choice is not tied to the dislodging of artistic space and re-alignment of fine-art culture with the working class and francophone majority, as was the case in the 1970's and 1980's (see Greenberg, 1996, p. 354), but is based on the imperative of cheaper rents and the offering up of an alternative approach to market leaders. The Belgo is a mix of commercial and artist run galleries, studios and offices all set in open plan loft spaces with large windows and an abundance of natural light. The entrance is not particularly inviting - a dated and unassuming office building on the main shopping strip of the city that offers no indication of the art galleries that are contained within other than through the austere signage (that reads Centre d'art contemporains) that is hard to see at street level.

The Belgo is in and of itself a daunting gate keeping device that assumes prior knowledge of its 'contents' and a desire to navigate a rather labyrinthine and lonely series of hallways and staircases. It is neither terribly unpleasant nor particularly charming and sits in stark contrast to the retail shopping 'experiences' in the department and chain stores that line the St.-Catherines St. strip to the east and west of the building. The center is a key hub in the city's contemporary art network, though not owned or managed by the art cognoscente who serve as its tenants, the seemingly arbitrary allocation of leases in the space by the building manager is itself an important gatekeeping function in the city's art world. The centre which opened in

1989, took its inspiration from the walkup industrial spaces in mid-town Manhattan that had been converted into 'white cube' gallery spaces (O'Doherty, 1976) to offset the high cost of street front retail property in downtown New York. Most importantly, the Belgo and its galleries are no less than two blocks from the city's contemporary art museum, the Musée d'art contemporain.

Looking to Toronto and Brooklyn, the couple with the atypical gallery location, chose to associate their business with what they viewed as burgeoning and respected up and coming art scenes for new and emerging work in those two cities that were linked to commercial spaces that had a clear and definite relationship with their street level environment. For the respondents, the lack of a street presence for 'serious' commercial contemporary art in the city was a 'source of loss of collective interest in visual arts on one level, a sign of lack of regeneration in the visual art demi-monde and an appreciation that when it comes to paintings and photography people take their visual education where they can find it'. (Interviews, 2008)

Thus in Toronto's Queen Street strip, the fact that commercial galleries have a visible street presence on a busy entertainment and trendy residential strip for the 'creative classes' (R. Florida, 2002), correlates into a growing acceptance of the possibility of purchasing contemporary art as part of a larger repertoire of retail experiences. A street presence and an immersion on a daily basis on the way to work or to a nightclub serves an important role in encouraging curiosity and acceptance of the principle of buying art. Unlike the Belgo, this gallery, like those on Queen Street West in Toronto, rendered commercial contemporary visual art accessible by bringing the field within a larger visual and retail vocabulary that already includes specialist high end consumer goods such as furniture or clothing. The pair on the other hand viewed the Belgo as anathema to growing their client base for luxury goods that were both 'affordable' and 'bespoke'. The implication of bringing work to a retail

storefront would stimulate a curiosity and render the experience a regular part of one's trajectory through the neighborhood that would help encourage a familiarity with the concept that, at some point, would translate into the idea of purchasing work. The concept of a visible street presence for the pair is part of a formal and instrumental educational process that is consciously perceived as adding value to the immediate community.

The significance of the pair's choice of location may suggest a private sector attempt at addressing an 'art desert' by improving the 'cultural diet' for nearby residents but, like the availability of healthy food in deprived areas (see Wrigley, 2002), the result did not appear to generate a significant change since the overwhelming number of visitors at openings appeared to come from outside the immediate neighborhood. The accessibility and educational 'drive' were honest concerns, but the process of gentrification in the immediate area was slow and sales in this regard would require a critical mass that was only beginning to take shape. For the time being the overriding value of these efforts in the market was how it distinguished itself from competitors and was a statement of principle to prospective clients and other actors in the field, who would make the short detour further north to visit, comment on and hopefully purchase the works by the young emerging and mid-career artists who showed in the space.

#### Promotional Strategies and Pedagogical Processes

The customer relationship viewed as pedagogical process came up regularly in the interviews with commercial gallery owners. However the assumption may be that dealers in the traditional circuit "present themselves as missionaries who aim at making art accessible to a large non-elite public...and find dignity in selling artworks which members of the avant-garde circuit think of as kitsch..." (Velthuis, 2005b, p. 52). The interview with gallery owners

dealing in the more cutting edge and ‘autonomous’ side of the commercial market, revealed that they also had little to gain from closing themselves off to only the ‘initiated’ buyers. In the struggle for market share, overt pretence (in the form of the ‘pure gaze’ (Pierre Bourdieu, 1984 [1979], p. 33) for example) in a small and underdeveloped market like Montréal is simply bad business. But all of these approaches are premised on and begin with, as one dealer pointed out half seriously, the ability to read and position quality footwear – this visual cue serving as the one harbinger of economic wealth in the context of a proliferation of a casual urban chic for the wealthy and not so wealthy. Physically facilitating accessibility (or not) through gallery setting and costume is one clear signaling strategy, yet even on the floor of the Belgo Building, where the respected cutting edge galleries operate, the pressures of the Montréal market drives a familiar zeal and openness to an inexperienced clientele. While the store front gallery owners tell the story of a bus driver whose route continually brought him past the gallery window and a particular painting that he eventually bought, eavesdropping on the sales pitch of one of Canada’s top dealers working a customer on the floor in an art fair, the approach remains similarly down to earth – drawing on the prospective buyer’s knowledge of the artist’s previous buyers (in this instance similar works by the artist are part of the Hydro Québec state utility corporate collection) rather than a historical or aesthetic reference from the art canon.

In the local primary market the educational rationale acts as an integral element to a sales strategy in a context where the ‘avant-garde’s tendency [is] to suppress the commodity character of art objects’ (Velthuis, 2005b, p. 52). Depending on the gallery, the process of ‘reading’ client worth sets up the performance of delivering up the requisite engaging and accessible rendering of meaningful terms of value in a dialogue with the customer that can range from art historical significance to the highlighting of color schemes that match living

room sofa sets. The bridging function between the customer's surplus economic capital and deficits in cultural capital remains characteristic of the commercial dealer's role. The central tenet is that the cultivation of relationships with customers through an educational mode serves as the building block to closing sales. One young commercial gallery director in charge of a very large, new space, also outside of the city's Belgo complex, explained her business role almost entirely on these terms.

I'm finding that there are more people that I'm meeting who are becoming interested in art. Often times it is people that are regulated to a certain class, if we are talking about a certain viewership, say. They're interested in having beautiful things around them to begin with - one, because they have the means, two, because they are out in the world and are able to see and experience new things, and through these particular bunch of folks I have the potential of offering them an education in contemporary art practice and to give them an enlightened understanding of what artists might be doing right now (Interviews, 2008).

Entrepreneurial innovation in this context is about ways of instilling the 'bug' for contemporary art to the 'certain viewership' with the financial means. The selling proposition surrounding the product is a learning experience so that the mediating role becomes focused around the provision of a service and not simply a product. On more than one instance I came across the individual chaperoning clients/prospective clients through exhibits of work in other non-commercial art venues. At one point in our interview she talked about encouraging people (her clients) to go to other spaces, "...I'm a proponent of sharing the wealth, and by wealth I mean knowledge, and so I have no issue sending someone to another gallery, if I know the art work is right." Throughout our discussion, the issue of 'bottom line' and revenue was framed as secondary to the more pressing concerns around encouraging the growth of the market of buyers and encouraging a culture of selling amongst the artist community in the city. She went on to point out, "I want artists, who are my peers, to have the opportunity to partake in a lifestyle. To be able to create, to be able to sell their work, which...I realize is much more important than I previously had thought and I want the two communities [buyers and artists] to come together." (Ibid)

The issues of pretence, accessibility and education extend out to an often unsaid but generally understood role of the decorative function of the commercial gallery space in the city. The degree to which galleries are upfront about this aspect of their function can serve as a distinguishing trait between the autonomous and heteronomous sides of the visual art field. The following admission took me by surprise: “The way we operate...normally the gallery looks a lot like it does today [the space is relatively small but paintings are hanging on the wall as well as stacked upright against the wall on the floor], and I just ask, size, format, where we are talking about, because when people walk in here it’s usually a residential project they were looking for...Tell me your color scheme, if you want, whatever you think, and then what about these possibilities and what about this...”(Interviews, 2008). Given the roster of artists and the location of the gallery I didn’t expect to hear such a forthright admission of ‘utilitarian purpose’ as front and center to the sales strategy. In retrospect the stacked painting should have served as indication of a particular approach to the art object. Nevertheless, in the course of discussions with gallery owners it was clear that to close a sale if one needed to pull out this kind of utilitarian logic one would, it might be brought up as a concern by the client and not the gallery owner, but given the slow movement of product in the market and the general availability of works, purely decorative considerations would take up a more central place in the promotional strategy geared to non-institutional buyers than gallery owners would like to admit. Inevitably the particular balance between pretence and accessibility ends up being a unique characteristic of the city’s commercial art scene. Like other luxury retail sectors in the city the approach is a response to elite consumer behavior to conspicuous forms of craft consumption. Gallery owners are at the front line of having to address the common refrain, amongst cultural mediators in virtually all fields of the cultural industries in both English and French Canada, as to the public’s lack of knowledge of local

artistic production and the more sector specific concerns of unfamiliarity around the art buying experience.

The dealer's patience and pedagogical skill is part of the overall sales 'script' and strategy of breaking in and opening the market to a broader audience, particularly in light of the difficulty that contemporary works often pose to newcomers. For one gallery owner the groundwork for the educational performance begins with a hierarchy of needs that flows out from the modern aesthetics of the renovated kitchen. As he points out, "I have to admit that kitchens have evolved, in the last five years kitchens have become modern, people are starting to accept modern look that makes contemporary art easier. That's now happening in Montréal."

(Interviews, 2008) Within this frame the modernization of the living space is the key factor in moving people towards the possibility of a contemporary art purchase and the lesson in appreciation and aesthetics that may precede and follow the cultivation of a relationship with the gallery owner. This fact of changing economic gains and the quality of living spaces for Québec's urban elite also posed a larger strategic problem for gallery owners in the field.

They were concerned that any large scale public awareness campaign to change and encourage behavior towards art buying should be led by the state or the local trade organization since any public education campaign would be to the benefit of all the players in the field. The linkages to changes in built environment and government mobilization, which will be discussed at depth in later chapters, drew on traces of Québec's corporatist history – appeals to a paternalistic bureaucratic and a professional class capable of securing the cultural welfare of the nation in 2007 as they had done in the heyday of the 1960's.



## Promotional Strategies and Professionalism

The educational imperative is also tied to performance scripts linked to the conjoined ideas of professionalism and expert knowledge. These operate in the context of the limits imposed on entrepreneurial innovation that are framed by the countervailing terms that foster legitimacy in Montréal's art market. Gallery owners that attempt sales strategies that are outside of convention, for example, in terms of conspicuous displays of price (sales, advertised discounts) common to other kinds of retailers can quickly be relegated to the status of junk art dealer. The subtle interpretations and permutations of these performance scripts confer legitimacy in the community of peers and also act as identity tools that distinguish different businesses within the market. A typical response by gallery owners to the question of 'what do you do?' would quickly lead to an amorphous idea about being professional, a concept built on the sound and fair treatment in dealing with artists, clients and money, knowledge of the field (particularly knowledge of local artists which usually translated to a kind of artist name dropping rather than detail on network dynamics) and a familiarity with key institutional players, primarily curators in the major local art museums.

Most importantly professionalism pointed to the effective management of relationships with clients and other actors in the art world and community at large that indicated a certain high quality of customer service that brought with it an ethical standard to business practice. As one owner pointed out talking about her client base, "...it's all about relationships. It's a personal relationship that I have with them and they'll come back, because D. [an employee] and I are pleasant company. And we provide an environment that's easy to be in and I think that's important. We're professional..." (Interviews, 2008). On the surface the call to a professional moniker attempts to distinguish this specialization from base forms of salesmanship like the trade in carpets or cars and from other galleries lower down the

hierarchy doing wholesale selling or art consultancy work to fill corporate wall space with ‘no name brand’ artists, as one respondent described it.

The approach is indicative of a particular collegiality within the field that is meant to be fundamentally different from market or managerial driven forms of coordination (Freidson, 2001). This appearance of ‘fraternity’ between players implies an intimate knowledge of the field and a commitment to the defense of the high standards of local artistic production.

Though one would expect to hear gallery owners talk about the unquestionable quality of the merchandise they have for sale, one might also expect other players in the field to be more critical. Yet throughout the research process questions concerning the standard or quality of artistic production were extremely rare. When they were raised they were directed at network and market failures and in the most focused discussion around this point tended towards the inherent problem posed to artistic careers. As one respondent put it, “suppose you were an artist in 1945 [Montréal], you would be going to Paris very quickly, well the problem is the same now. It is very cynical but...if you want to sell your work or be more appreciated you have to leave.... Unfortunately the questions haven’t vanished over the years ...” (Interviews, 2008). His thoughts on those artists that chose to stay in the city was a point he did not clearly address, but his position was framed by a general weariness around the city’s self perceived ‘edge’. “When we are talking about the creative advantage of Montréal, I’m not sure I can put my finger on that, it’s that that is just a myth, just a way of reassuring ourselves but it doesn’t really exist”. (Interviews, 2008)

As an ‘identity tool’, professionalism amongst the primary gallery owners was not linked to membership in the local trade association AGAC (Association des galeries d’art contemporains). The trade organization was not viewed as particularly dynamic or important,

a gathering point yes, but too small and financially strapped to have an impact in spurring the market or its members. The key role of AGAC was to make representation on a municipal and provincial political and policy development level on behalf of its members who constituted many but not all of the ‘serious’ primary commercial galleries in the city, as well as organize events in Montréal and abroad that promote domestically produced work (for which it has been only negligibly successful with a yearly ‘works on paper’ sale). The fact that many well-known and respected galleries were not members was indicative of the trade association’s often contentious status amongst the contemporary art dealing community. The organization is funded through annual membership fees as well as through a provincial level cultural enterprise funding program (SODEC). Among the gallery owners I talked to longevity and reputation in the field conferred respect and recognition that were far more important markers of ‘professional status’ than the AGAC membership.

A common refrain amongst AGAC members was a criticism concerning network and market failures directed towards the varying degrees of cultural mismanagement and lack of comprehension of visual arts systems at the bureaucratic level. Government involvement per se was not at question. Criticisms were geared to the quality of government backed initiatives and available funding. In a survey piece of a commercial gallery in a local arts magazine, the owners voiced a common complaint concerning the difficulty of entering into ‘competition’ with ‘le système majoritaire’ (the artists run centers in the province).

C’est à se demander si le gouvernement ne souhaite pas voir disparaître les galeries commerciales. Il faut poser la question suivante: est-ce que l’intervention du gouvernement nuit au marché? (Interviews, 2008)

The response to the question of harm posed by government intervention pointed to the discrepancy between the \$300,000 in funding offered to commercial galleries and the \$ 5 million dedicated to the artist-run gallery system. In addition, the artists run centers and

galleries were accused of not respecting a protocol of simply showcasing and not serving as a point of sale for work. They were also accused of not respecting their functional objectives of acting as the entry point for artists leaving school and showcasing experimental work – “Ils exposent couramment les productions d’artistes de plus de 60 ans. Est ce normale?” (Van Hoof, 2006). The criticism is framed in ‘free market’ terms but the answers point to the assumed dependent relationship, typical of all actors in the cultural field –private and public, of a commitment to and reliance in Québec between government funding and cultural production and dissemination generally.

The gallery owners saw themselves as deserving of greater recognition because of their willingness ‘to buy into the risk’ of trading in emerging contemporary art in such a difficult market. They were investing in the brick and mortar businesses that fashioned careers as well as reputation for the artist/city/province/country and demonstrated a commitment to the local scene that too few customers were willing to make and whose role in cultural and economic development was not usually given its full due by government. Though the gallery owners I talked to were very conscious of the difficulties involved in operating business in Montréal, in that even given the typical three to five years required to start generating a profit (few new businesses in the sector even last this long), legitimacy in the eyes of more established actors and recognition and purchases by local institutions was difficult to achieve. As one respondent pointed out “...ce n’est pas un marché facile, c’est un marché long a construire. Il faut vraiment vouloir, ce n’est pas l’investissement le plus rentable. Ça demande beaucoup de temps et de la patience.” (Interviews, 2008) The time lag between opening and the kind of recognition that translated into purchases by state institutions (the most prestigious buyers since their collections are permanent and cannot, in principle, be put up for sale) was a formula that eluded most of the gallery owners I talked to, “Quand vous sortez d’une expo des

nouvelles acquisition tu sort avec une point d'interrogation. Je ne comprends par toujours le processus, peut-être c'est moi qui manque le bateau..." (Interviews, 2008). In the case of this gallery owner, celebrating ten years in the business, they were noticed and taken seriously quite early (on c'est vite démarqué) by state curators but purchases by these institutions only started in the last two years. Nevertheless, they saw themselves as torchbearers for the local art scene and mediators for the local system 'outside' the city. For most Montréal's primary market galleries this does not extend beyond Toronto.<sup>21</sup> The tendency resulting from the investment was a sense of ownership of the field and a duty of care to the art system and its participants while reiterating the inherent risks of the art business.

While 'professionalism' attempts to serve as an unquantifiable measure of a shared standard of performance within the field, the concept of knowledge serves as an extension of the ethical and expert persona of the specialist, that like social rituals and roles have an objective character that makes for an ethical order (Barry & Slater, 2005, p. 59). The top players in the field are known for various degrees of financial success but all are particularly respected as bearers of expert knowledge about the local field. The four main galleries in terms of sales and prestige are Galerie Simon Blais, Galerie Bellefeuille – and in terms of status in the primary market are Pierre Francois Ouellette art contemporain and Galerie René Blouin. All are owned and operated by French-Canadian men. In the context of the city's commercial contemporary market, these players are considered to be at the height of the local hierarchy and like the top dealers in any other art world, these businesses serve the always wealthy and sometimes prominent individual, corporate and institutional buyers in the city. The elite status of buyers and mediators is continually reproduced in the transfer of knowledge and money between gallery owner and client. Above the obvious shared class and economic interest, and

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<sup>21</sup> In 2007 only 5 Montréal galleries participated in the Toronto Art Fair and only one local primary market gallery was active in fairs in Europe and the USA.

the charges of complicity in the reproduction of those interests that the business motivation of the for profit gallery sets-up, (a familiar critique levied by public sector interests towards the bourgeois and heteronomous part of the art field ) in the Montréal context, the ability to render in a plausible and accessible manner the historical and aesthetic significance of works remains a key sales tool at the avant-garde end of the city's primary market. Typically the 'professional' attitude involved defending a commitment and loyalty to the local project and fundamental respect for the necessity and importance of the publicly funded system. On one level this becomes an unwitting extension of what Bennett describes as the Gramscian relationship between the state and the people in art systems, where the museum and by association commercial galleries serve as educators as well as instruments of ruling class hegemony. (Bennett, 1995, p. 91) Thus being knowledgeable is about convincingly being able to argue and defend the relevance of local artistic production networks in the context of a generally undereducated audience, and the relative newness and emergent properties of the artist or works. The concern for context in relation to art historical movement, commitment to the craft and skill in execution that gallery owners look for in artist and work (Lindemann, 2006, p. 34) are buttressed by the reputation and knowledge base these mediators bring to the work.

Two of the prominent galleries mentioned above, both of which are located in the Belgo Building two blocks from the Musée d'art contemporains in downtown Montréal, are also well known as being key suppliers of locally produced works to the major state run institutions. What is suggested in these linkages is that the discourse that comes through 'knowledge' is constructed on the basis of a consensus in and through the field and network of relations of players. The aesthetico-political discourse that permeates the upper reaches of the local hierarchy through gatekeeping decisions of the contemporary commercial galleries

and the purchases by the MAC in particular and MdesBA, often appear to move in concert. The regularity of the ‘convergence’ between exhibitions at the nearby museum and availability in these commercial spaces makes these galleries the source of respect and envy of the other players in the field. As one gallerist, who has cultivated a personal relationship with the owners in question, pointed out, “it feels like a conspiracy...but Ouillette and Blouin have cultivated a particular relationship with the MAC and the artists know that, they create local stars. They[the artists] want to go to them.”(Interviews, 2008)

The structural failures or shortcomings of the art network were only discussed in relation to the inherent fragility of the local visual arts economy as a whole. One respondent explained that ‘we’ve developed one system here [in Québec] and it is very difficult for artists from here to penetrate the outside system’ (Interviews, 2008). Those operating outside of the commercial art world shared these concerns as well so that the professional moniker extended ethical behavior to a morally tinged defense of the talent, unlocked potential and high standards of the field generally.

### Product and Identity

The articulation of positions within the field is part of what Callon describes as “...the process where calculative agencies compete or cooperate with one another” (M. Callon, 1998, p. 32). These are relational markers where the characteristics of the gallery space and product are about the ongoing process of creating both differentiation as well as symmetry (Ibid, p.34) between other galleries and goods for sale also operating in the vicinity. (Issues of geography and location have a particular importance in the context of visual art markets because of the experiential and immersive process of appreciating and purchasing visual art, in this way primary art markets are both localized and difficult to work through other sales channels such

as the internet.) The works of art for sale and the gallery space itself have to be both ‘singular’ as well as ‘comparable’ (M. Callon, Méadel, & Rabeharisoa, 2004, p. 63) since the process of competition concerns the interchangeability and similarity between different products looking to create ‘attachments’ to buyers and the positive endorsements of other cultural intermediaries. The relative position of a gallery represents self engineered as well as perceived distinctions with the other competing firms and institutions in the field. The branding exercise for the gallery, like any other luxury retailer, involves trying to stabilize and capitalize on a particular positive image and relative position - hoping that a brand image in the minds of those in the field translates into increased prominence and sales.

One gallery owner whose newer and small operation looks out at one of the city’s most successful galleries across the street, sighs when describing the regular flow of trucks outside the competition every morning, delivering work to customers, but finds solace in knowing that what she is offering up is work that has a different character than the more successful competition. Integrity of the owner and their business is driven by an ethos generated within a faith in one’s own aesthetic judgment and vision, though ultimately dependent on the demands of clients, is discussed in post-structural terms. As she explains, “...it took me awhile to realize that that’s what I was doing and I was just sort of, oh, this is the stuff I love, this is what I would like you to look at, if you like it great. If you don’t ...not.” (Interviews, 2008) All the gallery owners make this appeal to integrity in taste, trying to suggest that their own mediating function is tied to aesthetic principles that don’t simply involve pandering to the market. This is more than a simple sales technique in that the very nature of the business demands this kind of continuity between art object, mediator and the location and interior of the shop. All aspects of the marketing function reflect back onto the business itself. She holds a central place in the gallery, it carries her name and she is a constant presence along with two



part-time employees who contribute to its legitimacy through embodied acts and the choices and discourses that unravel in the process of performing the gatekeeping function.

Yet along the spectrum, from the gallery selling faux impressionist landscapes, still lifes, dated abstract expressionism, photo realist and naive figurative work (all of which are the bread and butter of neighborhood commercial galleries throughout the occidental world) to the critically successful gallery showing edgy, avant-garde work by emerging or mid-career artists', one will hear about the 'quality' of the work on display. Unlike Entwistle's explanation for the more negotiated approach between buyer and sellers in the construction of taste and value in the mediation of fashion buyers (Entwistle, 2006), the more established galleries mentioned earlier did have a greater hand at shaping value, because they were one of a very small number of operators in the city with a track record of sales to the permanent museum collections at the MAC or the Musée des beaux arts de Montréal. Unlike the more common annual purchases made by the Musée nationale des beaux arts in Québec City, purchases by one of the two metropolitan institutions translate directly into monetary and symbolic capital of a higher order for the mediating gallery and mediated artist.

Nevertheless, as champions for emerging artistic works and careers, the dealers above continually have to defend choices and strategic positions. The more common rule is that because of the limited size and means of the local buyers, gallery owners are also faced with the reality of having to answer to the tastes of the market and customer's decorative needs and aesthetic proclivities. Regional stars with challenging subject matter are available in those 'cutting edge' galleries mentioned earlier but for the majority of galleries there is huge currency and facility to be had in selling beauty and edgy rather than simply edgy. Offering a challenge without pushing clients away is embodied in a 'lifestyling' ethos that the gallery

owner has to tap into. As one owner put it “if you walk into a gallery and it seems to be the kind of home you aspire to, then that is very reassuring to the customer...”.(Interviews, 2008). Showing ‘pertinent work’ involves a defense of stylistic considerations and technical skill within the broader context of trends and fashions in the visual arts world that play more locally or internationally depending on gallery. As one gallerist put it, “ I’m looking to identify four or five trends going on and find the local painters that I can work with that fit that bill...” (Interviews, 2008). These choices are important demonstrations of the aesthetic proclivities of the mediators themselves, and serve to fashion the particular identity of the business in the intimate context of a product market setting. The ongoing success of the space is contingent on carefully managing changes so as not to upset expectations of existing and new customers, and cultivating critical acclaim in the field, and the goodwill of cultural and civic leaders. The quality of the relational and transaction processes - the engineering of consumer experience – becomes a mechanism of differentiation in the market and an important component of the calculative frame for both mediator and, of course, the consumer.

In my discussions with gallery owners, the field as a whole might be earmarked as a market for conquest, but in reality each of the entrepreneurs had their eyes on a relatively small group of competing galleries with whom they saw themselves in immediate competition. In many instances they may have their eyes on more moneyed or established operations (this is often literal given the close proximity and groupings of commercial spaces in the city) which serve as a long term aspiration in terms of quality of work, client base, ability to generate sales and longevity and reputation, or some combination of these variables., However a constant claim was an appeal not only to the unique character of their business but also to the unique selling proposition that this somehow embodied. The goal in theory was not to simply adopt the approach of the nearby competition but to generate interest and appeal in one’s own ‘identity’

so as to entice consumers in their direction. Competition in one's immediate 'niche' was about a particular and limited group of similar 'class' galleries that one conceived of sharing an affinity with. Perception of legitimacy is attained when playing by similar standards in the eyes of artists, customers and competitors operating in the field and being recognized for doing so.

### Prices and Places

The pricing function for works affirms one very important aspect of visual arts economies - the fact that they are highly localized. Pricing scripts and strategies are "not invented by individual dealers, but are instead shared supra-individual understandings of how art can be priced and marketed in a legitimate way." (Velthuis, 2005b, p. 119). The ability to price works in relation to the pricing scripts is a demonstration of knowledge of the local scene and the different standards used to determine prices within the competitive environment.

Therefore like other retailing contexts, "prices are a source of identity [within the market] and confirm status hierarchies among dealers, collectors and artists." (Velthuis, 2005b, p. 166).

The amounts calculated as the selling price for primary market works are dependent on what customers in the local market are willing and capable of paying for particular gradations of value engineered by gallery and other mediators and buyers in the field. In stark contrast to classical supply and demand models, increasing demand will typically drive prices up in an art market rather than lower prices through cheaper marginal production costs – characteristic of the typically bespoke and one off status of art works. In terms of network efficiencies, the pricing scripts "provide a sense of structure to the market and keeps the uncertainty that prevails around the value of art under control." (Velthuis, 2005b, p. 85)

One manifestation of this kind of regional standardization is that, within a particular niche of the local market in Montréal, gallery owners will talk amongst themselves of a ‘multiplier’ that is used to calculate the price of a particular series or groups of works by an artist. The price of paintings will be calculated on the basis of adding together the height and width of the piece in linear inches and then multiplying this total by a dollar figure. Prices may be tweaked to take into account variations of quality within a body of work, and the prices for exceptionally large or small works will be adjusted up or down if the calculation takes prices too low or high relative to an average range of prices. For the gallery owners the multiplier is the indicator of the significance of the work and the artist. Typically undergraduate school leavers will be priced using a multiplier between \$15 and \$20, so that a 3ft x 4ft painting will carry a retail price in the region of \$1500 based on an \$18 multiplier; graduates \$25, etc. - as reputation and pedigree of artist and works increase so does the amount of the multiplier. From an artist’s perspective, not following a positive pricing progression or leveling off at a particularly low multiplier, is sign of waning interest and a career lull. Given that many artists, particularly emerging young painters, used pre-assembled standard sized frames to stretch their canvases, price checking and comparison becomes relatively easy within and between galleries.

According to one well established gallery owner, the major problem in Montréal is that the local buying public is only willing to support relatively low prices for new works. Hence mid-career artists in particular, many of whom may have substantial CV’s that include local, national and international juried exhibitions and presence in important state and corporate collections as well as catalogues and, in many instances, tenure track teaching positions, cannot expect to sell works that cost more than \$12,000 to \$15,000 dollars (irrespective of size) in the local market. By 2008 these figures were testing the limits of what individuals

were willing to spend in the city. The problem with this glass ceiling in prices in Montréal, is that once a market is established in another major city, which in most instances is Toronto, there is really no incentive to sell works through Montréal galleries. Very quickly, artists and their agents will be involved in undercutting the value of their own works through pricing differentials between the galleries they may work with in Toronto and Montréal. The result is that many Montréal artists have no representation in Montréal since their prices are set in more valuable regional markets outside the city such as Toronto, Vancouver or Calgary. Given the larger size and value of the Toronto market, many locally based artists will content themselves with presentation of works in Montréal's parallel or university gallery system with the goal of maintaining a profile in the local art world.

The export orientation built into the Montréal market means that a visit to Toronto's primary market gallery scene uncovers a disproportionate number of Montréal artists represented by Toronto galleries. As one prominent collector I talked to described it, "...the dilemma for gallery owners in Montréal is that by helping artists to find galleries abroad, even Toronto, this involves creating competition for oneself by encouraging the Toronto gallery. Since Toronto is the jump off city [in Canada] to [prominence] in the rest of North America." (Interviews, 2008) Though one gallery owner I talked to stated that he encouraged his artists to seek other markets, and in another instance, this involved engineering a 'gallery swap' between a Montréal and Toronto space, the size and value of buyers in the larger center means that benefits in any marketing ploy will generally be received in the more valuable setting. Without going so far as to accuse commercial gatekeepers in the art of "concealment of knowledge, deception and manipulation..." (K. Negus, 2002 p. 508), it nevertheless remains part of the arsenal at the disposal of the cultural intermediaries. From an artist/supplier perspective, there are obvious benefits to be had in securing a firm relationship

with the more lucrative partner and making exceptions for an occasional presence, for promotional or sentimental reasons, towards the less lucrative option.

In addition to straightforward geographic proximity and the shared cultural and linguistic affinities that secure the strength of ties between actors in the network, the tendency towards the maintenance of a cultural solidarity within the local market helps contain the degree of dissipation of art and artists in Montréal's art world. The benefits of public art policy and program funding mechanism in Québec is obviously a key incentive, but also is a well-founded distrust of private sector arts activity and a knowledge of its inherent risks, particularly in the larger context of cultural promotion and survival that has shaped the development of the cultural economy in Québec. The socio-technical networks, like pricing scripts, help guard the integrity of a local commercial art world and help shape the criteria for participation and the specialized knowledge base particular to the mediators in the city's commercial primary art market. The rules and roles of legitimate behavior set the terms for acceptable market behavior in this intimate and interpersonal mode of market making.

## Conclusion

This chapter examined the strategies employed by gallery owners working in Montréal's primary commercial art market. The 'rules and roles' of professional behavior and 'weak ties' employed by actors in the network establish the broad frame for legitimate economic activity. The competitive practice between actors occurs through the use of marketing and positioning strategies to generate greater symbolic and economic capital in the field. The frames that are employed by these entrepreneurs in their strategic calculations over price, product and positioning occurs in reference and in response to existing market conditions in the local

market. The size and scope of the art market in Montréal impacts the condition for innovation and risk taking in the field. In this way, even in the context of the influence of international trends in the art world, the market remains highly localised. Change occurs slowly, and typically relies heavily on state institutional endorsement particularly through the validation of state institutional art purchases.

The relationship of actors to local historical narratives and the government policies of the city of Montreal and the Quebec state are not simply internalised or imposed but operate through the value imposed on more established actors and institutions and their ability to impact strongly on the distribution of value in the local art field. The process of mediation by actors in the primary market involves the “material and mundane...that deflates grandiose schemes and conceptual dichotomies and replaces them by simple modifications in the way in which groups of people argue with one another ...” (Bruno Latour, 1986, p. 3). Forms of socio-technical agencement employed by mediators do not necessarily have to reinforce existing frameworks but madcap behavior is hard to sustain in such a small and competitive environment. The room for risk taking is limited and the movement of mediators, like the market itself, is slow and guarded. Professional legitimacy is tied to longevity and the depth of network resources that, in this economy, involves ties to state enterprise and established elite and corporate actors. Symbolic relevance of the field in an urban and provincial context means that competitive practices are fraught with nationalist symbolism. Therefore innovation must be carefully orchestrated with an eye on the politics of specific strategies and alliances of the calculative agents used to increase sales and prominence in the market.

For the mediators in the primary market, the 4P's of the marketing mix serve as a key ‘technology’ and ‘instrument’ used to ‘disentangle’ the multi-dimensional reality of the

artwork and associated actors (M. Callon, 1998, p. 26). These marketing and positioning 'instruments' at the disposal of gallery owners and other mediators in the primary market and the 'overflows' they generate, contribute to producing and reproducing what an art world 'looks like' through labour market practices and modes of artistic cannonization that generate the local creative economy and our understanding of the city of Montréal and the province of Quebec. In as much as the "...'macro' political order of the state is built up from a complex network of localised technical practices and devices (Barry, 2001, p. 12), the alliance and conflicts through processes of often banal strategic economic mediation generate the evaluative frameworks that legitimate culture products, practices and other actors that make up the urban and national space.

The primary market space in both its nationalist function in Quebec and its place in the urban cultural economy of Montreal serves as one important site for the active mediation between the objectives of government policy and the lives of individuals and institutions in the public sphere. The issues of branding the city or province are rendered through these seemingly banal economic practices that, in the context of art worlds, involve selecting and celebrating art and artists as well as enabling the range of galleries, institutions, curators and critics. It is the practice of individuals that becomes the aggregate force that generates the 'black box' of the artistic field itself and in turn the evolving criteria for legitimate action.



## Chapter 7

### **Biennales, Triennials and Obduracy - Versioning on the Periphery and Engineering the Cultural Capital**

*It could be argued that events like the Biennale de Montréal allow the local art scene to inhabit a cosmopolitan realm while circumventing more troubled forms of intra- and international exchange. Montréal has long had a reputation as Canada's most 'cosmopolitan' city. Within a national and North American context this is largely due to the Québécois language and culture being read as foreign and the habits of Montréalers as relatively exotic. Within the city and province...there is a different understanding of what it means when local languages, customs, and institutions intersect with 'international' standards for art making and exhibition practices. (Sloan, 2004, p. 130)*

*The image of places comes from the sense that people have – local people and those far away – of the cultural-material interactions within them. And this reputation of place becomes another aspect of local economic structure, a part of its geographic capital. People desire goods associated with a specific place because they want, at a distance, the place itself. (Molotch, 1996, p. 229)*

#### Introduction

The previous chapter focused on local and political imperatives tied to the line management of commercial primary art businesses in Montreal. In this chapter we examine the links amongst a broader range of primary art actors in the city and their enterprising and entrepreneurial responses to what they described as Montreal's 'sullen' art market. The chapter draws mostly on data from press clippings and ephemeral material gathered during the primary period of fieldwork. The chapter links the changing role of cultural mediation in the primary art market and the focus on the urban rather than the national as a response to both international trends in the field, shifting local demographics and changing modes of governance. One consequence is an increased private sector orientation in the changing focus from the national to the urban and the ensuing need to respond to issues of multicultural participation in the art world within the discourse of Quebecois nationalism.

The overflows and entanglements that frame strategic action, through the rules and roles and the strength of weak ties that format behavior, extend the practice of mediators into broader socio-technical networks that involve a focus on metropolitan based cultural and economic planning and promotion. The tension between a multicultural cosmopolitanism and a protectionist nationalism in the city and the art field is explored through different kinds of socio-technical agencement's (STAs) that are being used to stimulate the growth of the local art market locally and its prominence internationally. The entanglements at this level mobilize an array of actors from a variety of fields. Their individual economic and symbolic capital interests are tied to the aggregate effects accrued through Montreal's effective international and local branding, the creation of recognized urban events and the promotion of a local city based aesthetic. In part this is the process of rendering operational and 'translating' the goals set forth in the *Montréal Cultural Metropolis - a cultural policy for the city of Montréal* document discussed in Chapter 5. As Callon has pointed out, STAs impose different types of interrelated framings which produce exclusions and matters of concern associated with them...framings can be neither complete nor perfect; they are sources of overflowing. (M. Callon, 2007, p. 143) The overflows generated by the broad partnerships between government and mediators and actants in the cultural field involve new economic and governance arrangements that generate political effects, (Barry, 2001) whereby market maneuverings and pressures reinforce the specifically metropolitan and multicultural cleavages between the city of Montreal and the Quebec state.

Cultural mediators, be they government policy or program officials, commercial gallery owners or state curators behave as a type of 'policy broker', consciously or unconsciously, performing the 'displacement' and 'transformations' of the visual art field through their strategic calculations and conflict or alignments within an ecology of government cultural

programs and policy and the limitations of the market. The extent of the gains to be achieved from different kinds of entrepreneurial 'creative destruction' within the various specialist areas in the field always occurs with the knowledge that the 'rule and roles' (Abolafia, 1996) of the field may not be fixed. Nevertheless they serve as the framing devices for the depth and breadth of marketing activities on the part of actors, and set the terms by which actors in the field collectively demarcate themselves from one another as well as from those in other fields of expertise.

The strategic calculations of well-known cultural figures in voicing their displeasure with government inaction, the response of the local press to the success of an artist, the promotion of the local art field internationally or the need to spur local forms of elite consumption, all involve modes of calculative agency where art world concerns and those of the urban economy meet. The economies of distinction for both material and symbolic capital operate on the basis of competitive markets that involve mediated practices over labour markets and aesthetic canonization that engages the overlapping and multiple scales of the urban, national and international. Urban boosterism, like nationalist rhetoric, becomes a form of agency that mobilizes action within Montreal's cultural economy. This is a case where "different agencies can mix or merge with others..." and where "...this substitution of socio-technical agencements to the individual-human agents embedded in institutions, conventions, personal relationships or groups sharing identical value, has important consequences on our understanding of markets." (M. Callon & Caliskan, 2008, p. 29) These shared values and goals involve alliances, mobilisations and effects across and within fields of different specialised activity. The complex entanglements that arise from these strategic alliances involve STAs that employ a range of promotional devices and technologies such as: the creation of art fairs, international junkets, the marketing of local art stars and educational

events to spur the art market in the city and serve in the local and international branding of Montreal as a cultural capital.

The 'organisation' of Montreal's art field, attempted through policy and new governance structure, is an idealised ordering of the cultural field. The political effects that arise from attempting a coordinated alignment of actors and technologies in service of addressing the city's sullen primary art market " triggers the emergence of matters of concern to which they are not always able to provide satisfactory answers. These matters of concern then evolve into many (potentially) political issues whose solutions may, in turn, impact on the organization of economic activities. (M. Callon, 2007, p. 139). Of the many overflows and entanglements with a political consequence, one important one is the way in which the discourse and practice of cosmopolitanism, within the cultural economy, generate the multicultural and signifiers of citizenship and inclusion. Markets and the mediators operating within them take on the role, often unknowingly, of 'curating the multicultural', in and through the changing relationship between city and state, that renders the cultural industries and its practices increasingly central to the organization of the social and economic spaces of the city. (Keith, 2005, pp. 114-115). It is in this sense that the arrangements generated in the intersections between policy and practice, in the market setting of the primary art market, shape our understanding of what Montreal is as a city, and the manner in which it engages the key urban issues of diversity and inclusion.

The significance of the metropolitan orientation on the part of the network of mediators becomes increasingly important in generating and responding to new evaluative frameworks. These frameworks involve a working through of identitarian concerns over native authenticity and the filial. They arise from a nationalist politics that is under threat by the entanglements

generated by the cosmopolitan overflows of both Montreal's cultural policy and the city's changing demographics that operate through local processes of percolation, incubation and assimilation within the city's institutions and network of mediators. These changes also raise important questions concerning the willingness of mediators to adopt innovative entrepreneurial strategies to respond and capitalise on these changes through STAs that reshape the field and the city. Yet, actors in Montreal, particularly the key mediators in the primary art field, who operate with an acute sensitivity to negotiating the internal binarisms of the urban vs national and center vs periphery, take a very cautious approach to addressing the 'obduracy' (Hommels, 2010) of Montreal's art market and cultural economy.

### Montreal: Cultural Capital in the Making

The desire to brand the city is an explicit goal of urban policy as we examined in the discussion in chapter 5 on the Montreal cultural metropolis, policy document. This is a process that Molotch describes as the “ positive connection of product image to place [which] yields a kind of monopoly rent that adheres to places, their insignia and the brand names that may attach to them...” (Molotch, 1996, p. 229). Built into the concept of a Montreal brand is an urban economic plan and governance model that views the culture industries as a key instrument in urban economic growth and prosperity. There is an implicit understanding of the value of what Zukin has called the ‘artistic mode of production’ - an amalgam of enterprise culture and the marketing of ‘hip’ culture (Zukin, 2001, p. 263) that the document presents as an essential ingredient in metropolitan promotion and prosperity . Primary market operators see themselves as very well placed to serve as important actors in this relationship between culture, urban promotion and economic development, playing their part in generating what Alan Scott described in 1997, as the ‘distinction’ capable of the smaller cities like Montréal - “...at a point in their development where they may well rapidly come to compete

with the top ranked cities...provided that the right mix of entrepreneurial know-how, creative energy, and public policy can be brought to bear on the relevant development issues...”

(Scott, 1997, p. 209). The narrative of the movement of Montreal from city to a ‘cultural capital’ is often arrogantly taken as an inevitable outcome for actors and mediators operating in the primary art market. They see themselves as the natural bearers of the national cultural capital title in relation to their field, particularly in comparison to other rival Canadian cities like Vancouver and Toronto.

The links between the primary art market actors and urban development concern the role of key mediators in the art world in generating and growing their markets. As Latour has stated, it is the scope of a network that generates its legitimacy. The cosmopolitan and internationalist drive not only employs a variety of promotional technologies in service of generating an internationally recognizable urban brand but also affects the way that actors in the field operate in relation to these ambitions. Market dynamics incorporate increased private sector involvement, the promotion of the linguistic and cultural particularity of the majority population and the need to generate a more inclusive and diverse image of art and artists through evaluative practices employed in the promotion of indigenous works.

The focus on the competition for position on the culture totem of cities, rather than nations, also highlights the changing relationship to a provincial bureaucracy at a political and demographic level within a history of competing cosmopolitan and parochial attachments that characterize the Quebecois nationalist struggle. The complex frames employed in the strategic decisions made by actors operating in the field operationalize the dilemmas of a monopoly rent that in actual fact, like the positioning strategies of galleries referred to in the previous chapter, involve qualities that must be both ‘singular’ and ‘comparable’.(M. Callon et al.,

2005, p. 63) These frames operate in reference to the amenities and services already available in other cities that are understood as competitors in the field. In this sense the signifying importance of multiculturalism and racial and ethnic diversity, as criteria and trait of cosmopolitan status, bears on policy makers and actors in the field as much as changing demographics and immigration patterns in the Province and city. The organization of ethno-racial diversity within the market plays out the dramaturgy of the multicultural in a specific urban context.

The networks and mediators operating within the local visual art world play a role as important catalysts in fostering the new evaluative frames that enable plural forms of participation that generate the attributes of what we understand to be the ‘multicultural’ in a multicultural city. Reiterating Zukin’s claim that the “...visual arts plays a key *productive* role in creating and processing images for the urban economy...” (Zukin, 2001, p. 260), the competition for symbolic and economic capital amongst actors within the visual arts field becomes a reflection of localised metropolitan politics through labour market practice as well as through the artists and works that are subject to canonization and cultural adoption. The issues surrounding multicultural and racialised modes of cultural, economic and political participation are acutely felt in Montreal, to the exclusion of the rest of the province, particularly given the numeric concentration of members of these communities in the city and their limited presence in the rest of the Province.

Since the core period of the fieldwork, the attempt to generate what one respondent described as, ‘The good art fair that makes people travel in and collectors buy through a force of attraction...a capacity to draw collectors to your event and create something of note...’ (Interviews, 2008) has yet to fully materialize. Nevertheless, the field has undergone an

increasingly neo-liberal and de-centralized re-organization that has, in part, resulted in a focus on new funding and promotional activities for the commercial sector of the primary art market. These changes have generated shifting evaluative frameworks where the politics of essentialism and the multicultural abut against one another through the performative acts and strategic calculations of actors in the field. Given that the "...city increasingly mediates circuits of political engagement and cultural reproduction at a post-national scale of analysis" (Keith, 2005, p. 188), Montreal's growth and development is happening in a way that is increasingly distinct from that of the province of Quebec. The gains made by players in the visual arts field represent a response to the specifically urban development of Montréal rather than that of the nation of Quebec. As one curator opined "...Montreal must orient itself internationally to attract buyers." In 2007, according to this respondent, the "critical mass of work wasn't here yet, it's a question of supply. Montréal is not, cannot attract that supply." The pessimistic comments do not necessarily negate local attempts at *trying* to achieve some of these goals by, as this respondent suggested, becoming an "art capital with important exhibitions of artists not simply as a place to buy - but as a place to look at nice work..." though he went on to point out "the art market interests less than 2% of the population, so the art market in and of itself is of no electoral interest to the government...so just forget it." (Interviews, 2008) This has historically been true, but in the context of what Harvey describes as the "shift in urban politics and the turn to entrepreneurialism...that confines innovation to a very narrow path built around a favorable package for capitalist development and all that entails," (Harvey, 1989, p. 11) the political, economic symbolic value of the artistic field in the context of the focus on urban creative economies has grown. Particularly, in the context of contemporary city building and the services and entertainment orientation of generating cultural capitals, the role of primary art markets takes on a new found importance alongside more traditional and nationalist concerns that have sustained the cultural field and its



politically relevant labor markets.

The advocacy work of actors in the art field, and in particular its commercial component in trying to ensure a greater place in the promotional agenda of the city of Montréal, has generated some positive outcomes. These are a byproduct of the checklist of items that were raised in the Consultation Committee on the Cultural Policy Development Proposal for the city of Montréal in 2005 by AGAC (L'Association des galeries d'art contemporain) that centered on increasing the role and prominence of the visual arts scene by making it a more important element in the list of defining and marketable elements associated with the Montréal brand. (AGAC, 2005) The highbrow and anti-populist kind of 'capital' often associated with the visual arts sits alongside the understanding of the field as another necessary specialist market/service of the contemporary city as entertainment machine (Clark et al., 2003) and hence the creation of the normative conditions to appeal to the Floridian 'creative classes' (R. Florida, 2002) that has captured the imaginations of policy makers. Florida's analysis of Montreal's situation through a series of presentations and papers (Richard Florida et al., 2005; Stolarick & Florida, 2006) on the city are significant, and like endorsements by the international press, the attention from the public intellectual is perceived as an important form of recognition and validation. Generally, Montréal fairs well within the author's array of matrices and often reductive frameworks, as in the following:

Montréal has a well-diversified economy for a city its size, and wealth distribution is less unequal than in most North American cities. In this respect, we see a relatively robust economy that, though it doesn't have the same level of economic performance as other regional economic poles of North America, still harbors real sustainable growth possibilities and an impressive pool of talented workers. (Richard Florida et al., 2005, p. 8)

Interestingly, the significant concern and criticism raised by Florida and his colleagues, in the context of the easily digestible matrices and performance indicators, is that the city has failed to capitalize on the diversity of its population and incorporate these actors into the broad range

and roles within Montréal's growing and vitally important creative economy. While ranking favorably on 'Tolerance Benchmarks' against 25 other US and Canadian cities in the 'mosaic', 'gay', 'boho' categories, Montréal's 'visible minority' valuation was one of the weakest on the list. (Richard Florida et al., 2005, pp. 9-10) Based on Florida's own thesis, it is the 'density and diversity' of creative actors and activities that have a positive impact on regional innovation and generate the positive spillovers of capital for the community. (Stolarick & Florida, 2006, p. 1799) This fact sits alongside another key point raised, that entrepreneurship is lower in Montréal than in Canada generally and is significantly lower than in the USA. It is growing, to be certain, but the lower availability of private seed capital (informal high risk investment), the lack of highly visible entrepreneurship programs, and the limited encouragement of women owned businesses, combined with a more laid back European culture, have all contributed to dampening the entrepreneurial environment. (Stolarick & Florida, 2006, p. 1813). In the formal and informal discussions related to this research project, actors reiterated this fact.

The place association branding that links events like the International Jazz Festival, the indie music scene and games and software development has never been achieved in a significant way by the city's visual arts scene or artists, in terms of both symbolic and monetary value since the 1960's. Though known as a place of art and culture, the inability to brand visual arts production and generate sufficient momentum in Québec as well as outside of Québec, to spur sales and link visual arts within the larger gamut of urban amenities, remains an ongoing challenge for many within the sector. As one respondent described it, " Je ne vois pas de changement entre la maniere qu'on active le marché de Montréal maintenant ou il'y a 20 ans. Je ne vois pas de difference, je dirais plus une recule...plus une recule qu'une changement positif." (Interviews, 2008) The comments are partially a lament for the reduced financial

support once provided by the public sector. They also reflect a concern for how, in the context of a local economic boom and an unprecedented international growth in the visual arts market, a historically and visibly important element in the local creative economy has managed to maintain such a limited national and international profile.

The concern around Montréal's tertiary status in terms of visual artists and visual arts production was viewed in reference to the higher profile of other cities in Canada such as Vancouver. That city's international art status, linked to photo and video based artists like Jeff Wall, Rodney Graham and Ken Lum, has generated place association in relation to this group of extremely high profile internationally recognized artists. As one respondent put it, Jeff Wall's photo set-ups, which use urban Vancouver as a backdrop or the outskirts of the city's Fraser River Valley, have played an important role in marketing a particular image of the city to an influential and moneyed class of design sensitive consumers that inhabit trendy upmarket neighborhoods around the planet. When many people think contemporary Canadian visual art, it is these artists and this city that comes to mind. Toronto's role as Canada's financial capital has also brought with it a new dominant role as an important North American cultural center. The Toronto International Film Festival for example, is now the most important film festival in North America along with the Sundance Festival, and the largest film and television buyers' market outside of Cannes. The Toronto International Art Fair, in existence since 2000 with sales of \$15 million in 2007 (TIAF, 2007), has not only grown to become Canada's most important visual arts fair but has taken an increasingly important role as a destination for buyers and galleries on the North American art fair circuit. Alberta born and educated Janet Cardiff's prize winning installation at the 2001 Venice Biennale or the 2003 hype in the New York based art press surrounding Winnipeg drawing collective 'Royal

Art Lodge' (Pollack 2003), further raised the ire of Montréal's art players and press. A 2006 article in the *Le Devoir* broadsheet typifies this concern:

“En arts visuels, par contre, il faut remonter jusqu'à Riopelle pour dénicher un prétendant au cercle des happy few. Et encore, le peintre décédé en mars 2002 demeure surtout apprécié pour ses grandes toiles réalisées en France dans les années 1950 et rattachées à l'école de Paris.... la métropole québécoise [Montréal] a du pain sur la planche pour se repositionner. D'autant plus que la concurrence ne faiblit pas dans le reste du Canada. Une deuxième génération émerge de Vancouver avec encore beaucoup de force et de répercussions hors frontière...” (Stéphane Baillargeon, October 3, 2006).

The possibility of relegation to secondary or tertiary status within the Canadian federation is viewed as an unacceptable and humiliating position for a city that sees itself as an important national and international center.

The need to promote and highlight the artistic field in the city becomes part of the larger exercise of demarcating the local scene from competing cities. The idea of 'Montréal As Design Product', to draw on Molotch's title concerning LA and the myriad associations the idea of the city conjures up from Hollywood film to cutting edge visual art (Molotch, 1996), remains an ongoing challenge that forms part of the strategic consideration of the elite group of players within Montréal's creative economy and in particular, those operating in the commercial primary art market. The idea of cultivating a unique exportable aesthetic is less of a concern for actors than the simpler mechanism of giving a more prominent place to the local visual arts economy within Montréal's creative economy and the array of services, amenities and experiences that come to be associated with it. Like the approach to arts and culture in the 2005 Cultural Policy Document, the balancing act that informs cultural production at large in Montréal's creative economy re-appears within a frame of competing ambitions. These are centered around international attention on the one hand, and on the other, reflections of collective self-representation of the ever more ethnically diverse francophone majority. The dilemma posed by this situation plays itself out through the increasing centrality of the

creative economy as the locus for the changing demographics of Montréal and the fashions of an internationalized cosmopolitan ideal.

Events, built on the appeal of entertainment and spectacle, are meant to draw attention to the city's visual arts scene and serve as kinds of 'urban propaganda projects' (Boyle, 1997).

Montréal's penchant for festivals, over what often feels like the sustainable and long term development of specialist cultural markets, is also played out in the form of the biennale, a visual arts place based showcase. Events such as the 2007 manifestation of the Montréal Biennale and the first annual Québec Triennial in 2008, organized by the Musée des Arts Contemporains de Montréal, are in part a response to the increasing dominance of other Canadian art centers and the preeminence of the Toronto International Art Fair (TIAF), the leading visual art event in the Canadian federation. As the pre-eminent national art event in Canada, TIAF represents what Stallabrass has identified as, the overriding influence of international commercial interests in shaping the agenda for trends and fashion in the visual arts field (Stallabrass, 2004). Montréal's own Biennale comes out of a tradition of over 20 years of Biennale type events, called les Cent Jours de l'Art Contemporain (One hundred days of contemporary art). This began in 1984 and was organized by the Centre international d'art contemporain de Montréal, a local non-governmental cultural organization in the ongoing leadership of Claude Gosselin which was geared to promoting cutting edge visual arts. 1998 saw a refit and re-branding of the older model through the creation of a Biennale and a shift from an annual event to one held every second year to promote local, national and international visual arts in the city.

The discursive space within which these events play out are in part a response to a sense of complacency that has grown around the visual arts. The concerns expressed by the more

established gatekeepers in the city that I talked to, extends out into what is now a very real concern for catching up to the levels of private sector investment and participation in the arts and cultural sector found in Toronto. In an article entitled, “Toronto rafle le paquet... pour Montréal des miettes” [Toronto takes the prizes and for Montréal the crumbs] (Joyal, February 7, 2007), typical of this line of criticism concerning cultural funding and practice in Montréal, a former leading federal cabinet member under a Trudeau government, Serge Joyal, presented a case chastising Montréal’s business and bureaucratic elite for their lack of commitment to cultural development, particularly in relation to enlisting private sector support. He listed the previous years’ differences, sector by sector, noting Montréal’s \$25 million versus Toronto’s \$565 million dollars of private sector investment in arts and cultural projects<sup>22</sup>. He accounted for this huge discrepancy to the fact that Toronto -

“s’est donnée un plan stratégique de développement culturel axé sur de grands projets d’infrastructures et d’équipements qui la situeront à la fine pointe des institutions semblables en Amérique, elle a réussi à littéralement écrémer le marché des commandites privées auprès des grandes entreprises canadiennes, même de celles qui sont bien implantées, et ce depuis fort longtemps, dans le marché montréalais.” (Joyal, February 7, 2007)

The criticism around a lack of long term planning and large capital investment remains part of the more pointed concerns expressed in a similarly toned piece written by Alain Simard in the 2006 catalog for the Festival Internationale du Jazz de Montréal. (Simard, 2006) The festival, which he founded and continues to run, is one of the most important annual tourist draws and public events in Montréal. As one of the city’s pre-eminent cultural entrepreneurs<sup>23</sup> and key initiators of the Quartier de spectacles project, using his public event to air his criticism,

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<sup>22</sup> The massive discrepancy is due to the huge capital investment projects going on in Toronto at the time, in particular the \$270 million Royal Ontario Museum renovation designed by star architect Daniel Libeskind and financed in large part by Jamaican –Canadian investor Michael Lee Chin, (ROM, 2011) and the \$280 million private sector residential redevelopment of the industrial distillery district into a ‘cultural marketplace.’ (Thorne, 2004) By 2011 Montréal had ‘caught up’ with some major capital projects involving cultural infrastructure, with the completion of a \$105 million concert hall, the \$120 million Quartier des spectacles involving a mixture of direct government and PPP funding and the \$141 million Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec.

<sup>23</sup> Simard as well as Cirque du Soleil founder Guy Laliberté, were for many year poster boys for all three levels of government in relation to culture and heritage issues, since both individuals nurtured their projects through grants received from all three level of government.

represents a particular new, very public lambasting of the public sector bureaucracy which he sees as responsible for being too slow at providing the levels of financial support, cultural development and infrastructure project funding to keep Montréal astride of the public/private sector development of and investment in the cultural economy going on in competing cities.

Underlying both critiques is a line of reasoning that represents an important paradigmatic shift in the approach to cultural production and promotion in Montréal. On one hand there is a new found importance placed on the role of members of the business community as key actors in the cultural milieu, and on the other there are key cultural actors whose role as economic generator in the city affords a visible and moral authority that sits above the bureaucratic attitude of the politician or state funded agent. Additionally, both instances rely on Toronto as well as other North American and European cities as referents for the city's success.

Montreal's unique linguistic and cultural history is not taken for granted as the sole 'necessary condition' within the pitch for the city's unique selling position. The now familiar, (but in Montréal – late in coming) inflection of a neo-liberal entrepreneurial ethos sits alongside the changing relationship to the power of a dominant state and state funded cultural bureaucracy.

The operators in the primary art market are operating within a lower profile yet similar matrix of political and economic concerns. The rise of the cultural entrepreneurs also ties into a move away from the collective action of the nation state to the particularities of local markets concerned and bounded by the psychic and very physical limits of the metropolitan agglomeration of the city of Montréal. The dialogue of nation is displaced within the discourse around a particularly sectoral, metropolitan recognition of financial and symbolic gains. This frame is what distinguished all of the interviews I conducted when the issue of

growing and promoting the local visual arts scene came up. As one interviewee pointed out, this in part becomes a reaction against the complacency built on the ‘myths’ of Montréal’s cultural superiority and relative cultural insularity since the 1960’s and the recent ‘re-adjustment of the social democratic mission and sovereignty obsession’ (Interviews, 2008) that had shaped the political and cultural ecology since the 1960’s.

### Biennales and Triennials

The commercial gallery owners and the state curators that I talked to are extremely sensitive to the need for keeping in step and in fashion with trends going on in other centers of the visual arts world. As one corporate curator pointed out, what is missing in Montréal is a major visual arts , since it is the ‘force of attraction – a capacity to draw the collectors to your event and create something that makes all the difference...’ (Interviews, 2008). The need to find local versions of new styles and trends extends out to a contextualization of the art field as an extension of the personality of the city itself. The desire for Montréal’s character to be somehow reflected in its art world and by extension, its art to be seen as being at the forefront of shaping trends, is a position of distinction that actors thought would befit a city which conceives of itself as more than an important regional center. Actors in the art world therefore viewed their role as important agents in promoting a contemporary, cutting edge cosmopolitan image to the rest of the country and the world. The dilemma posed by certain artists and their work reflects where the cosmopolitan ambitions of agents in the field do not fit squarely with the terms and the conception of who and what an accepted local actor is and how his career should play out, however the need to respond to trends nevertheless forces a local response, albeit awkward.



An event like the Triennial du Québec or the Biennale du Montréal represents attempts to respond to clear demographic changes in the makeup of the local art world. More importantly, they also serve as a demonstration of the contemporariness of Montréal's art field and mediators' ability to operationalize the discourse of ethnic diversity and globalized and cosmopolitan art worlds within the confines of the local Montréal metropolitan and Québec provincial geography. They present an image of the city as being at the forefront of new trends and fashions shaping urban development and the civic creative economy. The process is far more sophisticated than the simple appropriation or copying, this is a kind of 'versioning' – 'an invocation of someone else's voice to help you say what you need to say' (Hebdige, 1987). Versioning becomes part of understanding how the dominant influence of international trends are played out and worked through in local variants that appear in commercial and creative practice. This 'global' information loop involves what Robertson explains is the "ongoing process of bringing the global, in the sense of the macroscopic aspects of contemporary life, into conjunction with the local, in the sense of the microscopic side of life in the late twentieth century" (R. Robertson, 1992, p. 173). In the context of peripheral art markets and city branding, the process of generating both real and symbolic forms of cultural capital status concerns fulfilling a checklist of cosmopolitan attributes, most apparent in the constitution of the urban creative economy, that is understood as being an amalgam of the artistic, commercial and spatial attributes of the city – the most visible and encompassing characteristics of urban life.

The act of clarifying the local script for global trends becomes a key force in generating change. For the gallery owners that I talked to, working with new and emerging artists in the market and the process of invoking links to more or better established entities remained central to an overall sales and positioning strategy. If these references were apparent to the viewer

and drew positive associations so much the better, since this contributed to closing sales and fostering relations with the client. The symbiosis between art field and city creates a situation where symbolic and real gains, in the competition for ‘distinction’ within the field and the built environment, translate into gains for the locality. There is a clear sense within both the commercial and public art communities of the need to keep in step with trends, not only in terms of services and facilities but also types of government programs and styles and types of art and artists. More often than not the process reinforces the hierarchical patterns that move from center to periphery in the context of the dominance of international art worlds and their larger economies and reach.<sup>24</sup> The local trends towards photo based landscape work or the increase in the appearance of Asian artists on the scene are in part a consequence of local mediators trying to capitalize on the changing global fashions within the contemporary art field.

What one curator described as the ‘technocratic’ orientation of the local visual arts scene also helps to clarify what he viewed as a universalist’ tendency in the style of art work produced locally. As he goes on to explain, “So, Montréal being in the periphery, not being in the center of the international art world as ‘internationalism’ is really happening in the 80’s, is adopting a sub-point of view as opposed to just sticking to its guns. And that’s nobody’s fault...But we feel the consequences today where the art at the time didn’t really find an audience because it wasn’t really speaking to its audience whereas the performing arts...be it through chanson or theatre all wholeheartedly and a lot more successfully spoke local even on an international stage...” (Interviews, 2008). Following on from the high modernism of the fifties and sixties, the canonized period in the local art history, the recent art production,

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<sup>24</sup> There is of course important and regular exceptions - the fact that Montréal’s locally designed and built Bixi bike technology was purchased by the City of London in 2010 was an important source of civic pride and lauded as an example of the city’s global influence as a technological and urban design innovator. (The Montréal public bike rental system was chosen in London over a competing French designed system -Velib- being used in Paris.)

according to this art historian, represents a more concerted attempt to address a balance between an ‘honest and indigenous’ sourced voice within international modes and styles in contemporary art.

In this context ‘honest and indigenous’ are politically loaded and contentious terms that point to the application of versioning practices by local mediators that situate work and artists, so that they will be well received locally and also resonate at an international level. Versioning practices bear the burden of proving a local authenticity through criteria that involves a complex prism of both aesthetic and civic criteria. The specter of ‘versioning’ practices remains inflected by the very ‘metropolitan’ concerns of the gatekeepers in mediating between representations of the aesthetic of the artwork and artist, belonging and the city. The process is therefore part of what Keith describes as “...new products and new identifications [that] link explicitly notions of creolisation and exchange...”(Keith, 2005, p. 124) that operate within and are particular to the city’s creative economy.

The fact that a Biennale “seems to magnify an event’s contemporary relevance and cachet, while the prestige of the hosting city is also at stake...” (Sloan, 2001, p. 123) fits quite comfortably with the shifting sands of the local political ecology and the aspirations and sense of civic responsibility upheld by the actors in the visual arts scene. As Sloan points out, “joining this planet-wide constellation of cities [Lyon, Shanghai, Venice, etc], it appears as if Montréal’s art scene has been geo-culturally re-aligned.” (Sloan, 2001, p. 123) But the lukewarm international press reception of the 1998 inception of the event points to what the author describes as the disjuncture between what is expected and what is delivered at events of this kind. In as much as the Biennale “advertises itself with greater or lesser measures of a utopian, multicultural and cosmopolitan rhetoric” (Sloan, 2001, p. 126), the full weight of the

disjuncture between local realities in the ‘structures of feeling’ and content and quality of artistic production in face of the ambitions of the event organizers and supporting marketing materials becomes apparent. The concern in 2000 for the event’s lack of money and resources (Sloan, 2001, p. 129) could easily be repeated in reference to the 2007 version of the event which enlisted the active participation of the local commercial gallery owners, and had a relatively high profile in the summer civic entertainment calendar.

Given the moderate success of previous art fairs, like the AGAC organized Salon de Printemps, the 2007 Biennale was viewed as an important opportunity to spur interest amongst local buyers and up the profile of the city’s scene. Though the event garnered limited international attention, the various cocktails, social events and public and private sector fundraising (even a \$25 donation included recognition in the program catalogue) generated local ‘buzz’ – “the major medium of communication among the interconnected networks of cultural producers, employers, clients and patrons who circulate among the city’s consumption spaces, media spaces and cultural institutions” (Zukin, 2001, p. 261). The event managed to captivate the interest of the local elite and enlisted the support of commercial gallery owners who usually have a nominal place in the promotional literature when compared to public sector organizations. Yet in this instance they dominated the available advertising spaces in both the catalogue and program.

Milling amongst the exhibits in a downtown building that serves as studio space for one of the local MFA programs, on more than one occasion I crossed paths with a commercial gallery owner who I knew and who was leading a group of one-time clients through a discussion of the work on show. There was no direct financial gain for her, in that the work was not for sale and the artists on display were not associated with her space. However the Biennale was an

excellent opportunity to initiate and introduce these prospective customers to what was hot or not and guide them through the dilapidated and authentic feeling studio spaces reverberating with cultural capital and avant-garde bohemian chic, in the sense of not yet arrived, compared to the clean white space of the state run or commercial gallery. The grungy exhibition spaces did not hide, what was in Montréal, an opportunity for a relatively dominant presence for primary commercial galleries in the city amidst this public/civic event.

This encroaching privatization of visual arts culture in Montréal, in keeping with Wu's critique of funding and management of art institutions in the UK and the US (Wu, 2001), had begun here in earnest in the mid 1990's with the corporate sponsorship of touring art show at the Musée des beaux art de Montréal. Though private sector investment has played a visible role in sponsoring the Biennale in Montréal the degree of visibility afforded the sector is new<sup>25</sup>. As one would expect, the increasing role and profile of private sector interests was viewed as a sign of concern by many of the art cognoscenti in the city. Yet, for the old guard actors within the field, to completely discredit private sector investment and participation would appear out of touch and not in step within a context of changing financial realities and diminished government support. One public sector curator described the situation of private sector encroachment in Montréal in relation to the promotion of non-art experts from the business and legal world onto governing boards of art institutions as 'the abandonment of intellectual cultural, decisions to a class of business people, lawyers, politicians who suddenly displace their roles towards content rather than administration ...businesses can't or won't work in a sophisticated manner in Montréal, but the city's contemporary art heritage is being constructed by business people rather than academics and professional curators' (Interviews, 2008). This is a familiar refrain in many art worlds in the West. However what distinguishes

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<sup>25</sup> Toronto's prominent civic visual arts event the annual TIAF unabashedly wears its commercial stripes. At the 2006 incarnation of the event, the adjacent hall in the convention center was occupied by a retail trade fair selling condominium developments in the city that one had to pass through to get to the art fair !

Montréal's neo-liberal turn is its delayed arrival, a consequence of the dominance of and reliance on the state cultural apparatus in sustaining the visual arts network in the province and the slow pace of re-alignment of the political ecology after the 1995 referendum.<sup>26</sup>

The following year, a new variant of the biennale concept was unveiled with the first Québec Triennial in 2008. The inauguration of this once in every three-year event, hosted by the state contemporary museum, was meant to serve as a showcase of locally produced work. This event distilled many of the concerns raised by the visual community within a very overt frame of Québec identity politics. In part the event could be read as a response to the concerns raised by the director of the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, a year earlier, in another show dedicated to recent new acquisitions which his institution organized, where he raised the specter of an art economy "too small and too narrow for its own exuberant cultural production". This was in the context where "...the art world is larger, richer, more complex and more inclusive than ever, and has shown no signs of reversal in living memory" (Mayer, 2007). The Triennial was very much a response to these concerns drawing uniquely from work created by artists from Montréal and the rest of Québec. It attempted to situate new work by local artists within an international art discourse built around a fashion for graphic dynamism informed by a very particular trans-national and cosmopolitan sensibility apparent through the range of content and the racial and ethnic diversity of the artist-producers.

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<sup>26</sup> According to Polèse and Shearmur, by "...1996...three sectors...entertainment, advertising, radio and television production were once more on par with Toronto in terms of management occupations" (Polèse & Shearmur, 2004, p. 18). The financial implications of the growth and wealth of this group of workers, drawing on a Floridian creative classes perspective, would help answer the sizable growth of the creative economy within the city and an outcome of which is that "...the renewal of urban areas [is] led by escalating housing markets rather than by government programs." (Tonkiss, 2005, p. 113) The growth in visual art sales is simply one consequence of the growth in wealth and increasing importance of highly aestheticized modes of conspicuous consumption.

The programmers were very explicit about the show's intentions in shaping the local ecology, implying something more consequential for the community than simply the boundary of the artistic field – "...the exhibition stakes a claim to how we define ourselves as Québécois. Therefore, the consequences tied to its ambitions contribute to the creation of place..." (Lanctôt, 2008, p. 36). The implication of this discursive reworking of the nation and its self-image distinguishes what is fundamentally an urban Montréal phenomenon from the Province as a whole. Hence the fact that some of the artists in the show "are in a way, 'other'. They are not typical, in that they are not of French Québécois descent, yet they are 'typical' in that they are artists working in a cosmopolitan city...the dialogue between art and society has rarely been reconsidered since the 1970's, as the thorny issue of ethnic diversity and multiculturalism have been swept under the rug" (Lanctôt, 2008, p. 38). The ecology of artistic production and the need to distinguish the city from the rest of the province reiterates the demographic and political reality of Montréal's unique status in comparison to the Québécois nation. But the discourse of the cosmopolitan status of Montréal therefore creates a situation where the metropolis abuts against the thorny issues of linguistic and ethnic integrity and preservation that has characterized the cultural economy in the province. The significance of the curator's statements operate in reference to changing fashions in the visual art world and more importantly, in reference to the post 911 debates over citizenship and identity, in the form of a provincial 'frenzy' over 'reasonable accommodation', the ensuing ramping up of the debate through the voracious sensationalism of local 24 hour news channels and shock jock radio punditry in Montréal and the city's hinterland.

As a marketing push for the promotion of the local 'scene', the efforts of the MAC staff were to a large part successful in garnering the attention of the Canadian press. The Canadian English language newspaper of record, Toronto's Globe and Mail, in an article entitled 'Is

Montréal the Real Art Capital of Canada?’ claimed that, “...with all its vitality and freshness, the show leaves one with the unmistakable impression of Montréal's ascendancy...it's telling that the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal is the first to take the lead with its new Triennial. Refusing wannabe status, and with its leading institutions honoring the home culture with discernment and passion, Montréal is suddenly looking like the sexiest thing around” (Milroy, 2008). Such glowing reviews are cherished and the show and its response were a demonstration of confidence and a very strategic attempt by the institution to move itself and the community it serves towards the newer multicultural paradigms and fashions of the visual art world.<sup>27</sup> Commercial galleries in Montréal would like to see themselves as important actors in this movement, however the terms of legitimate behavior are framed by the limits imposed by a sullen market and the force of powerful local institutional mediators who sanction national art. But within the celebration of the cosmopolitan possibility by the museum and by extension the city, the question that remains is to what degree is the shedding of an older, more parochial melancholic nationalist rhetoric and essentialist search a consequence of the force of changing fashions from the ‘outside’ or the changing demographics from within the province.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> When discussing ‘diversity’ with curators, in more than one instance *no* distinction was drawn between international (code for non-european) artists not from or living in Canada and the locally born or resident artist coming from minority ethno-cultural communities.

<sup>28</sup> The links between civic branding, international exposure and art worlds have seen the greatest success in the last ten years within Montréal's hyperactive alternative music scene which serves as an excellent counterpoint to the city's visual arts world. Bands such as Arcade Fire have been able to capitalize on the synergies between the city's large student population, the low cost of living and the slow demise of traditional business models built around the diminishing power of international record labels, with the rise of internet based marketing and promotion and a relentless touring schedule. The success of this highly dispersed marketing and management model within a geographically localized creative environment was a regular point of reference for the respondents I interviewed. Without thinking through the mechanics of the pop group's success, the attention that the band had received was viewed as a demonstration to the world of what the city was capable of producing. In those sentiments there was a clear sense of ownership over that success and for the visual art actors this represented a trajectory to follow. The international profile that the local music scene had garnered was a source of envy, having achieved a critical mass of international attention to an extent deemed important enough to be taken seriously by the city's political class and key cultural mediators. This version of the creative entrepreneurial ideal, a self-regulating, market driven system existing on limited government support and in Arcade Fire's case, the mixed linguistic pedigree of the band members seemed to parallel the city's own cultural policy ideals. Yet the trajectory for the visual arts community is burdened in Montréal by the necessary dependence on a bureaucracy and the high costs of promotion and marketing for a medium that relies so heavily



## Altmejd

Within this context the power of exogenous forces often feels like a key motivating influence, forcing innovation within a thickly bureaucratic status quo that lacks the political will to respond to local shifts without the existence of a viable referent outside its sphere of influence to hold up as an example. What Bourdieu describes as the ‘homologies’ between the field of cultural power and the struggle between the dominant and dominated classes (Pierre Bourdieu, 1993, p. 44) is paralleled, in the need to reproduce within the space of urban life within any given city, forms of cultural practice and engagement that generate cultural capital. On the level of competition, for investment and tourist dollars, keeping in step with trends and fashions that determine contemporary definitions of the ‘cosmopolitan’, remains a key criteria for application of the title of creative city and capital of culture. The need for local homologues and versions of cultural practice and forms, as a response to trends and fashions emanating from, more often than not, more influential cultural centers, acts as a strong motivational force within the local cultural ecology. These approaches to innovation and fashion, the mechanisms for cultural pollination or cross-pollination are a response to the condition of peripheral status and the ontological insecurities of a fragile and shifting notion of national identity. But the reiteration of what sounds in 2010 like a dated essentialist cliché of both Québécois and Canadian identity politics, nevertheless belies the performative and discursive subtlety that frames and renders the conception and vision of Québécois or Canadian, within the artistic field in the city of Montréal and the role of intermediaries like gallery owners and state curators, in this process.

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on an immersive, in situ, visual experience to function in rallying the support of key actors in the key nodes of the international contemporary art world.

One of the participants in the 2008 Québec Triennial was Montréal born artist, David Altmejd. A year prior to the 2008 event at the MAC his work had been showcased as part of the city's 2007 Biennale. It also served as Canada's entry to the 2007 Venice Biennial, the leading international competition and showcase of contemporary visual art held in Venice every two years. The approach to dealing with Altmejd is a good example of the complexities of the artistic field in the city and the specific response to 'versioning' and 'assimilation' that is enacted by players working in service of the sector's and the city's ascendancy. Here was a case of a young visual artist who had garnered critical praise and was on the rise as an international art star. He had been chosen to participate in the Whitney Biennial in 2004 and Istanbul in 2003 after having just completing his MFA at Columbia in New York City. He was also represented by prestigious commercial galleries in London and New York and had work in the permanent collections at the Whitney and the MOMA, yet returned home to Montréal as a relatively unknown entity. Though he completed his undergraduate Fine Arts degree at the Université de Québec à Montréal and his candidacy as the Canadian entry for the Venice Biennale was sponsored by the UQAM gallery and its well recognized curator Louise Déry, (who had championed the artist's work since his undergraduate days), he was not well known amongst the actors in the local scene.

As the local English and French mainstream and specialist press were lined up for the publicity push and lead up to Altmejd's shows, at both the local Biennale and the prestigious Venice event, the complexities of generating local recognition and legitimacy became apparent. Altmejd's success and trajectory presented a scenario that many of the participants within the local visual arts field that I had talked to were hoping for, a Montréal artist who was operating internationally and could bring some attention to the local scene. On first appearances this looked like an opportunity where the international success of a local artist

could also be tied to a larger benefit for the commercial as well as parallel and institutional art players and the overall place branding of Montréal. The range of responses I encountered concerning the artist and his success during my interviews were surprising - including no knowledge of him whatsoever, to half joking claims that he must have been chosen as part of a federal conspiracy,<sup>29</sup> to articles by one local journalist that his family ties to senior administrators at UQAM accounted for his art celebrity status. (S. Baillargeon, 2007a, 2007b) Though the *Le Devoir* article where these comments appeared generated a clarification and apology by the author, it did set a particular tone of privileged brat that seemed to ‘stick’ through Altmejd’s movement through the local media space.

What was revealing about the lukewarm and often negative response by the local press and players was a heightened aspect to the politics of the cultural field that in Montréal, employ particular modes of cultural percolation, incubation, and assimilation over innovation and spectacle. The questions that arise are what is the order of importance of these characteristics, at what point do some of these values take precedence over others and how are they arranged in any given circumstance? The aggregate sense derived from the art field in Québec in face of Altmejd and his work was that of dealing with an outsider and unknown quantity.

Understood within an analytical frame comprised of Appadurai’s social life of things (Appadurai, 1986) and Taylor’s conception of legitimacy, identity and alienation as congruent to and an extension of political and institutional behavior in Québec and Canada (Charles Taylor, 1989) – for Altmejd the necessary linkages within the community had not been established and the necessary relationships within the local network were not in place.

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<sup>29</sup> The Canadian representative at Venice is a federal matter, chosen by a committee assembled by the Canada Council for the Arts in Ottawa who match a Canadian artist and a prominent curator, usually associated with a major state run or educational institution, to lead the curatorial decisions for a given Venice Biennale.

The Montréal born artist, son of a white French Québécois ‘de souche’ mother and a North African born Jewish father, should have become a poster boy for the liberal elite in the city reflecting a very francophone and cosmopolitan vision of the city and its art world. Perhaps the conflation of Jewish/Arab name, gay style, a bourgeois international form of spoken French combined with the relocation to New York and London placed the artist too far outside ‘local’ terms of reference for him to benefit from the ‘civic boosterism’ that comes from local belonging and ‘appartenance’. The sense from those who were close to the artist and helped organize his participation at the Venice Fair was that the local press and art establishment really did not know how to deal with such an entity. He had established himself as an up and coming artist within networks that were at the center of the art world, removed and with little help from Montréal’s parallel galleries (though the artist had shown in some of these spaces) and university dominated art network and press. From the perspective of the commercial galleries in the city, the artist’s success in New York and Europe was on one level a liability, since little he had produced prior to his rise was available locally, and the speed of his rise had priced his work out of the range of the cutting edge galleries that would want to carry his work in Montréal.

In addition to these extrinsic concerns were the ontological ones linked to the possible lack of a sense of investment on the part of local mediators in this artist’s success and the lack of attachment on the part of Altmejd to this local network. The question of allegiances and attachment and most importantly the lack of ownership by the local art field in his success compounds his condition as ‘other’ within the local ecology. It would be easier to deal with him and bestow praise had he simply been a successful foreign artist participating in a local art event but his ties to Montréal renders his position more complicated. Not only is he clearly different in relation to the Triennial artists and the issues of ethnic identity discussed earlier,

but his success at the economic center of the art world with limited intervention or participation in this trajectory by local players, too simply laid bare the impotence of Montréal's peripheral status and the disjuncture of the local scene and its key mediators from the current of a commercially inflected critical high art practice found in New York. The fact that he is from *here* doing that over *there* seems to make less sense than simply coming here to show us what he does over there. The feeling of stewardship by local mediators and the field at large in the artist's success was clearly insufficient to cultivate the sense of investment and filial attachment to the artist, his work and his career trajectory. Given his 'foreign' sounding name and the difficult nature of his work, it was much easier to not follow through on the wave of positive press and endorsements coming from the foreign art and mainstream press. As opposed to serving as a centerpiece for the Québec Triennial, one had the sense that his international profile and success was downplayed during his participation in the event, to be in keeping with the emerging and far less well known status of peers who were also selected for this showcase of new Québécois art.

What one curator in the public sector described as the fact that 'culture is not so much commodified in Québec society so that the market ends up being discreet' (Interviews, 2008), offers a partial answer to the perception of 'organic' mechanisms that generate distinction in the local art world. In a sector where promotional channels are driven by a set of priorities dominated by a small group, with strong links to state support and institutions, cultivating awareness around Altmejd's international 'maverick' status requires a local history and precedence to ring true and appear legitimate to the field at large. This is all within a local tradition that has viewed an art market built on speculation and an overt marketing orientation as somehow manufactured and tainted by the corruption of financial self-interest as opposed to the 'purer gaze' of the state and artist run sector in a context where "...the dominant

structure disseminating art in the city has been a non-profit one [and] the idea of marketing anything falls on deaf ears or raises eyebrows and suspicions...” (Interviews, 2008). Also implied within the response of many actors within the local field was a critique of the ‘cherry picking’, as one local curator described it, for young, fresh out of school visual artists from schools in New York and London - a trend that had started to take hold in Montréal,<sup>30</sup> but because of the scale of the local market did not generate near the levels of financial or symbolic returns achieved by the Altmejds of the world.

Though the terms of local cultural participation, inclusion and assimilation into the field occurs through the lens of a competitive market orientation, to be fully accepted as local player one would have had to percolate through the particular networks and relationships of the local field. The Altmejd case demonstrates that not having done so, or having done so in an extremely limited fashion, forces a skepticism that is derived from a fundamental distrust of what is perceived to be an external commercially driven market imperative, a force corrupting the collective ‘pure gaze’ of the local visual arts field. Yet at the same time as there is resistance to an artist that embodies the market orientation emanating from the center, there is a very real need to acknowledge, try and reproduce these same mechanisms in the small and heavily subsidized Montréal market.

### Gains for the Commercial Primary Art Sector: Shanghai and Sodec

From the perspective of commercial gallery owners the most significant shift in the ecology

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<sup>30</sup> A critique raised by some of the interview subjects prior to the Altmejd media push was that the local state run institutions, ie MAC, were simply responding to fashion by offering shows and purchasing works by young artists often in their early thirties (Altmed was born in 1974, Pascal Grandmaison was born in 1975. This was also the case for many of the other artists who participated in the Triennial), side stepping a process of mid-career advancement that would then result in ‘canonization’ through purchase in a permanent state collection. The ‘Virillo’ style acceleration was perceived as particularly problematic in such a small market since financial symbolic resources were limited. Each act of ‘cherry picking’ meant one less purchase by the Musée d’art contemporains of a work by a mid to late career artist who had worked his or her way up through a more traditional career trajectory.

of the local art field has been the recent attention they have received from municipal and provincial governments. In early 2011 the provincial government doubled the budget of the Societe des entreprises culturelles du Québec's (SODEC) single program geared specifically for commercial galleries. The Programme de soutien au marche de l'art, in support of international promotional efforts, saw a budgetary increase from \$268,000 to \$465,000 (Québec, 2011). This is still not very much money given that the cost of a booth at a second tier art fair such as the Toronto Art Fair begins at \$10,000 dollars for a 200 square foot space and rises steeply when moving on to events such as FIAC (Foire internationale d'art contemporain) in Paris or invitation based events such as Miami Basel where participating galleries have to take into account the costs of travel, packaging, air freight and insurance.

The endorsement by the provincial government of the efforts of the commercial gallery actors in the art field reaffirms their role in the stewardship of Québec visual culture internationally. Yet as the wording of the ministerial press release indicates, the focus is on addressing the key political constituencies within the field, the artists and then the two other key actors, commercial galleries and the contemporary gallery association (AGAC) in descending order. "...Notre responsabilité d'appuyer les artistes en arts visuels et les galeries d'art ainsi que l'Association des galeries d'art contemporain qui oeuvre directement à l'amélioration des conditions de travail des artistes, à la promotion de l'art contemporain et à l'expansion des marchés au Québec et partout dans le monde" (Québec, 2011). Most importantly the announcement also included a gesture to the Rassemblement des artistes en art visuels (RAAV), an organisation discussed in chapter 4 who represent visual artists in the province, with a SODEC program geared to their members called Programme d'aide aux artistes en arts created to facilitate "...les achats d'équipements spécialisés de création et le développement d'outils de promotion et de mise en marché."(Ibid) This program serves those artists working

independently of the local commercial gallery network trying to promote their work internationally.

The strength in numbers and grassroots political influence of the artist constituency is sufficient to ensure that any program appearing to benefit the enterprise sector within the field must be balanced with equal amounts of official and political attention given to those working as 'independent' artists, taking on the production and mediating function, on the shared border of entrepreneurial possibility and public sector dependence. These political compromises are essentially a natural consequence of the history and role of the state bureaucracy in the arts as well as the demand by the influential constituency of producers to not hand over the role of mediation completely to the potentially profane influence of financial speculators - the state bureaucracy's mediation through 'soft power', in the form of governance and management structures and organization, remains entrenched.

The second major event of direct benefit to actors in the local primary commercial market involved a high profile art junket organised by the Association des galeries d'art contemporains (AGAC) and Tourisme Montréal, an agency of the municipal government, as part of the 2010 Shanghai World Expo. The weeklong event assembled 15 local artists and the 15 different galleries they worked with, as well as three key local mediators, a corporate curator working for a major national bank, a curator from the Musée d'art contemporain in Montréal and a well known local art critic working for *Voir*, one of the French language weeklies. The promotional material promised Chinese audiences the opportunity to be immersed in "...the dynamic and vibrant atmosphere of Montréal's art scene and provide an outstanding window on the imagination that drives all sectors of our metropolis." (AGAC, 2010) The 'pitch' veers to hyperbole with statements such as: "Through this exhibition and



short catalogue, the City of Montréal invites you to a visual feast featuring the work of Montréal contemporary artists whose works are unparalleled in the world. Go ahead: discover us and be entranced!" (AGAC, 2010) The sensationalist tenor of the event, part of the larger Montréal showcase at the World Expo, and celebration of 25 years as twinned cities, also involved other happenings over the course of the 6 month expo that highlighted local successes in areas of sustainable development and urban design. The focus of the six month presence of the 'Espace Montréal' at the fair, branded around the motto of 'Better City, Better Life', involved pitching a tantalizing mix of economic possibility and cultural gravitas geared to increasing tourism and economic exchange and to "strengthen our image in the country as well as the relationship with the business milieu." (VilledeMontréal, 2011)

The Montréal Art Contemporain presence at the Expo is indicative of the importance of new strategies and practices to promote the aesthetics of the creative city into which the commercial primary art actors now play an almost fundamental role. The contemporary city without a contemporary art scene does not fit within the expectation and necessary marketing mix required to sell Montréal as the burgeoning cultural capital and economic center competing for symbolic and monetary capital. For the participating commercial galleries, the focus is less on the intrinsic qualities of the art than on the international education and accolades of the artists. The mediators' role in this context is to situate the work within cosmopolitan rather than the parochial networks of the art and educational field. This, we can speculate, is on the premise that international networks and education attainment are two variables that sell well to Chinese audiences. Additionally, any association that the Montréal galleries or artists can make with Shanghai, a global hot spot for contemporary art, adds credence to both the CV and sales proposition that will be offered back home. Given the comments from the respondents that I talked to, the participation at the Shanghai Expo, even

if tainted by the more 'common' concerns of working in service of civic branding and gains to the local tourist economy, delivers the association between visual arts and the city to a non-expert audience that one can link to positive, in-direct effects for both city and art field.

The Shanghai junket was followed by the increasing participation of local commercial galleries at international events. In March 2011 commercial galleries and artists from Canada took part in a showcase of contemporary Canadian art at the Armory Show in New York City<sup>31</sup>. Organized by the Toronto based Art Dealers Association of Canada (ADAC), with financial support from the Canada Council of the Arts and the City of Toronto, the *'A Quiet Revolution: Canadian Art Now'* focused on modern and contemporary art and was an attempt at orchestrating a significant presence by a group of member Canadian commercial galleries at a prestigious, second tier, international art fair. The Montréal contingent included local ADAC members, Galerie Simon Blais, Galerie Trois Points and Pierre Francois Ouellete Art Contemporain. Concurrently, Montréal based Parisian Laundry Gallery participated in the less expensive Volta art fair in the city. These 'feeder' fairs piggy back off the larger more expensive events, offering opportunities to less established galleries and artists at lower costs while taking advantage of the physical proximity and presence of buyers, critics and the focused concentrated art 'buzz' in the city. Two months later saw the participation of two Montréal based primary market spaces, Gallery SAS and Art Mur, at the NY Pulse Fair, a specialist contemporary art event that piggy backs on the larger, more expensive and more established New York version of the Frieze Art Fair that takes place in that city in early May.

The shift in momentum and the participation of new actors from Montréal in the North

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<sup>31</sup> The Amory Show in New York City and the Chicago Art Fair for Contemporary and Modern Art a month later, are organised by the privately owned Management Mart Properties Inc. (MMPI), a Chicago based consumer and trade show events and property management company also responsible for putting together the Toronto Art Fair and the Volta Fair in NYC.

Eastern North American art fair circuit represents a significant movement given the dearth of local actors participating in art fairs, other than Toronto, prior to 2006 and the core period of fieldwork. With the exception of established contemporary local specialist Pierre Francois Ouellette, the presence of Montréal primary commercial galleries in New York, Chicago, Los Angeles or FIAC in Paris or the Barcelona Fair was, since the beginning of this decade, essentially non-existent.

### Trickledown Effects and the Supply Side

For the commercial players in the primary market, gains within any sector of the cultural economy were viewed as beneficial in generating brand recognition and greater interest in the local primary visual arts field. This applied across the spectrum from decorative to avant-garde mediators operating in the city's primary market. The reliance is on the promise of a trickledown effect that will draw traffic and sales in the commercial spaces. Given the limited resources of the sector, promotional efforts that extend beyond one's own business serve to associate the art with the other positive aspects of urban life in the city. As one curator stated, "...so when I'm travelling I'm doing my best to promote this space and at the same time to promote Montréal as an art city, because I live here, and I need it to work for me too. I want to keep this job and I want to keep this space operating, so all these things matter to me." (Interviews, 2008) Compared to other major Canadian centers the yearlong calendar of cultural events is an extremely visible component of daily life, in addition to the quality of the built environment and the café culture that thrives in its boroughs. The presence of state supported specialist and populist cultural activity serves as a central ingredient to this recipe, as one respondent put it,

"We are sort of drunk on cultural as it is, as a city. We're in such a privileged place already. It is a happy place to artists to be and that hasn't sort of subsided it is still reasonable to live

here. The climate sucks, but whatever, you buy a better coat. People can go to school here. There's good funding for school because we're in Canada. There's still a means of getting research grants not only through Canada Council but through CALQ which is very strong for Québécois artists. One can sustain here, but do you want to live a life of mediocrity or do you want to build momentum and try to break out of this box and do something else..." (Interviews, 2008).

The box that this curator refers to is a fundamental mechanism of the local art field that remains prolific in terms of producing product but is not particularly good at supporting careers or generating demand. An 'art economy too small and too narrow' that former director of the Musée d'art contemporain, Mark Mayer, referred to in the quote used earlier.

Given the economic realities in Montréal and the 'technocracy' that governs the local network, one respondent was concerned that the city's policy interests sit more closely to a model of economic development that is based on accessibility, as opposed to the sector's inherent tendency towards exclusivity and in turn sales. This accounted for the visual arts secondary status in recent policy documents, yet as she went on to point out, the 'renewed faith in all aspects of Montréal' was certainly to have a trickledown effect that would affect her market. The disjuncture between production and demand that plays out in the art community and city is driven by the high levels of financial support offered to the visual arts sector, but, as one journalist pointed out, there is an illusion at play that isn't in keeping with demand: "very easy...look at the local art magazines...then look at the publishers...they give a deceptive image of their being more happening than actually is...then look at the masthead...the publisher...who are all primarily academics at universities...its art by committee (Interviews, 2008).

Given this ecology galleries have been very conscious of creating opportunities to generate 'buzz' given the increasing wealth and 'omnivorous modes of consumption' of the

population, and fostering a greater understanding of the speculative component rather than the simply decorative one through visual arts consumption and collecting. *Esse arts + opinions*, a Montréal based tri-annual arts magazine founded in 1984 by students from the Masters in Art History program at the Université de Québec à Montréal (UQAM), published a collection of essays in a 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary special book edition in 2009 entitled, ‘Vendu – Sold: Insights into collecting and the art market’ (Esse, 2009). Designed as part of a fund raising event for the magazine, the essays and catalogue of works by prominent Québécois and Canadian artists were in step with the spirit of the Biennale in 2007 and Triennial in 2008 by trying to situate local artistic production within larger international debates in the art world, and specifically around the increasing attention and importance of the commerce in art.

The magazine, which began as a French language only publication and, with the intention of increasing its readership and influence, transformed itself into a bilingual English-French publication in 2007, was clearly responding to a desire for a shift in attitude within the local ecology of artists, mediators, consumers and bureaucrats. They worked with sponsors that included participating artists, journalists and academics who contributed essays, direct government support from the Conseil des arts de Montréal as well as purchased advertising space by commercial galleries, third party services such as art consultants, insurance brokers and art shippers and state supported institutions and university galleries. The collection was trying to establish a more vibrant dynamic amongst key mediators as well as educate the targeted well-heeled audience for their fund raising event. The high quality of the publication – expensive full binding, 30lb off-white bond paper and high gloss full color plates - produced a very ‘design’ oriented volume. It presented a survey of topics related to the working of the commerce of art locally and internationally with an unabashed

endorsement of the speculative and monetary dimension to this economy and its underdeveloped role in the local cultural economy.

As the foreword of the volume points out, "...despite the high quality of artistic production, the art market in Québec and in Canada has a hard time competing on the international scene. The alleged reasons for this state of affairs are many: buyers reservations or lack of trust regarding the local market; organizations' lack of resources for promoting the artists' work; infrequent touring and the poor presence of promotional tools as artists catalogues; lack of vision of various levels of government with respect to cultural policies that might better support the international dissemination and circulation of art work." (Babin, 2009, p. 13)

Given the Canada wide remit of the volume, the litany of problems still does not address the limited tradition of art speculation in Québec which raises issues of the province's very particular trajectory when it comes to the imbrication of cultural and economic life within the cultural sphere. There is a clear attempt to generate a positive approach towards the increasing commercialization of the art sector in the collection of essays without clearly addressing or challenging the bureaucratic infrastructure that supports the entire field – one does not bite the hand that feeds it! Within this context, in addition to educating and encouraging new modes of consumption amongst the elite audience, a key target remains the state bureaucrats, at agencies such as SODEC and the Canada Council, who are being politely prompted to play a more active role in the primary art market sector as a necessary element of national promotional strategies on an international stage where Canadian and Québécois mediators, operating for national interests, remain under represented.

The careful movement toward the principle that facilitating demand will take care of supply, one of the kernels of neo-liberal supply side economics, remains a financially dangerous and

very unfashionable position for actors in the cultural sector to adopt. The slow move to cultivating a culture of consumption challenges the centrality of Keynesian principles of governance and cultural protectionism that are an important theoretical source for arts funding policy in Canadian and western-European economies. (Upchurch, 2011) My own encounter with the Esse volume happened at the Papier10, an event organized by AGAC (Association des gallerie d'art contemporains) as a modest commercial art fair for local galleries focusing on works on paper. It provided a more affordable and therefore accessible alternative to the commercial art fair event and the higher price points at the Toronto International Art Fair. An event geared solely to the commercial players in the local field is an inevitable outcome in a city that organizes Biennales and Triennials and harbors important international ambitions. The small size and modest scope of the Montréal fair was a demonstration of the need to actualize new and burgeoning network resources in the context of a volatile and competitive national and international primary art field.

### Conclusion

Each of the events discussed in this chapter is an attempt at mobilising actors in the service of changing the "obduracy" that has limited the growth and development of the local primary market. Obduracy, as Hommels explains, involves the force of 'dominant frames', forms of 'embeddedness', and 'persistent traditions' that limit the adoption of innovative practices and technologies. (Hommels, 2010, pp. 144-145) For mediators in the primary art market the centrality of the various technologies of the cultural economy in the development ambitions of the city and the drive to brand the city a cultural capital acts as an important catalyst to undo obdurate practices and change the 'sullen' market conditions they have endured. Nevertheless, innovation is often delimited by the enduring force of nationalist concerns around 'appartenance' and belonging that frame the criteria for recognition and inclusion

within the upper hierarchies of the artistic field.

The peripheral status of the Montreal art world and its limited size and reach drives actors to look to 'versioning' practices and the generative role of government policy and support to foster change in the field. The Montreal culture policy document discussed in chapter 5 is an affirmation of the "...vastly increased...social significance of all sorts of urban cultural producers..." within which the "...visual arts plays a key *productive* role in creating and processing images for the urban economy...(Zukin, 2001, p. 260). These changes are both symbolic and material involving the increasingly important role of Montreal based, arm's length, soft-touch bureaucracies in spurring and supporting a cautious 'marketization' that impacts the visual arts field.<sup>32</sup> The overflows and entanglements generated through the cosmopolitan orientation that Zukin identifies as the engineering of culture through - aesthetics, ethnicity and marketing built into the drive for 'cultural capital' status (Zukin, 1995) highlight the cleavages between the "...two dominant representation of identity in Quebec...the melancholic nationalist discourse, at times sorrowful and resigned, often vehement and seditious; and the anti-nationalist discourse [one], rationalist and cosmopolitan..." (Maclure, 2003, p. 11) The technologies of urban and sectoral promotion, encouraged through the local and international branding of Montreal, operate within the spectre of this ongoing nationalist dilemma. But as Zukin has pointed out, "...incorporating new images into visual representations of the city can be democratic. It can integrate rather segregate social and ethnic groups, and it can also help negotiate new group identities." (Zukin, 1995, p. 20) The measured and slow approach by actors in the field is due to the fact that their operationalisation of the goals set forth in the Montreal cultural policy, a declaration

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<sup>32</sup> This is in addition to the increasingly important role of Saatchi-esque style private vanity projects by a number of well-heeled local collectors that house personal private collections and also serve as points of sale for contemporary art (Battat Contemporary, the Parisian Laundry and Galerie Division/Arsenal). Two of these galleries have been very active in the feeder fairs discussed earlier in this chapter.



of an understanding of the value of the artistic mode of production and amalgam of enterprise culture and the marketing of 'hip' culture (Zukin, 2001, p. 263), retains the potential to destabilise the economic and symbolic integrity of the ethnic and cultural traits that have defined the nation building exercise of the Quebec state.

In Montreal the role of obduracy in relation to innovative practices operates through the material and sentimental attachment of actors to the principle of institutional and identitarian protection, that manifest in the context of market dynamics. The size and fragility of the local market drive actors to operate in concordance with the dominant frames and existing embedded relationships that are perpetuated through the strength of ties to state funded institutions and key mediators and the financial and symbolic consecration they bestow. The reframing of these relationships within a Montreal based metropolitan discourse, generated through increasing private sector involvement in the art field and the possibility of an increasing international awareness through participation in art fairs and promotional junkets, has yet to generate the level of growth that can sustain a broader range of mediators and canonised artists and works. The fact that "...markets produce (new) identities...spawned by the functioning of markets, they strive to be recognized and taken into account so that they can find their place within the collective." (M. Callon, 2007, p. 146), suggests a cycle of innovation and entrepreneurial possibility governed in part by an ability of the community at large to absorb these changes. In this conservative environment, change is cautiously managed, there is limited room for manoeuvre. The need to overcome sullen markets and the role offered through a revitalised urban based cultural policy has generated new STAs such as the Biennial and Triennials as well as increased funding that has facilitated participation in art fairs and international junkets. However the obduracy of market values and market size, in a field where a nationalist bureaucratic order operates in the interests of key mediators, even in

the context of increasing privatization, generates a condition where, 'the unexpected and uncertainty, is often replaced by politics in which existing institutions ignore the questions that they are unable [or unwilling] to address and reinforce existing framings. The logic of repetition thus prevails over that of the production of differences. ' (M. Callon, 2007, p. 158).

The role and responsibility of mediators as agents of urban diversity and the multicultural in the primary art market with its particular economics and distribution systems, and to varying extents in other areas of Montreal's cultural economy, employ frames that are a result of discursive and material limitations to practice that are specific to the artistic field in Québec. Calculative agents in markets can "... trigger the emergence of matters of concern which they are not always able to provide satisfactory answers. These matters of concern then evolve into many (potentially) political issues whose solutions may, in turn, impact on the organisation of economic activities. (M. Callon, 2007, p. 141) In such an environment the weak ties and rules that enable material and symbolic status in a field may generate new STAs but possible overflows and entanglements that threaten identity constructs and the economic networks that support them have to be carefully managed and protected. Within this context the changes generated locally by multicultural drift and new versioning practices, are kept in check by the shared interests of mediators in the field.

## Chapter 8

### Conclusion: Evaluation and Innovation

*Because experimentation opens onto new forms of organization and theorization, it also introduces an explicitly political dimension into the process of economization, especially when it means marketizing objects and behaviours that have previously defied marketization. (Çalışkan & Callon, 2010, p. 23)*

*We spontaneously figure out the aesthetic relation as binary, between a work and a receiver. In fact, it is actually a triadic relation between works, the public and a number of mediation processes – publication, dissemination, organisation, production, commentaries, material and mental frameworks. These processes are operated by individuals who act as intermediaries in the art world; much more than artworks and artists, and as well as spectators, they are a perfect scope for sociological investigation. (Heinich, 2012, p. 701)*

### Introduction

The analysis of the practice of actors in the primary art market in *Market and Mediators* situates the competition over scarce symbolic and material resources within economic sociology, urban sociology and cultural studies. The focus on history, policy and practice in the thesis affirms the complex array of criteria that actors and actants employ to frame market activity in the field. Actors may not always implicate themselves directly or overtly in local politics and policy. However they do operate with the knowledge, like other actors in the primary market, that the specific history of Quebecois nationalism and the government policy and programs that have engineered the field do play an important part in shaping and sustaining that field and their role in it. Changes in policy and focus, away from the national to the metropolitan and urban cultural economy through cultural policy and changing governance relationships, unravel in Montréal within the tensions that arise from the ongoing concern for cultural protection and preservation in and through the practice of actors in the field.

The banal strategic decisions of commercial gallery owners, state curators and other key mediators operate in relation to a specific local history and the influence of government policy. However they also operate in relation to an array of factors both local and international such as responding to changing trends in the art world and rudimentary line management concerns that also inform and shape practice. The consequence of these strategic negotiations, from within and without the artistic field, play an important generative role in shaping the city and province through forms of labour market practice and artistic canonization and celebration. The artists, artworks and mediators who work within this politically and symbolically complex important social assemblage are therefore strategically placed to respond to and act as interpretive agents of global and local changes that generate the social space we experience. The material and symbolic qualities of the city of Montreal or the Province of Quebec that they mediate, through their strategic choices in the economies of competition over scarce material and symbolic resources, therefore play a role in generating characteristics of the multicultural and cosmopolitan within the urban and national space.

#### Reaffirming the Theoretical in Markets and Mediators

The analysis has stressed the role of a variety of 'frames' that constrain and enable actors in the art field at the level of national and civic modes of boosterism, where the lingering ethno-cultural dimension to the national renders the two positions difficult to reconcile. For actors, different kinds of frames can operate at different scalar levels and can do so concurrently. History and 'habit' through the rule and roles of art practice in the city do contribute to formatting strategic calculations and shaping the imperatives of actors, but not necessarily through an un-reflexive awareness. Actors are shrewd at exercising frames and sensitive to possible overflows and entanglements that may challenge the organisation and ordering of a field in Montreal that preserves their material and symbolic power. This awareness constrains

and also enables. The subjective and associative concerns that constitute the evaluative frameworks that are at play in art worlds, the breadth and depth of financial resources that sustain the market and the overriding functionalist role of the artistic field in a nationalist context work together to engender an obduracy (Hommels, 2010). This characteristic encourages the slow apportioning of power and change through the role of strategically placed gatekeeper and mediators of the national and metropolitan cultural space.

What comes out of the research, particularly in the discussion of mediators and the 4P's in Chapter 6, is a more active and volatile model of economic practice through field theory than the rigid adherence to a fixed 'objective space of possibles' that Bourdieu defends in his use of field and habitus. His approach tends "...to emphasize the correspondence between social structures and mental structures [that] presents practice as the outcome of the relations between habitus and objective conditions, rather than the outcome of negotiated relations between variously disposed individuals..."(Bottero, 2010, p. 14). The dominance of state enterprise in sustaining and organizing the field as explored in Chapters 4 and 5 ensures a level of concordance between interests of the state and the and the actors who make up the primary visual arts market. This is not to say that private sector dominance doesn't produce its own particular extremely problematic outcomes, because it does. (see Pierre Bourdieu & Haacke, 1995; Stallabrass, 2004; Wu, 2001) However the coupling of the sustenance of an art world to state funding, and gatekeepers charged with the power of cultural preservation and promotion in a context of identitarian insecurity within a tradition of melancholic nationalism, breeds very particular and conservative strategies in generating new evaluative frameworks that foster the changes in labor market patterns and the art and artists subject to canonization in the local primary market.

In a manner similar to Bottero's suggestion of actors' engagement with forms of 'gender reflexivity' (Bottero, 2010) - in which women's tacit presupposition is questioned in their negotiation through distinct fields - actors in Montreal's art world operate through forms of cultural and economic reflexivity, specific to the broad array of factors that frame calculation in the field locally which challenge the integrity of Bourdieu's 'dispositional identities'. In line with Bottero's argument, I agree that "...reflexive identifications and mobilizations must chime with the substance of people's dispositional practice to be socially meaningful [and symbolically and materially sustaining in the economy] but this does not "...address the ways in which dispositional practice can be diversely interpreted."(Bottero, 2010, p. 10) The mismatches between habitus and field do generate 'critical transformative forces' as much as they generate 'habitual action, reinforcing habit and acting to perpetuate norms.(Bottero, 2010, p. 11) In doing so history and policy play an integral role in forming the field and the habitus of its actors but without a rigid fixity or singularity - the habitus does not substitute for the agent - as Bourdieu's work often suggests (Crossley, 2001, p. 94). This is why the focus on the performative and mediative capacities of actors in ANT and Callonian economic theory serves as such an important counter to the limitations built into Bourdieu's theory, in explicating the possibility, the detail in the contents and consequences of actors mediating and the transformative practices in the primary art economy.

Understanding the habits of actors in the field as not a necessarily pre-ordained, unconscious or a fixed array of attributes but a learned and consciously employed series of rules and attitudes that can be reflexively employed and examined restores an agency to them. This affirms an active view of habitus as another socio technical arrangement open to diverse interpretations and manipulations in a context of competition over material and symbolic resources by actors, while accounting for a porous boundary that delimits 'legitimate'

behavior. The restoration of an 'improvisational dimension to the concept of habitus' (Steinmetz, 2011, p. 51) allows us to comfortably account for the small revolutions typical of art and fashion "that exhibit a constant churning and cycling of dominant and dominated groups, in which newcomers challenge hegemonic tastes and the status of established elites."(Steinmetz, 2011, pp. 54-55) Steinmetz's emphasis on agency within field theory most importantly reaffirms the role of key mediators in a process of historical reclamation in and through the genesis and re-articulation of the attributes that have rendered the field distinct - a condition of historical mediation, manipulation and reproduction that has been stressed throughout this document.

Given this understanding, the step to a Callonian approach to unraveling and explaining the calculation that renders the cultural through economic practice, and the economic through cultural practice follows logically. As argued in Chapter 2 and reiterated here, the process of comprehending cultural processes like the mediation and jockeying for position that goes into primary art field practice is an undoing of the construction of the cultural and economic as 'opposing terms'. Macro structures like society, culture or economics operate as heuristic tools rather than self-contained social organisms or processes. They are contingent, porous and ephemeral constructs bleeding into one another and reliant on their constant reaffirmation by individuals who employ the technologies necessary for their validity and purification. As Slater has argued in his explanation of the 'impurity' and 'monstrosity' of the business of advertising and marketing (Don Slater, 2011), the 4p's of the marketing mix are an instrument and that in the intimate and relational context of primary art markets enable actors and firms to " ...go around and behind the price mechanism so that a market coordination is not impersonal and formal quasi/quantitative , but rather substantive and cultural." (Don Slater, 2011, p. 12) Traditional rules of supply and demand and price setting do not apply within the

highly localised rules and practices that engender legitimacy in art worlds. These 'professional' standards operate as a referent against which existing and incoming actors function in the primary art market in the city and establish the specific criteria for adherence or contestation. Entrepreneurial action within the state or private sectors of the art field occurs with a keen eye on the positive or negative overflows that an innovative marketing or positioning strategy might generate.

The 'translation' process built into the acts of mediation by actors in the field therefore involves the "...whole series of actors ... establishing their identities and the links between them." (M. Callon, 1999, p. 70) The way in which these 'allies are locked into place' affirms that the identity of actors in the field are "formed and adjusted only during action' (M. Callon, 1999, p. 71) in the field. What is clear is that the 'locked' position of actors remains partial and volatile. The 'interessement' between them is governed by conditions of economic self-interest that alter through the changing dynamics of other social and political facts which bear on the strategic calculations of those involved in the primary art market generating new entanglements and overflows. As Lahire points out, "social agents are not made all of one piece; they are fit together from separate parts, complex charts of dispositions to act and to believe which are more or less tightly constituted. This does not mean that they 'lack coherence', but that they lack a principle of unique coherence—of beliefs, i.e., models, norms, ideals, values, and of dispositions to act." (Lahire, 2003, p. 348) The position of director of the state run Musée d'art contemporain or that of a recent fine arts graduate operates at different points within the network of the field, each position involving particular calculative agencies with powers and responsibilities unique to that function and place. However within this 'social universe', none of these roles, relative 'objective' positions or outcomes is fixed or goes unchallenged over time.



### Montreal's Sullen and Obdurate Market

In Montréal, the role of actors in the visual art field, operating in a small yet competitive market that bears a responsibility for maintaining a sense of culture and identity, is politically charged. As guardians of local heritage and history and, as was suggested in Chapter 5, agents of policy - actors in the field mediate within the imbrication of cultural and economics that generates political effects. Given the economic limitation of the field, they have been extremely reliant on criteria generated through an assemblage of state and municipal policy, changing governance systems and fashions in the art world in shaping local evaluative frameworks. The reformatting of economic relations in the primary art market in Québec through the diminution of the welfare state and the neo-liberal turn has been marked by a number of factors. These include a much greater focus on the economic contribution of the cultural sector and on cultural industries since the end of the 1970s, the decentralization of cultural powers to newly created arm's-length organizations and the adoption of private-sector approaches to funding the cultural industries (Gattinger & Saint-Pierre, 2010, p. 296). The changes in Montréal since 1995 and the boosterism of the 2005 civic Cultural Metropolis document represent an apogee in the city's relationship with the Québec state. Montréal's role as 'economic engine' and the provisioning of the broad array of goods and services, now key to that economic development, brings together the changes wrought through global flows of capital, the intermingling of cultures, people and money that are hallmarks of the post-industrial and post-modern forms of regional economic development. At play is a 'crisis of bureaucratic rationality that stems from the relationship between cultural change and systems through which difference is regulated', (Keith, 2005, p. 58) that in a Québec context, highlights the economic and demographic differences between the state of Québec and the city of Montreal.

As the previous chapter explored, the focus on an 'economy of qualities' (M. Callon et al., 2005) so important to the forms of economic exchange built around the services and amenities drive in urban economic development, obviously not only increases the relevance of the cultural economy but also the culture(s) at play in that economy. The move from the nation to the city as the pre-eminent site where these changing modes of governance and shifting economic priorities and demographics are most acutely felt has also involved the appropriation and versioning of new modes of socio-technical agencement. The biennales, triennials, junkets and fairs operate to generate more financially and celebrated art worlds and are activated through the mobilization of actors by way of a policy of cultural capital and metropolis building. Yet the mobilisation around issues of diversity and the multicultural suggested in policy, materialises through the values of inclusion celebrated and called for by these bureaucratic technologies and international trends rather than simply through the force of multicultural and demographic shift in the city itself. This raises important questions concerning actors and their understanding of the distinctions between the practice of the cosmopolitan on one hand and the multicultural on the other in the Montréal context.

The economics of primary art practice and the versioning of the cosmopolitan in this governance and financial landscape involve a careful apportioning of what Zukin (Zukin, 1995) has identified as the three facets of culture built into the drive for 'cultural capital' status - aesthetics, ethnicity and marketing. The issue of aesthetics and built environment are quite easy to translate through the STA's employed by actors in the field. However the issue of the multicultural remains problematic in the context of the ethno-cultural traces that operate through labour market practices and modes of canonization that are framed by the concerns of melancholic nationalism and the engineering of a Quebec cultural technocracy explored in

Chapter 4 and 5. The 'space of possibles' (Pierre Bourdieu, 1993, p. 189) employed by those mediators bearing the necessary 'capital for consecration' (Pierre Bourdieu, 1996, p. 148) operates with reference to the politics, history and geography that generate the unique characteristics of the cultural field in Montréal. This incorporeal and objective history plays out through instruments like provincial cultural policy that attempt to organise the artistic field and the actors in networks that constitute it. Policy in the context of the local art world plays an influential role in establishing frames, that as Rose points out, are designed to exert an intellectual mastery, and establish certain 'explanatory schemes' (Rose, 1998, p. 120) that are employed in the field.

Key mediators in the cultural economy are strategically placed to generate the multicultural city. They are important facilitators of dialogical democracy: "a process of co-construction involving the identification of emergent concerned groups and of their integration into the processes of design and production of new goods and services." (M. Callon, 2007, p. 159) Yet the obduracy of the market, as well as a commitment to an extremely cautious and conservative evolution of the national identity construct renders the speed of change extremely slow. The educational and mediative practices, so important to the framing of contemporary art, leaves ethno-cultural essentialist traces to the valuative systems built into these processes in Québec and Montréal.

The case of David Altmejd, in chapter 7, is an example of the strength of networks in Montréal's art world and the reliance on 'weak ties' between individual actors in those networks that reiterate the strong historical dimension and its role in establishing the local rules of the game and the positionality of the player on the field. (Ley, 2003, p. 2536) In the case of Altmejd, evidence suggested that this was driven by a lack of local percolation

through the field by an artist whose career trajectory embodied an ethos ‘corrupted’ by a hybrid pedigree and the financial self-interest of the global art market rather than the ‘purer gaze’ of the state and artist run sector. The full implication of the cosmopolitan 'overflows' and 'externalities' that he brings with him and generates through his links to the nodes of the international art field are checked by the obduracy of actors in the local field. Yet the mobilisation around these technologies that contributes to market growth and urban promotion also generates entanglements where the outcomes are more easily assimilated as the junkets and fairs demonstrate. Innovative combinatorial logics that displace 'objective positions' occur as the increasing prominence of private sector actors demonstrates, in the vacuum left by diminishing state support. The shifts unravel slowly and as one prominent curator pointed out, particularly when they involve the re-framing of the ethno-cultural discourse from within the Québec nation.

The concern around aesthetics, marketing and ethnicity remains bounded by the protectionist frames used to construct value and legitimacy in the context of the gate keeping and entrepreneurial function of mediators in Montréal. This is one lament of the 'economy of qualities' (M. Callon et al., 2005) employed by gatekeepers in the visual arts network to establish the complex set of criteria operating through evaluative frames. Value as understood by these mediators is what Stark identifies (Stark, 2009, p. 11) as a relationship that is not a “single order of worth but contains multiple ‘orders of worth’” drawing from Boltanski and Thevenot’s (2006) vocabulary. Gatekeepers in the primary market enable both the ‘disruptive and re-combinatory as well as an ability to exploit uncertainty in the market’ (Stark, 2009, p. 17) but have failed to engage the range of possibilities this affords. The debate in Quebec concerns two different evaluative frameworks, one driven by stereotypes built around ethnic essentialism and the other, a syncretic identity construct fashioned in equal part by local and

the global affiliations and life worlds of the children of Bill 101. This leads us to what Stark calls, "the generative friction that occurs at the overlap, rather than at the gap between evaluative frameworks that entrepreneurs can exploit..." (Stark, 2009, p. 19) which local mediators have generally failed to capitalize on. As he goes on to point out, "entrepreneurship as an enabling capacity, proves productive not so much by encouraging the smooth flow of information or the confirmation of fixed identities as by fostering a productive friction that disrupts organizational taken-for-granted, generates new knowledge, and makes possible the redefinition, redeployment, recombination of resources" (Stark, 2009, p. 19). Yet in such a cautious and conservative market, obduracy usually trumps the needed 'disruption' that prevents what are called path dependent effects of locking into earlier successes (Stark, 2009, p. 16) which limit the possibility for the full range of innovative mediating practice. The responsibility for innovative mediating practices rests not just on the shoulders of artist producers but also on the mediating of mediators through the apportioning of this power to a diverse and expert group that is representative of the diversity in the general population.

### Opening Black Boxes

In the movement between the descriptive and critical modes of sociology employed in this thesis, I hope I have done more than conceive of actors as flat and one dimensional. In respect of their agency and the principles of sound ethnography, I have tried to generate a research project "...that consists in demonstrating how actors exercise their own judgments and how their practice in the world conforms to such an approach..." and "explicating their logic for acting rather than simply imposing a reason on them." (Heinich, 1998, p. 62 *my translation*) The distinction between the assumption or imposition of motivation and its revelation through dialogue, observation and discussion returns us to the problematics of the taken-for-granted generated through Bourdieu's claims on the assumed powers of the cultural field and habitus

in comparison to the sociations and frames generated by actors in Callon's networked universe.

The descriptions of what actors do, how and why they do it sit alongside an analysis that involves a critical, political approach that in its adherence to plural and multicultural values, some may take as dogmatic. This approach is in keeping with the cultural studies' ethos of this project and its commitment to "...placing these engagements [with the urban and multicultural] in theoretical narratives which understand the duplicities of stories of the temporal and the spatial, unpacking the ethical, political and practical contradictions out of which they are constituted." (Keith, 2009, p. 553) The questions that Gilroy asked in 1992 concerning the leaving behind of ethnic absolutism in the British art world (Gilroy, 1993, p76), are prescient in the face of the problems surrounding the constitution and practice of a racially and ethnically diverse urban Montréal and the larger Québécois polity.

The decision to explore the mechanics of the visual art field through the economics of mediating practices by experts stems from the belief that the "...art work functions as part of a social relational matrix in which it is embedded..." (Gell, 1998, p. 7) In choosing to focus on context and the process of contextualisation one may be accused of upholding the dualism that thinkers like Heinich are attempting to undo through a pragmatic sociology based on an 'engaged neutrality' (Heinich, 1998, pp. 71-82) that integrates art work and system.

Nevertheless, in defense of this position, the brackets used to delineate the field were based on scalar considerations, rather than through a willing disregard for the artist producer. The cultural mediation of gallery owners, curators, critiques and policy analysts involves 'translating' between policy and the public, artists and buyers and art event and reader. This is a very specific order of mediation that is vocational and characteristic of the service based

'economy of qualities'. Their role in the pursuit of maximizing symbolic and financial capital in either the state or private sectors involves the translation of a range of specialised vocabularies into meaningful and resonant frames that can convert to sales, media coverage, etc.. But as emphasized here, the frames are reflexively employed and operate in relation to the network and social world at large. The vocation of mediators is constructed through positioning strategies that are specifically oriented to the "...exercise of cultural authority as shapers of taste and the incubators of new consumerist disposition..." (Sean Nixon & duGay, 2002, p. 497) and therefore are active in shaping the cultural economy.

One could have looked at a mediator in relation to a specific artist or art work - perhaps following "the social life of these things" - but what is clear from this research project is that in a small market like Montreal it is the aggregate of positive endorsements that makes or breaks careers for mediators. The content of art works in one's curatorial stable is just one of many mitigating factors. In Montreal's primary art market a single artist or work does not generate a career for a mediator. To understand the way the field works one has to look at mediators in terms of the quantity and quality of their connections in a network. The aesthetics of the product they 'move' or choose to associate with concerns practice and the application of a discursive construct that operates beyond the intrinsic qualities of the art object itself and instead concerns the elaboration and construction of object and artist in the relational setting of the local market amongst key mediators.

Diversity in numbers is one measure of multicultural and plural economies but another is the substance and scope of discourse and the power and position of allies in the local network. In the economy of primary art practice in Montréal, it is mediators that have the upper hand. Their central function as gatekeepers and their role in structuring and organizing the network

makes them quite literally the “...groups of micro actors seated on top of many (leaky) black boxes”. (M. Callon & Latour, 1981, p. 286) Through their strategic position in the field they play the crucially important role of hiding the profane mechanisms that guide pricing, positioning, and hiring strategies. They are therefore at the head of the “repression of their economic and social conditions of possibility” (Pierre Bourdieu, 2005, p. 7) that is an essential and unique characteristic of the visual arts field as a whole. This local Montreal 'black box' includes the local variations on legitimate activity and discourse within its own spectrum of heteronomous and orthodox principles. The narrow range for the normative framings of local politics by the actors I interviewed, taken as an instrumental or substantive belief, therefore serves as criteria for survival and an important point of reference in generating the scale and scope for innovation in the network.

The political framings employed by key mediators, their strategic and career sustaining practice in the field and government policy at the municipal and provincial level function together to promote and protect the city and its cultural production. The challenge to a bureaucratic rationality, the important role of the cultural economy of Montréal and the growing distinction between city and state, generate an increasing market orientation and a greater focus on the commercial and international promotion of the artistic field. In the vacuum left by diminished state funding in Montreal's art world, the metropolitan focus opens the possibility for broader and diverse value frames in keeping with the cosmopolitan and international ambitions of actors and actants. The role of key mediators in Montreal, as the guardians and translators of a culture and identity that retains strong ties to an ethnically inflected nationalism, has resulted in limiting innovative practices and the full use of technologies that can generate a more diverse and dynamic, multicultural and francophone city.





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