École libre: Visualising a Social Pedagogic Movement

Tina Carlisi

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By: Tina Carlisi

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Signed by the final examining committee:

_____ Chair
Dr. Juan Carlos Castro

_____ Examiner
Dr. Kathleen Vaughan

_____ Examiner
pk langshaw

_____ Supervisor
Dr. Juan Carlos Castro

Approved by _____
Dr. Lorrie Blair, Acting Chair of Department

_____
Dr. Catherine Wild, Dean of Faculty of Fine Arts

Date   August 12, 2013

ABSTRACT

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The year 2012 marks the longest and most widespread student strike in Québec's history. During this period, art students and artists participated in initiatives to bring awareness to the movement as a means to mobilize others. In this practice-based thesis, I investigate how social commitment to affordable education inspired art students and artists to initiate engaged projects, and I will argue that these practices offer insights that can stimulate a rethinking of post-secondary art and design education. As part of my research, I developed an art project titled *École libre* which was presented in a solo exhibition. This project was inspired by the events and the artistic production around the 2012 student strike, but also by the history of the province's commitment to accessible education and by ideas associated with free education.

This thesis uses a combination of methods which includes practice-based research, textual analysis, critical visual methodology and interviews with experts. By discussing examples of art initiatives, I argue that these practices adopted pedagogical frameworks and were driven by notions of possibility. Through praxis, I consider modes of production, processes and materials associated with activism, and connect them to types of learning that exists in the margins between educational institutions and the street. I will discuss the movement's relationship to pedagogy, not only as a fight for free or affordable education, but also how it inspired many students to set their own objectives, precisely because they were involved in a larger social project that they consider meaningful.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, Anna Sauro Carlisi and Gaspare Carlisi, who both did not have opportunities for accessing higher education. Their continuous loving support and sacrifices they made for their five daughters has profoundly shaped my belief in free and democratic education for everyone.

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Note on Language

Writing about the Québec student movement in English poses distinct considerations. In consistency with the thesis subject, specific words and titles are first presented in French with an English translation followed in parentheses. Names of places are intentionally presented with accents in conformance to their French spelling. Interviews conducted in French and quotations originally published in French have been translated into English for fluidity in the main body of text. These translations have been indicated accordingly and the quotations in their original language have been provided as footnotes.

Figure 1: Installation detail of *illimité* [*unlimited*]
Photo credit: Tina Carlisi

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 *Printemps québécois:* A Brief Introduction

In 2012, for over seven months in the province of Québec, students from more than a dozen cégeps[1] and universities went on strike to protest against the provincial government's budget plan to raise university tuition.[2] Following the boycott of classes by students,[3] the first mass demonstration took place in Montréal on March 22, 2012. The demonstration was attended by hundreds of thousands of students and non-students alike. After failed negotiation with the three major student union representatives,[4] the government suspended the semester in the striking educational institutions and passed a force measure law called Bill 78.[5] This bill banned non-announced marches and gatherings, as well as threatened large fines against organizers and participants of such events (Assemblée nationale du Québec, 2012). In response to what had been perceived as a provocation, thousands of protesters continued to participate in the monthly mass demonstrations, as well as smaller night demonstrations. All throughout the summer in

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[1] The word cégep is an acronym for *Collège d'enseignement général et professionnel* [General and Professional College]. In the province of Québec, general stream high school education is five years. After high school, students can choose to attend a two year pre-university programme or a three year professional programme in a cégep. Professional programmes are intended for entry into the work force upon graduation. Pre-university programmes are intended to prepare students for university. A student graduating from a professional programme may also choose to continue their studies in university. University in Québec is three years instead of four years for students who attended cégep.

[2] The planned increase for tuition was $2,168 to $3,793 between 2012 and 2017, which represents a hike of $325 annually and an overall increase of 75%.

[3] Some students attending Concordia University and McGill University in Montréal also did not attend their classes, but this did not have the same impact on suspending the semester as in certain Francophone educational institutions. Both universities did not formally recognize the student strike.

[4] CLASSE (La Coalition large de l'Association pour une Solidarité Syndicale Étudiante) spokesman Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois, Martine Desjardins, president of FEUQ (Fédération étudiante universitaire du Québec), and Léo Bureau-Blouin, president of FECQ (Fédération étudiante collégiale du Québec).

[5] An English PDF download of *Bill 78: An Act to enable students to receive instruction from the postsecondary institutions they attend* is available at the following address: http://www.assnat.qc.ca/en/travaux-parlementaires/projets-loi/projet-loi-78-39-2.html.

many Montréal neighbourhoods, denizens would bang their kitchen pots and pans, which is a form of popular protest that originates in South America.[6] Then Premier of Québec, Liberal leader Jean Charest,[7] announced elections for early September in 2012, which his party lost to the Parti Québecois.

The Québec student movement[8] is colloquially referred to as *Printemps québécois* [Québec Spring] or *Printemps érable* [Maple Spring]. Both phrases are a play on *Printemps arabe* [Arab Spring] and suggests a connection to other social movements that are taking place globally.[9] Not unlike the May 68 protests in Paris,[10] art and design were used in the Québec 2012 student movement to mobilize students and in that process captured the popular imagination of the cause. The symbol for the Québec Spring is a *carré rouge* [red square] which is typically made of red felt and pinned on one's clothing using a safety pin. Before becoming a symbol of the student struggle, the red square was first used for the fight against social assistance reform in 2004. In 2005, students in the Sociology Department at Université du Québec à Montréal

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[6] *Cacerolazo* [casserole] protests originated in Chile in 1971 when a group of women from the upper middle class took their pots and pans to the streets to protest against socialist reforms by the Allende government in relation to the food shortage (Kumaraswami & Thornton, 2007). Contrary to its bourgeois roots, pot banging has since been used to support causes that lean towards socialist ideas.

[7] Jean Charest was Premier of Québec from 2003-2012.

[8] Although the student movement and not the strike is considered to be ongoing for many people, this thesis primarily focuses on the eight month period between February and September 2012.

[9] This author does not suggest sameness of social movements, but rather acknowledges that there has been a rise of movements taking place in different parts of the globe. This constitutes a critical aspect to be considered in relation to the Québec student movement.

[10] "Nineteen sixty-eight was the climactic year of New Left protest all over the Western world, and especially in France where in May that year ten million workers transformed a student protest into a revolutionary movement by joining forces on the streets. In the space of a month, France was overthrown and restored" (Freenberg & Freedman, 2001, p. xxi).

(UQAM) decided that it would become the symbol of the student movement because they also considered their struggle to be against poverty (Radio-Canada, 2005).

1.2 Statement of Research

In this practice-based thesis, I will examine how art and design were used as part of the Québec student movement in 2012. By linking traditions of art activism and contemporary art practices that consider pedagogic frameworks, I propose that social events such as these constitute a fertile terrain for inspiring new ideas on post-secondary art and design pedagogy. By investigating the interconnections between art, activism and education, the central question of this research is:

> How can the cultural production and pedagogic frameworks which grew out of events, workshops, experimental "schools" and collectives during the Québec student movement in 2012 participate in the re-imagining of contemporary post-secondary art and design education?

To explore the multifaceted aspects of the research subject, I apply a combination of methods: practice-based research (Candy, 2006), textual analysis (Mckee, 2003), critical visual methodology (Rose), and interviews with experts (Bogner, Littig, & Menz, 2009). These combined methods allow for theoretical and creative investigation of the research questions and thematics.

As part of my research, I developed a body of art work, which was publicly shown in a solo exhibition titled *École libre*, in May 2013 at Nowhere Gallery in Montréal. "Practice-based research is an original investigation undertaken in order to gain new knowledge partly by means

of practice and the outcomes of that practice" (Candy, 2006, p.3). Inspired by the artistic practices that emerged during the student movement, the art production for *École libre* is a visualizing of my ideas, insights and understandings that emerged from this inquiry. Considered are modes of production, materials and processes employed for activist means, and their relationship to learning within non-institutional settings. Social movements offer a ground for dialogue and exchange, which creates a continuous process of learning for those involved (Choudry & Kapoor, 2010). Throughout this thesis, I will discuss the student movement's connection to pedagogy, not solely as a struggle for free or affordable education, but also how the Québec Spring inspired many students to initiate creative work, precisely because they were involved in a larger social project that they considered to be meaningful.

A brief discussion on the history of Québec's commitment to accessible education, as well as a visual analysis of archival documents and personal documentation, offer contextual support to my research. By applying a critical visual methodology (Rose, 2011), I will discuss examples of artistic actions that arose in the Québec student movement. A critical visual methodology is a framework based on thinking about visual materials in terms of the site of production, visual content, and *audienc-ing*. Rose (2011) argued that "all visual representations are made in one way or another and the circumstances of their production may contribute towards the effect they have" (p.14). This is a critical method for considering and reflecting on the artist as cultural producer in the context of social movements.

Furthermore, for this research, I conducted interviews with professionals whose expertise informs historical and contemporary factors for the student movement, as well as providing

insight pertaining to the links between art, politics and education. The use of expert interviews has long been popular in social research (Bogner, Littig, & Menz, 2009). As stated by Bogner, Littig, & Menz, "the expert has edged into the centre of theoretical interest from both a theory of society and a democratic theory perspective" (ibid, p.3). The two experts I interviewed are Dr. Moniques Richard, a professor in Art Education at Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM) and Dr. Jean-Philippe Warren, a professor in Sociology and Anthropology and Research Chair on the Study of Québec at Concordia University. Dr. Richard's teaching and research interests include pedagogy of art projects, contemporary art, collaborative action research, cultural and technological youth practices, and impact of popular culture and technology on art education. Dr. Warren's teaching and research interests include Québec society, histories of Canadian social sciences, Québec popular culture, Canadian Aboriginal peoples, the Roman Catholic Church in Québec, and Québec-based social movements. The data collected from the interviews are weaved throughout the thesis as support for the concepts explored.

Each chapter presents a different area of consideration in relation to my research. Chapter two serves as a socio-historical and ideological contextualisation of the Québec student movement. I begin this chapter by briefly discussing Québec's commitment to accessible education in the last fifty years. Specifically, I focus on the province's motives for affordable education as part of a crucial component in its social progress (Warren, 2008). I then discuss current claims that institutions for higher learning are adopting a neoliberal model which threaten the province's commitment to accessibility and to the common good (Baillargeon, 2011; Berthelot, 2008; Martin & Ouellet 2011; Martin & Simon Tremblay-Pepin, 2012; Seymour, 2013). This conversation continues by examining how the Québec Spring shared similarities

with other contemporary global movements that are fundamentally against neoliberal politics and that represent a general discontent with global capitalist systems (Žižek, 2013). Gestures of solidarity amongst movements are considered as a collective demand for new economic, social and political possibilities.

In chapter three, I examine art and education's relationship to the idea of possibility. To begin, the first section briefly encapsulates the development of avant-garde art schools in the twentieth century. This discussion serves as a basis for presenting current discourses on the re-thinking of art and design education (Madoff, 2009), particularly in light of contemporary art practices that adopt social and pedagogical forms (Allen, 2011; Atkinson, 2009; Bishop, 2005; Castro, 2012; Kester, 2004; Manifesta, 2006; O'Neil & Wilson, 2010; Thompson, 2012; Wenger, 1999). In the following section of this chapter, I ask what insights or understandings art and design educators can draw from the students' experiences in the Québec Spring movement. Particularly, I concentrate on the types of non-institutional learning that took place, and how they are situated within a space between the school and the street, or what is referred to as a "third space" (Bhabha, 1994; Routledge, 1996). The chapter concludes with proposing that a rethinking of art and design education should also consider a pedagogy of possibility (Freire, 1970; Giroux, 2007, 2011; Rancière, 1987). I argue here that time, place and space are essential for critical thinking and for artistic expression to develop.

In chapter four I elaborate on ideas discussed in the previous chapter by presenting examples of art initiatives that adopted social and pedagogic frameworks for their projects. In particular, I will discuss initiatives where art students set their own learning, objectives, goals,

and initiated interdisciplinary collaborations. Here, the importance of time, place and space is stressed in relation to concepts and material practices. This chapter focuses on how art students and artists took materials that are often not considered in traditional fine arts settings, such as silkscreening and knitting. These mediums, however, are part of a tradition of protest art, with knitting being a more recent addition with the increasing popularity of knit bombing. The concluding section elaborates on one initiative called École de la Montagne Rouge, which I argue is not only the most prominent participant in the visualisation of the Québec Spring, but also embodies this convergence of protest, contemporary art and pedagogy of possibility.

Chapter five specifically deals with the body of work I developed as part of this thesis research. This section first begins with a brief discussion about practice-based methodology before explaining the project in detail. Through a discussion of each work in the series and how they conceptually relate to each other, my intention was to create a dialogue between the research ideas and thematics explored throughout this thesis. This dialogue then provides the basis for my concluding ideas and questions in chapter six.

1.3 Justification

Like thousands of others who participated in mass demonstrations and other forms of manifestations, I believe that education is a right and not a privilege. Education should not be conceived as a commodity. It should remain accessible, democratic and encourage creative and critical thinking that is free from the demands of the global market. During the Québec Spring, I was engaged by the arguments for free education, and the artistic projects that were created during the student strike. Artists and art students initiated creative projects and collectives in

order to bring awareness and mobilize others. Within this process, they participated in the visualising of the movement, which I argue can inspire new ideas or new forms for post-secondary art and design education.

The title *École libre: Visualising a Social Pedagogic Movement* itself is intended to express a number of ideas explored in this thesis. *École libre* [free school] refers to concepts regarding freedom and emancipation through education, the fight for accessible and free education, de-centralised educational models such as free schools,[11] as well as free thought and free creative expression. *Visualising a Social Pedagogic Movement* refers to the contribution of art and design to the Québec Spring, since it managed to capture the social imagination of these events at that particular time in Québec's history. The title also refers to the visual articulation of the research thematics in the art production I developed as part of this thesis, as well as referring to the ways this movement presented new possibilities.

Although the student movement is colloquially referred to as the Québec Spring and Maple Spring, as previously discussed in this thesis, I will refer to the movement as the Québec Spring. This is to create consistency for the reader, as well as acting as an acknowledgement of the social and political history the movement is rooted in.

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[11] Free schools are small personalistic educational communities free from state control and values of corporate capitalism. Students and teachers are encouraged to engage in interactions according to their own authentic needs and interests. Starting in the early 1960s, and increasingly after 1967, free schools brought together small groups of people who believed that learning should be intimate, spontaneous and joyful; particularly, not controlled by textbooks, curricula, instructional methods or rigid rules of behavior. These communities represent a shared desire to make learning relevant and responsive to lively social and political issues. Free school ideology is explicitly counter-cultural, and its foundational values are influenced by the educational thought of Rousseau and Pestalozzi (Miller, 2002).

CHAPTER 2: QUÉBEC STUDENT MOVEMENT

2.1 Commitment to Accessible Education in Québec

The political and economic climate of Québec in the 1960s, and specifically in Montréal, a city that had strong divides between anglophone and francophone communities, became a critical site for debate and social change. The province's historically determined motives for affordable and democratic education hold a critical position in its social progress (Warren, 2008). The decade of the 1960s was marked by a language debate, which was directly linked to social, political, economic and cultural issues (Mills, 2012). Prior to 1960, governments in the province rejected modern values, the church had great influence and control over the state, natural resources were owned by foreign companies, factory workers were not unionized and therefore subjected to poor working conditions. It was common that English was used in the work place, which created inequalities for the city's francophone population. Although francophones made up the majority of the population, anglophones had economic control and had better access to higher education (Behiels & Hayday, 2011).

These conditions propelled an intense transitional period between 1960 to 1970 referred to as the *Révolution tranquille* [Quiet Revolution]. During this period, radical changes were made in Québec society, marked by a process of secularization, modernization, nationalization of natural resources and democratization of health and education. With the significant growth in youth population after World War II, the newly elected Liberal Party, lead by Jean Lesage, made reforms to education a primary issue. In 1961, the Lesage government set up a commission of

inquiry called the *Commission Parent* [Parent Commission].[12] The main result of the *Rapport Parent* [Parent Report], released in 1966, is accessibility to higher education for everyone. "Québec has developed a model of society called the *Modèle québécois* [Québecois Model][13] which gives great importance to the capacity of each citizen to access institutions of higher learning" (J-P. Warren, personal interview, March 6, 2013). Discussing the intense changes in relation to accessible education, Dr. Warren stated:

> In the 1960s it was believed that francophones in Québec were falling behind the rest of North America, and that if they could acquire the skills to perform in a modernized, industrialized and technological society, then they could level the playing field with immigrant and anglophone workers. It was the [general] position [in Québec] that to enjoy social mobility, they needed to get a university degree. It is so that in Québec the move towards free access to institutions of higher learning was the most powerful. What it did is that it maintained tuition fees at the university level extremely low.[14] (ibid)

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[12] "The Lesage government created a royal commission on education in 1961, chaired by the chancellor of Laval University, Alphonse-Marie Parent ... The Parent Commission undertook a thorough examination of Quebec's education system and found it unsuited to a modern society. A major recommendation of the Parent Commission was the creation of a level of schooling between high school and university. The Collège d'enseignement général et professionnel (cégep) were created in 1967 to prepare students either for university education through a 'general' stream or for the workplace through professional training. Students from both streams were to mix and enrich one another's learning experiences. At the end of the 1960s, nearly seventy-two thousand students were enrolled in cégeps" (Igartua, 2012, pp. 253-254).

[13] Reflections and analyses on the *Modèle québécois* have expanded in recent years. For some, it refers to policies and practices of the Québec government in the economic, social and cultural fields since the beginning of the Quiet Revolution. For others, it is more the result of interactions between various components of Québec society. It is often discussed as a "model of development" which encompasses all areas of activity or sometimes specifically a "model of economic development," which is only concerned with the economic field (Bourque, 2000).

[14] Québec has the lowest tuition than any other province in Canada with the exception of Newfoundland and Labrador. According to Statistics Canada, from the academic year 2011/2012 to 2012/2013, the average proposed tuition increase in Canada was 5%, with Québec having the highest increase of 10.1% (Statistics Canada, 2012).

One of the foundation blocks from this period was the creation of the province's unique cégep system and university network. Cégeps are public colleges which are instituted to offer next-to-free education in a bid to increase post-secondary education participation in the province. The first seven cégeps opened their doors throughout the province in 1967, with another sixteen in the following year. With the rapid growth of students graduating from cégep, nearly four thousand students were rejected entry to university due to lack of space and professors, igniting the first student general strike in October 1968 (Warren, 2008). Fifteen out of twenty-three cégeps went on strike for nearly a month, influencing the rapid creation of the University of Québec (UQ), a network of ten provincially-run public universities (ibid). The largest university in the University of Québec system is Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM). UQAM was created in 1969 through the merger of Collège Sainte-Marie, École des Beaux-Arts de Montréal and three other schools (UQAM, 2013).

These major reforms in education reflect the desire to democratize knowledge and culture, and the public commitment to accessible education (ibid). The reforms implicitly acknowledge education as a major factor in combating social and economic inequities. Since 1968, there has been numerous student strikes in Québec for various reasons which all relate to the democratization of education and the desire to have a more just society. The student strike in 2012 was the longest and most widespread in the province's history (J-P. Warren, personal interview, March 6, 2013).

2.2 Free Education Today: Against Neoliberalism

In 2005, approximately two hundred thousand students went on strike to defend benefits of social welfare gained from the Quiet Revolution (Venne, 2005). The strike of 2012 was grounded on the same basis against tuition hikes and a tendency towards neoliberal[15] politics which embraces the privatization of certain aspects of education. Baillargeon (2011) and Martin & Ouellet (2011) both make an argument for free education as the only logical solution to end the steady rise towards neoliberalism in the educational system. By providing recent examples of the partnering of education and business in various universities in the province, all three authors contend that privatization of the university encourages professors to devote the bulk of their time to research. As a result, the authors argue, it becomes difficult for professors to prioritize teaching. Privatization of education for students ultimately means that tuition fees will rise, causing larger debt burdens on students after graduation (Martin & Tremblay-Pepin, 2012). With Québec being one of the poorest provinces in the country, larger debt burdens on individuals will have a dramatic social impact. I asked Dr. Warren, who is an expert on Québec-based social movements, to elaborate on what he considers to be the parallels or differences between student movements from the 1960s and today:

> Social movements in the 1960s were about creating a new society, new system, and a counterculture where people would be free to self express. Today it is about preserving the things that people consider gains made by previous social struggles and to achieve a certain degree of justice for everyone in society. Fundamentally

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[15] "Neoliberalism is the defining political economic paradigm of our time — it refers to the policies and processes whereby a relative handful of private interests are permitted to control as much as possible of social life in order to maximize their personal profit. Associated initially with Reagan and Thatcher, neoliberalism has for the past two decades been the dominant global political economic trend adopted by political parties of the center, much of the traditional left, and the right. These parties and the policies they enact represent the immediate interests of extremely wealthy investors and less than one thousand large corporations" (Chomsky, 1999, p.7).

student movements since the 1960s are similar in that they are based on building a society that is equal and for social equality within the walls of academia. What is perhaps more acute now, which is something historians can observe, is the question of universities being instrumental in implementing a neoliberal agenda. The line between the critique of the commercialization of universities with that of the transformation of an entire society along the lines of a capitalist system. (J-P. Warren, personal interview, March 6, 2013)

The student strike brought into public discussion the future of education in Québec, with arguments both for and against the five year plan proposed by the Liberal government to increase tuition. Arguments in support of the hike generally relate to the belief that universities in the province are underfunded, higher tuition will increase spending on new equipment and resources, to remain competitive in the global market, and that the financial cost of a degree reflects the value of education. Furthermore, the idea of free education is believed to be unrealistic or outmoded for today's globalized economy (Martin & Tremblay-Pepin, 2011).

To counter-argue supporters of the tuition hike, the *Institut de recherche et d'informations socio-économiques* (IRIS)[16] published a research document in May 2011, available in French and English, titled *Faut-il vraiment augmenter les frais de scolarité? [Do we really need to raise tuition fees?]*. Through the analysis of data gathered, Eric Martin, a cégep professor in philosophy and Simon Tremblay-Pepin, a journalist and public relations consultant,

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[16] "IRIS is an independent, progressive and non-profit research institute founded in 2000. The institute produces research on important issues of the moment (public, private partnership, fiscality, education, health, environment, etc.)" and states "it offers a counter discourse to that of the economic elites." All studies and reports are available as PDF documents, free of charge on their website: http://www.iris-recherche.qc.ca (IRIS, 2011).

make a case against the raise in tuition fees by debunking arguments for the hikes. Their findings show that the province of Québec spends more on students than in any other province, both in general and in research terms. The authors' examination of the government's budget reveals that universities are not underfunded, as they focus on the present allocation of the funding institutions already have. The authors state that the amount of research grants have doubled from 1995-1996 to 2005-2006 and that the money is unevenly distributed. In addition, this money is increasingly used for more marketable rather than applied research, where businesses turn to universities to develop and implement their research and activities. Martin & Tremblay-Pepin (2011) assert these types of partnerships between education and business give students a highly specialized education that meets the company's immediate needs, but provides no deeper substance or critical thinking.

These partnerships result in higher costs for education. "The relative cost of an education says little about the value of its content. As people attempt to measure the exchange value of a degree by placing an artificial price on it, they are scarcely interested in content" (Martin & Tremblay-Pepin, 2011, p.7). The authors state another trend within university culture is that most recent hiring has been for management personnel and executives and not professors, "because the commodification of universities requires increasing managerial control and costly monitoring mechanisms" (ibid, p.9). The authors' findings are that these shifts have created an environment where students today have to work twice as many hours at minimum wage to pay for their tuition then students earning minimum wage in 1978. It is fair to assume equal contribution from every generation, but the commodification of education means larger burdens to carry for the present and future generations of youths.

Furthermore, it is often argued that Québec has one of the lowest enrolment rates in higher education and that keeping tuition low does not incite larger participation (Whyte, 2012). What is often not taken into account is that Québec has a different post-secondary education system which includes tuition free cégeps. Taking this in as a factor, Québec's participation rate in post-secondary education is parallel to Canada's average rate (Gluszynski & Shaienks, 2007). This does not suggest equivalence between different levels of study in higher education, but rather that a threat to remove free cégeps or raise tuition in universities would impact the participation rate in the province. Martin and Tremblay-Pepin's (2011) concluding analysis is that higher tuition will result in a lower participation rate. The authors provide a statistic comparison with other recent periods in Québec's history which illustrates that times where tuition increased, participation rates decreased. Author and researcher on Québec education Jocelyn Berthelot (2008) argues:

> ... the neo-liberal educational paradigm involves a genuine break with the past. Nowadays, even if education is still a field where states can affirm their sovereignty, educational policy is more and more being developed along international lines and being implemented in a well-orchestrated manner. (p.60)

The discussion of Québec's historical development and commitment to accessible education perhaps can shed light on specific aspects that define the student movement of 2012. Recent claims on the trend towards the corporatisation of educational institutions will undo the social promises made by generations before is interrelated to this discussion. I argue it is also critical to consider the Québec Spring in relation to other contemporary movements and uprises, which will be addressed in the next section.

2.3 We Have Questions and We Will Begin To Ask Them

Following the elections in September 2012, in the popular round table television series Bazzo.tv, student union representative Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois was asked to share his thoughts on belonging to a generation that is accused of being individualistic and only out for themselves; while simultaneously being part of a generation that from a young age, was told to save their money for education, retirement, etc., because there will be no public funds to aid them in the future. Nadeau-Dubois responded [translated]:

> As I said in the postface for [the book] *Souffle de la jeunesse* [*The breath of youth*]: the discourse that states that youth is individualistic and apolitical is not a diagnosis, it is a program. I think this is the role they wanted our generation to play and last spring we started to refuse to play this role. We said 'no! [We have]questions, [and] we will begin to ask them.' [17]

Specifically addressing the student movement in Québec, Nadeau-Dubois' argument captures a position held by youths in different parts of the globe made evident through recent mass social movements. The London [United Kingdom] student protests in 2010, which began in reaction to cuts in education and an increase on the tuition cap, then continued to grow as a larger social justice movement in 2011. As well as the Chilean student movement in 2011, locally referred to as the Chilean Winter, were also provoked by similar ramifications of neoliberal agendas. The Occupy Wall Street movement (OWS), which started in New York City, became an umbrella movement throughout the United States and globally for a fight against

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[17] « Ce que je dis, dans la postface du [le livre] *Souffle de la jeunesse*, c'est justement ça : ce discours qui dit que la jeunesse est individualiste et apolitisé(e), ce n'est pas un diagnostique, c'était un programme. Je pense que c'est le rôle qu'on voulait nous faire jouer comme génération, et ce printemps on a commencé de refuser de jouer ce rôle-là. On a dit 'non,! Les questions, on va commencer à les poser' » (Productions Bazzo Bazzo, 2012).

social and economic injustices, with affordable education being one of its struggles. Cultural critic and philosopher Slavoj Žižek (2013) argues that "People rebel not when things are really bad, but when their expectations are disappointed" (para 6). He goes on to propose that "people rebelled in Egypt in 2011 because there was some economic progress under Mubarak[18], giving rise to a class of educated young people who participated in the universal digital culture" (ibid).

The Arab Spring,[19] has often been claimed as the precursor to recent social movements in terms of its abilities to organize street manifestations and disseminate information and images using social media, igniting solidarity on a global scale. Laclau & Mouffe (2001, as cited in Mouffe, 2007) proposed that "a radical democratic politics calls for the articulation of different levels of struggles so as to create a chain of equivalence among them" (Critical Artistic Practices and Hegemony section, para 4). Besides sharing similarities in their use of social media in recent social movements, which are daily communication tools for those who have access to them, these movements are linked in meaningful ways made evident in a number of gestures. The Québec student movement of 2012 was both influenced, was influenced by and paralleled other social movements. Just to name a few examples, solidarity in the form of an active dialogue between demonstrating Chilean and Québécois students, in hopes of inspiring a global student movement (Radio Canada, 2012), or again, the graduating class of 2013 at Cooper Union in New York City adorned their gowns with red pinned squares, articulated their similar fight for free

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[18] Muhammad Hosni El Sayed Mubarak was the president of Egypt from 1981-2011.

[19] The Arab Spring refers to "the sweeping changes in the Arab world that began in December 2010 and perhaps the most important transitions of the early twenty-first century." Broadly, the Arab Spring is often ascribe "to high levels of unemployment, especially among youth, and the suppression of political options, but that seems to be too narrow an explanation because in countries such as Egypt the available evidence showed gradual improvement in these indicators." With a "growing discontent: the popular perception of entrenched and rising corruption, severely restricted options for participation and representation in policymaking, and failing public services ... the Arab Spring was sparked by homegrown movements over dignity, fairness, and exclusion" (Amin et al., 2012, pp.1-2).

education (New York Times, 2013). Another example is the *V for Vendetta* mask[20] worn by protesters virtually appears in every recent social manifestation, including the Québec Spring.

Protest slogans in the recent years have played on variations of an "awakening" of social, political and economic injustices and asserting a right to occupy space in order to uprise. Within this chain of equivalence among these social movements, and specifically student movements, the traditions of protest art, influences of contemporary art practices and educational forms help demonstrators envision a world that is liberated from neoliberal policies and ramifications. I propose what is crucial is the notion of possibility, which constitutes an important part of the dynamics of social movements, manifesting within practices that intersect art, politics and pedagogy. The next chapter will elaborate on these types of art practices and their relationship to experimental education.

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[20] "The protests fueled by the grotesque greed of Wall Street bankers inspired members of the Occupy Wall Street movement to wear masks associated with the anonymous anarchist hero V in Alan Moore and David Llloyd's graphic novel *V for Vendetta* (1982-89). These identical masks concealed the faces of the protestors and hindered criminal prosecutes, but they also linked the protesters to a global community who were outraged by the greed and corruption of the financial elite … the mask symbolize dissent, discord, and opposition to the dominant forces of power in general, although their meaning can be associated with historically specific situations and events … (Edwards & Graulund, 2013, pp.140-141).

CHAPTER 3: ART, EDUCATION AND POSSIBILITY

3.1 Contemporary Art Practices: Situation and Education

The history of Western studio art education is complex, and can be partly understood in parallel to art history. In the twentieth century, artists rebelled against the academy, such as the École des Beaux-Arts in France, considering these institutions bourgeois and formulaic. As art historian Thierry de Duve elaborates in his text *When form has become Attitude - and beyond* (1993), art schooling was affected by the avant-garde:

> As the examples and standards of the past could no longer be trusted, as imitation
>
> and observation could no longer provide the basics for the apprenticeship of art,
>
> the teaching of art had to look elsewhere for roots in both nature and culture.
>
> (p.20)

In turn, artists founded their own experimental schools, such as the Bauhaus in Germany and later Black Mountain College in the United States. These schools encouraged artistic experimentation and interdisciplinarity and went on to influence numerous colleges across the globe.

With conceptual art in the late 1960s and 1970s gaining influence, art practices continued to expand to include different media and forms, and increasingly included voices that were formerly excluded. Within conceptual art, more overtly political work by artists and collectives criticized institutional art structures, such as universities, galleries and museums, often referred to as institutional critique. Today, social art practice, which is rooted in the tradition of conceptual art, focuses on social engagement as the main form of a work or project. Various

ideas are explored within social art practice including pedagogic structures such as collaboration and knowledge sharing. In the last decade, a number of small, nomadic "schools" have been created across the globe, that have taken place in ephemeral spaces and in a variety of forms such as the framework of exhibitions, residencies or research initiatives. Author and critic Steven Henry Madoff (2009) proposes that these "academies" are "reactions to the solid weight of fixed institutions with their rules, their acquiescence to the Bologna Process in the European Union or the hegemonic regulations of MFA [Master of Fine Arts] programs in the United States" (p. xi).

Artist and writer Anton Vidokle (2006) has done sizable research on the range of models of art schools, providing what he refers to as "An Incomplete Chronology of Experimental Art Schools" in Manifesta 6 School[21] catalogue *Notes for an Art School*. In his article *Exhibition as School in a Divided City*, Vidokle (ibid) asks the question "But what specifically is an art school, and what is an art school at this point in time?" He continues to elaborate on his question:

> My research for the Manifesta 6 School yielded a range of models, from art academies and experimental schools to collaborative projects, accompanied by the insistent voices of critics lamenting the 'crisis of the art school.' Yet there has been an amazing range of schools in the past one hundred years: from the ultra academic École nationale supérieure des beaux-arts to the high-priced Columbia MFA, from the inclusiveness of the various Bauhaus schools and the dynamism of the Staedelschule to the elite coteries of the Whitney Independent Study Program (ISP). Given this proliferation of different models of art education, the

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[21] Manifesta is The European Biennial of Contemporary Art. The curators for Manifesta 6 wanted to create an art school in Nicosia, Cyprus involving participants from multiple disciplines for a period of three months, but was cancelled. The catalogue remains as evidence of the framework of the biennial (Herbert, 2006).

notion of crisis seems, at the very least, a misplaced one. Art education is not in

stasis. (p.2)

Perhaps the issue is not that there is a 'crisis of the art school,' but rather what art education

needs to do in order to continue to evolve. Relating back to art practices that emerge within the

dynamics of social movements, how can art education shift to encourage students to develop

projects that interconnect materials, processes, critical thinking and social relationships?

In the article *On the Ground: Practical Observations for Regenerating Art Education*

(2009), artist and educator Ernesto Pujol offers a portrait of the contemporary middle class art

student:

At the dawn of the twenty-first century, American [Canadian, European, etc.]

middle-class students now enter art school with eight evolving tools including (1)

cable, satellite, and web accessible televisions, (2) laptop computers, (3) cell

phones and particularly smart phones, (4) DVDs and game players, portable and

stationary, (5) MP3 devices and ipods (6) credit cards and ATM cards, (7) digital

cameras, integrated and stand alone and (8) scanners. All generate instant

information, communication and currency to goods, and several include image

capture. A pivotal historical perceptual change is taking place among us, making

the abyss between past and present modes of perception greater than even before

in terms of attention, translation, forms, aesthetics, and production. The future of

art education will be based on the notion of universal immediate access. (p.3)

Pujol is not suggesting that art schools should become media labs, but instead proposes a conceptually based multidisciplinary studio as hybrid learning environments that entails both "messy studios" and technologically wired spaces. For Pujol "a multidisciplinary degree should be regarded as the beginning of a lifelong intellectual journey, not the end of it. This is about generating public intellectuals, visual scholars, and artist citizens: active cultural workers who participate in global society" (ibid, p.6). Pujol argues that in addition, the traditional separation of art history, art theory and studio course needs to be reconsidered. During the Québec Spring, a number of art initiatives exercised this merging of history, theory and practice, taking form both as social art practice (workshops, collaborations, performances, "schools", etc.) and through material practices (silk screening, knitting, sculpture). Artist and writer Gregory Sholette (2012) proposes a re-defining of social art practice to include materiality, and by extension a rethinking art education. This reflection is inspired by how art played out in the Occupy Movement specifically, and social movements more broadly, as there is a return to craft during our digital age:

> In an unexpected move, OWS [Occupy Wall Street] has not embraced invisibility or rejected an audience. Rather the movement instead has claimed its own cultural terrain, and has done so in full public view ... Zuccotti Park and other OWS encampments revealed a mix of high-tech digital media and handmade signs, a mix of the archaic and the new as if beneath the internet there is cardboard. (para 5)

Reflecting on art that is produced during social movements offers indicators of how contemporary art education needs to shift to reflect students' contemporary situation. Pujol (2009) affirms that "It is absolutely crucial that art schools consider their institutional role in the

support of democracy. The history of creative expression is linked to the history of freedom" (p.9). In other words, a struggle for freedom has historically inspired artists to capture a re-imagining of what is possible. The next section will redirect this discussion to the Québec Spring.

3.2 *Le printemps*: Inspire and Re-Imagine

A seven month strike is a significant amount of time, and no doubt has impacted students who chose to return to their studies after the strike was voted as over, but the question we need to begin with is how? In conversation with Dr. Moniques Richard, she observed significant changes in her art students both during and after the strike. For Richard, students have learned some concepts that she identifies in Jacques Rancière's *Le maître ignorant* [*The Ignorant Schoolmaster*] (1987), among other texts, namely the concept of "equal intelligence." Rancière's pedagogical work, particularly in *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, "presents a disruption of traditional didactic relations between the teacher and learner or between learners themselves that assumes an inequality of intelligence" (Atkinson, 2011, p.43). Richard elaborates [translated]:

This is to say that we have as much potential to achieve, whether you are the teacher or student. Students in the street had so much potential and were as intelligent as professors in the university. This is an important principle they have implemented, because they did not feel the need to verify with their teachers "Is this correct? Can I do that?" They really took action. I think they learned a lot about emancipation and will. It led students to act, to self emancipate, speak as citizens and understand how art can also serve as a vehicle between people ... I think learning took place on the streets; learning how to communicate with each other. What I found is that there was a lot of interdisciplinarity, and students

learned to work together through various means.[22] (M. Richard, personal

interview, February 27, 2013)

Authors and professors in education, Aziz Choudry and Dip Kapoor (2010) both argue that "the voices, ideas, perspectives and theories produced by those engaged in social struggles are often ignored, rendered invisible, or overwritten with accounts by professionalized or academic experts" (p. 2). The collection of writings in *Learning from the Ground Up: Global Perspectives on Social Movements and Knowledge Production* (2010), offers understandings of the knowledge, learning and educational dimensions in recent or contemporary social struggles. How was learning made manifest for art students during and after the Québec student strikes of 2012, and what can art educators draw from this experience? Richard, feels that students, perhaps not all, but those who participated in the manifestations, now have more autonomy. She continued to explain her thoughts [translated]:

Students know a little better how to organize and how to find ways to achieve

what they have in mind for their projects. I saw the wealth of projects produced

during the strike and students who returned in the fall, who had a short few weeks

to complete their projects, despite a lot of stress, and double time, still managed to

concentrate and make meaningful projects. I feel that despite their fatigue, what

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[22] « ... J'ai l'impression que les étudiants ont appris certains concepts que j'aie identifié dans le texte de Rancière [*Le maître ignorant*] , entre autres, [celui de] « l'égalité des intelligences », c'est-à-dire que l'on a autant le potentiel de se réaliser, que l'on soit maître ou élève. Alors, les étudiants dans la rue avaient autant de potentiel ou étaient aussi intelligents que les professeurs dans l'Université. Alors, c'est un principe important qu'ils ont mis en œuvre, parce qu'ils n'ont pas senti le besoin d'aller vérifier : « Est-ce que c'est correct ? Est-ce que je peux faire ça ? »Ils sont vraiment passés à l'action. Je pense qu'ils ont appris beaucoup de choses, aussi, sur l'émancipation et sur la volonté, c'est-à-dire ce qui les a poussé à agir et à s'émanciper et à prendre la parole comme citoyens, et comment l'art peut servir aussi de véhicule entre les personnes. ... Je pense que ce sont des apprentissages qu'ils ont faits vraiment dans la rue, et je pense aussi qu'ils ont appris entre eux à se communiquer. Ce que j'ai constaté, c'est qu'il y avait beaucoup d'interdisciplinarité, des gens qui provenaient de différentes disciplines, et je pense qu'ils ont appris à collaborer ensemble à travers différents moyens. »

they acquired during the strike was there.[23] (M. Richard, personal interview, February 27, 2013)

As we can see throughout this discussion, the artistic production of the student movement took on a variety of exciting forms, from collaboration, participation, pedagogic frameworks, as well as the revisiting political theory and traditional forms of protest art, for example. During the process of active participation in social movements, including creative activities, young people extended their learning environment into the public sphere. I propose that for art educators, this is a fruitful site to be inspired by. Richard shares a similar reflection [translated]:

Some of us have asked the question: "How can we adjust our teaching?" I think it is healthy to ask such questions. Our vision has changed and students have worked in all different kinds of groups, and with people from different disciplines. This is something that we do not often have the opportunity to do, but now the context lent itself to it. So I think the role of the artist is challenged by these events, even if it is already present in contemporary art practice. We know that when teaching, there is always a lag with the current cultural context, and we are always trying to catch up with what is happening in the environment, and that's okay too, but I think it makes us see and explore other avenues, including networking as a new teaching models ... but it is still linked to what happens in

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[23] « J'ai l'impression que les étudiants, peut-être pas tous, mais ceux qui ont participé aux manifestations, ont maintenant plus d'autonomie. Ils savent un peu mieux comment s'organiser, comment trouver les moyens pour réaliser ce qu'ils ont en tête, pour réaliser leurs projets. J'ai vu la richesse des projets pendant la grève et les gens qui sont revenus à l'automne pour compléter leurs projets, en très peu de semaines, malgré beaucoup de stress, des horaires doubles, ont quand même réussi à se concentrer et à faire des projets signifiants, donc j'ai l'impression que malgré la fatigue il y a eu des acquis qui étaient là. »

institutions. So that is something interesting: the opening is made in the margin between the street and the institution.[24] (ibid)

This margin between two spaces, between and within activism and academia is what Routledge (1996) article's *Third space as critical engagement* describes as "a space that enables the disruption of both sites in both directions, whereby each may learn to 'occupy the subject position of the other' (Spivak, 1990, p.121) and in doing so create something else, something other than 'academia' or 'activism' " (p. 402). Routledge (ibid) suggests here a new form of learning exists in a third space (Bhabha, 1994) at the intersection of activism and education, where critical engagement is a continual process of possibility:

The notion of the third space reworks earlier positions of engagement articulated by people such as Fanon (1963) and Freire (1970), in that it is explicitly concerned with engagement as a process of continual becoming, flux and transformation, that entangles academic and political space ... The third space is thus a place of invention and transformational encounters, a dynamic in between-space that is imbued with the traces, relays, ambivalences, ambiguities and contradictions, with the feelings and practices of both sites, to fashion something different, unexpected. (p.406)

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[24] « Certains d'entre nous se sont posés la question : "Comment peut-on faire pour ajuster notre enseignement? », et je pense que c'est sain de poser ce genre de questions. Notre vision s'est transformée et les étudiants ont collaboré dans toutes sortes de collectifs avec des gens de différentes disciplines. Il y a eu beaucoup, beaucoup de collaboration entre les disciplines. C'est quelque chose que l'on n'a pas souvent l'occasion de faire, mais là, le contexte se prêtait à cela. Donc, je pense que le rôle de l'artiste est remis en question par ces manifestations là, même si c'est déjà présent dans l'art actuel, dans les pratiques. On sait que, lorsque l'on enseigne, il y a toujours un certain décalage avec le contexte culturel actuel, il faut toujours essayer de rattraper ce qui se passe dans le milieu, et c'est normal aussi, mais je pense que cela nous fait voir et explorer d'autres avenues, entre autres le réseautage comme nouveau modèle d'enseignement ... Mais c'est quand même en lien avec ce qui se passe dans les institutions. Donc, ça, c'est quelque chose d'intéressant : l'ouverture se fait dans la marge, entre la rue et l'institution. »

A third space offers a site for continual potentials. As educators, perhaps it is our role to provide an environment based on possibility, where art and education do not answer questions, they ask them, "not focused on what we are and should be (transcendence) but upon the potentiality and unknown of becoming" (Atkinson, 2009, p.3). Similar to Pujol's conceptualisation of contemporary art education, possibility arises through multidisciplinary environments, where learning is a continuous intellectual and creative process.

3.3 Pedagogy of Possibility

With the question "What is a school?," one can conjure many definitions, from school as a place, an institution, a situation, a circumstance, an attitude, an idea, even an open discourse and a discovery (RAQS Media Collective, 2009). In RAQS Media Collective's article *How to Be an Artist by Night* (ibid), they begin their reflection with the English root of the word *school* which is the "classical Greek term *scholē* (σχολή), denotes first, 'a pursuit or time of leisure'... and only consequently shades off to mean "a forum for discussion" and "a place for learning" (p.75). For RAQS Media Collective:

> It is necessary to dwell on this conflation of duration (time), gathering (a forum) and site (a place for learning). Of these, time is the most important, because gathering that does not endure or a place that disallows the transformative, accumulative inscription of exchange and discourse cannot by in itself or even in combination, generate a context for learning. So it is time and particular kind of quality of time - time out, leisurely time, the kind of time that can be a vessel and receptacle for reflection — that is central to learning. (ibid)

Time is essential in artistic development, or what Dewey (1916) refers to as a "willingness to let experiences accumulate and sink in and ripen" (p.218). Initiatives founded during the Québec Spring, such as École de la Montagne Rouge had a chance to accumulate, "sink in and ripen" throughout the Québec Spring, leaving a copious art production as evidence of this process. Art students involved in such projects may have perhaps began with little experience in such initiatives, and have no doubt grown from them. When one considers École de la Montagne Rouge's endeavour, they began with experimenting with different mediums and citing from influential texts and artists, to then develop their own voice. Art practices within social movements, is de facto a process, paralleling the movement itself as it strives to define what is possible. For Warren, one cannot measure the success of a social movement by the immediate consequences, it is measured by the degree to which it lasts in the collective consciousness. We should ask if it can offer a marking line before and after, as a way to organize the chronology of recent history, and can it be used as an inspiration for what can be achieved. Warren elaborates on this idea of marking a possible:

> Just weeks after May 68, somebody told [student leader] Daniel Cohn-Bendit [paraphrased] "Your revolution did nothing," and he said [paraphrased] "We don't want to achieve something, so much as to *marquer un possible*." To define what is possible. Once you know what is possible, you can measure yourself to it without ever feeling that one day you will achieve that kind of utopia. But it is there to judge what you are and what you do. In Québec, the Quiet Revolution is something like this. It is a myth. It is not something people have achieved. It is partly this, but it is also something that is used to measure today's public policies. Do they live up to the kind of society we wanted to build in the 1960s?

Are we pursuing the dreams of equality, liberty and fraternity which are the utopia of modernity in Québec? (J-P. Warren, personal interview, March 6, 2013)

Within critical pedagogy, the idea of a "language of possibility" and "pedagogy of hope," many would agree, traces back its roots to Paulo Freire (Cho, 2013). Freire's philosophy of education was inseparable from his politicization on issues of poverty and power structures. What can be inspired is possibility as a "not yet," based on anticipation that considers both the past and present (Giroux, 2007). As artists and art educators, can a pedagogy of possibility inspire a praxis (theory and practice) of potentials? In the next chapter, I will provide specific examples of initiatives by art students and artists that during the Québec Spring, I argue exercised a praxis of potentials. To begin this conversation, occupation of space is considered as the basis for this process.

CHAPTER 4: *À NOUS LA RUE!* [THE STREET IS OURS!]

4.1 *Carré Rouge* and the Occupation of Space

Throughout 2012 in Montréal, the red square occupied the cityscape. At the time of the writing of this thesis, these traces of their once strong presence still remain highly visible. Red squares were present on people's clothing in the form of a traditional felt square attached with a safety pin, as well as innovative iterations such as earrings and other types of jewellery. Sidewalks were adorned with stencil graffiti of the symbol accompanied by slogans, and people supporting the strike displayed red fabric squares on their front balconies.

Figure 2: A *carré rouge* [red square] flag on a front balcony in Montréal, spring 2012.
Photo credit: Tina Carlisi

During manifestations, streets, green spaces and public squares were fully activated by citizen

engagement. With each demonstration, protesters would chant the phrase « *À qui la rue? À nous la rue!* » ["For whom the street? The street is ours!"]. Sociologist and expert in the field of urban and economic sociology, Fran Tonkiss (2005) explains the spatial dynamics of protest and demonstration:

> The geography of protest and demonstration is the spatial expression of an extended sphere of politics. Spaces of protest, even if temporary and unstable, give shape to a conception of power as something that is contested at diverse sites between different social actors. The politics of resistance — using tactics of demonstration, picket, direct action and occupation — frequently makes its point in space. (p.60)

Figure 3: Stencil graffiti in Montréal that reads *La resistance est un devoir* [*Resistance is a duty*]
Photo credit: Tina Carlisi

As briefly discussed in chapter two, there is no doubt that social media played a role in the Québec Spring, as with many contemporary social movements, from organizing, to communicating and debating, but the movement's impact was most effective in physical space. For Dr. Warren, it is critical to understand that social media may be how people communicate with one another, but that it is not the reason why people protest on the street. He argues that the most successful petitions to ever take place in the province were prior to the Internet. Also, many cultures have access to new technologies, but they are not necessarily protesting on the streets, therefore "we should not underscore these technologies to achieve certain revolutions" (J-P. Warren, personal interview, March 6, 2013). Rather, Warren proposes that there are more important factors that motivated the student movement in Québec. This motivation begins with "a belief that what you are fighting for is good for you but also something that can be inscribed or situated in a more global horizon; that what you are asking for is relevant to you and to other people in the world" (ibid). The second motivation is to get the attention of a government that does not listen. The third factor is the falling support for the provincial government. The final factor for motivating the student movement, as Warren observes:

> ... is an important and serious conversation that a student movement's leadership had with its base. It started in 2005 when one of the first strikes against the Charest government took place. Student leaders, student activists, although they changed because they move on, kept having this conversation on having better access to institutions of higher learning and also getting an education that is not just about acquiring the right skills for a specific job, but also becoming better citizens. (ibid)

This dialogue may have appeared to explode in 2012, was actually the result of a longer socio-political process. Within this, art and design became powerful articulations for conveying the movement's motivations and ideas. Creativity often took on spontaneous, social and educational forms, with the intent to inform, educate and inspire.

4.2 On Strike: Fighting Back with Art and Education

Although artistic production has been part of social movements in Québec in the past, art and design used for expressing, marking and encouraging political engagement amongst youth has been the most predominant in the student movement of 2012. This phenomenon can be better understood in relation to global tendencies towards social art practices in contemporary art that are in reaction against current policies. Author Nato Thompson (2012) suggests that in recent years there has been a growing movement of artists who choose to engage with timely issues. Thompson argued that, "unlike its avant-garde predecessors, socially engaged art is not an art movement, but rather they are cultural practices that indicate a new global social order" (p.19).

Various modes of social art practices (participation, collaboration, educational forums, etc.) were present during the Québec student movement. Projects and events such as yarn bombing, public performance, workshops, and even free red square tattooing took place during the protests. According to Bouriaud (1998), "whereas historically avant-garde art was intended to prepare and announce a future world, today it is modelling possible universes" (p.13). These models of possibility manifest in collaborative, participatory, or dialogical structures, where social engagement is the medium (Bishop, 2005; Bourriaud, 1998; Castro, 2012; Kester, 2004; O'Neill & Wilson 2010). As part of social art practice, there is a recent interest in art's relation to

education (Allen, 2011). These interests take on different forms from critical reflections on what an artist's education should be today (Madoff, 2009) to experimental pedagogical models, which challenge the position of art and cultural production at a time when art has been institutionalized (Manifesta 6, 2006).

Although there were a number of art initiatives that participated in the visualising of the Québec Spring in 2012, this thesis will focus on a few examples that illustrate how the intersections between art, politics and pedagogy were made manifest during this time. The following section will then specifically focus on the work of one initiative, École de la Montagne Rouge, who arguably had the greatest impact on capturing the spirit of the movement. With a prolific production spanning a period of seven months, their initiative reflects contemporary art practices that intersect activism, art and education while also inscribing their work within a tradition of twentieth century avant-garde practices.[25]

In an interview with Dr. Moniques Richard, who has written and presented on the subject on art and education during the Québec Spring, she shared her personal experience within the movement [translated]:

> During manifestations, I saw around me a shared creativity and I felt engaged by it. I found it to have means that were very open and democratic, to join the public without necessarily being directly confronted by it, but rather through creativity, through poetry. Poetry has the ability to ease strong claimants. I very much appreciated this. This [movement] has touched people of all age groups and social

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[25] By avant-garde, I am referring to movements in the twentieth century starting in the teens, where artists broke away from classical styles. Instead these practices embraced experimentation and politics.

classes, and I think it was a movement that really mobilized many people in

Québec society, and brought a revelation for citizen action.[26] (M. Richard,

personal interview, February 27, 2013)

Strikes, both labour and student based, offer a unique environment to devote time to citizen

activities. Citizen action took form in art initiatives during the student strike, foregrounding

dialogue and educational frameworks such as knowledge and skill sharing. For example, during

the student strike, Maille à part, a yarn bombing[27] collective based in Montréal, organized

participatory activities that were open to everyone. Their *Atelier Nomade: Tricote ton carré*

rouge [*Nomad Workshop: Knit your Red Square*], took place weekly during the strike at different

locations. The workshop entailed collectively knitting a quilt of red squares as an informal means

to exchange thoughts on the commercialization of education, rising tuition and other student

struggles to accessible and quality education (Maille à part, 2012). A description of this project is

provided on their website [translated]:

> Our initiative is to create temporary spaces that favours strengthening social ties
>
> between various Montréal communities and college campuses in the city and to
>
> engage citizens in a discussion on the Québec education system and its possible
>
> future prospects. We believe that the art community is a great way to cross the

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[26] « J'ai vu autour de moi, en allant manifester, toute la part de créativité et je me suis sentie engagée par cela. Parce que j'ai trouvé que c'était des moyens très ouverts et démocratiques, d'aller rejoindre le public sans nécessairement confronter directement, mais par la créativité, par la poésie. La poésie venait atténuer un peu le message plus revendicateur. Alors, j'ai apprécié cela beaucoup. Cela a touché du monde de tous groupes d'âges, de classes sociales, et je pense que c'était un mouvement qui a mobilisé vraiment beaucoup de gens dans la société québécoise et je pense que cela a amené aussi une révélation de l'action citoyenne. »

[27] Yarn bombing takes on many forms, merging installation art, needlework and street art. Originating in the United States, knit and crochet graffiti has been seen in many countries. It generally involves covering public sites, such as park benches, lamp posts, or bicycle racks, and leaving it in the landscape. Artists and artist collectives have different motivations for partaking in yarn bombing from humorous to political, building upon traditions of renegade street art (Moore & Prain, 2009).

barriers between people and think together a fairer and plural society. Weaving the social, literally and figuratively.[28] (Maille à part, 2012)

Figure 4: *Atelier Nomade: Tricote ton carré rouge* [*Nomad Workshop: Knit your Red Square*]
Image source: http://mailleapart.blogspot.ca. Reproduced with permission from Maille à Part.
Photo credit: Thien V

Ideas of education have been made manifest in other ways through the collective's work. In our interview, Richard pointed to an example of Maille à Part, whose actions displayed an awareness of political history, utilising it as a form of public pedagogy [translated]:

When they [Maille à Part] covered the monument of Marguerite Bourgeoys, I think this action was a way to send an educational message. When Marguerite Bourgeoys opened the first school in Ville Marie, now Montréal, she was the first teacher, who fought, in some ways, for egalitarian education. This is to say, she taught both the

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[28] « Notre initiative consiste à créer des espaces temporaires favorisant le renforcement de liens sociaux entre les différentes communautés montréalaises et campus étudiants de la ville, de manière à engager les citoyens dans une réflexion sur le système d'éducation québécois et des perspectives d'avenir possibles. Nous croyons que l'art communautaire est un excellent moyen de traverser les barrières entre les individus et penser ensemble une société plurielle plus juste. Tisser (tricoter) le social, au sens littéraire et figuré. »

Filles du Roi [King's Daughters],[29] children of the French settlers, and also to aboriginal youth. With having all these groups in her class, she spent a lot of time teaching traditional knowledge such as sewing, embroidery, etc. One can think of links with Maille à Part and to knitting. It is interesting to see how they revisit pedagogic models that have an egalitarian approach.[30] (M. Richard, personal interview, February 27, 2013)

Figure 5: *Marguerite Bourgeoys porte le carré rouge* [*Marguerite Bourgeoys wears the red square*]
Image source: http://mailleapart.blogspot.ca. Reproduced with permission from Maille à Part.
Photo credit: Maille à Part.

Maille à Part's practice does not only reference historical moments, but also can be understood as connecting with other political causes, particularly those which merge art and activism. In 2012, the collective demonstrated solidarity with the Russian feminist punk performance

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[29] Young girls who were sent by the king of France to start families in the colony of New France.

[30] « Quand ils [Maille à Part] ont recouvert le monument de Marguerite Bourgeoys, je pense qu'il y avait là une façon de passer un message pédagogique. Marguerite Bourgeoys, quand elle a ouvert la première école de Ville-Marie, à l'origine de Montréal, c'était la première enseignante (qui militait, d'une certaine façon,) pour un enseignement égalitaire. C'est-à-dire qu'elle enseignait à la fois aux Filles du Roi, aux enfants des colons français et, aussi, aux jeunes autochtones. Donc elle avait tous ces groupes dans sa classe et cela passait beaucoup à travers des savoirs traditionnels comme la couture, la broderie, etc. On pense aux liens avec Maille-à-part et le tricot. C'est intéressant de voir que l'on revisite ces modèles pédagogiques dans une approche égalitaire. »

collective Pussy Riot when members of the group were charge and sentenced by the Putin government.[31] Maille à Part knitted balaclavas [ski masks], similar to those made infamous by Pussy Riot, and protested in front of the Russian Consulate in Montréal (Maille à Part, 2012).

Contemporary art social practices that deploy performative actions, often borrow from forms of protest as acts of citizenship such as flash mobs. It is interesting to observe here the influence of such art practices on current social movements. The collective ArchiContre has referred to its artistic performances in the context of manifestations as a *flash mob en rouge* [red flash mob] (ArchiContre, 2012). While their performative action often entailed wearing large red squares with slogans such as "1625 fois trop lourd" ["1625 times too heavy"], referring to the $1625 hike, their reflection on art, specifically architecture, education and urban space, was also informed by both political history and contemporary practices. As Richard elaborates on ArchiContre's process for understanding political history and relating it to the present [translated]:

> The collective ArchiContre from Université de Montréal [in the Architecture
> Department], returned to the archives and found pictures of the first student
> demonstrations from the university in the Architecture Department. They did so to
> review their history. They [students] take courses in the History of Art in their
> discipline, but to do historical research because there are issues present in the

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[31] "Pussy Riot is a feminist punk performance collective based in Moscow, Russia. Founded in 2011, they perform public artistic responses to Russian politics. In February of 2012, three members of the group were arrested and charged with felony hooliganism after performing in the sanctuary of the Cathedral of Christ the Savior. Members Maria Alyokhina, Nadezhda Tolokonnikova, and Yekaterina Samutsevich were sentenced to two years in prison" (Pussy Riot, 2013).

street, I think is something we learn directly from a situation we live.[32] (M. Richard, personal interview, February 27, 2013)

During the strike of 2012, the street and its extensions, such as public squares, parks, public art, etc., became sites for asserting active citizenship. Within ephemeral creative actions that took place like interventions and performances, print media, such as silkscreening, also took on pedagogical and social roles. The Internet implicitly served as a means to share information, connect and organize the movement. In bilingual Montréal, a blog was started to offer translated information to its linguistic minority population. Started by a volunteer collective, *Translating the printemps érable* began the day after the Special Law: Bill 78 was passed. The project idea was in reaction to the difference in ideology between French and English mainstream media; generally French media condemned the repressive law and the English media justified the suspension of democratic rights. According to its founders, the blog attempted to balance the English media's poor coverage of the Québec student conflict by translating media that has been published in French into English (Boushel & Sheftel, 2013). For English students who supported the strike, this blog became an important resource.

Social media was constantly capturing the movement at its current moment, with creative initiatives taking on web-based forms. In contexts where the Internet is widely accessible, print that is used to deliver news is becoming increasingly obsolete. Yet, printed media, such as posters and pamphlets are popular within social movements and acts of public protests. Caplow

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[32] « On peut penser entre autres au groupe de l'Université de Montréal [en architecture], le groupe ArchiContre, qui sont retournés dans les archives et ont trouvé des images des premières manifestations étudiantes des étudiants de l'Université de Montréal en architecture. Donc, c'est de revoir l'histoire. On suit des cours de l'histoire de l'Art dans sa discipline, mais de faire de la recherche historique parce qu'il y a des enjeux présents dans la rue, je pense que cela, c'est quelque chose que l'on apprend directement de la situation dans laquelle on vît. »

(2009) stated "[p]rints are often a form of public art, as they are circulated widely outside the private sphere" (p. 12). During the Québec student movement, the role of print media contributed to the Québec student movement, as a social form, as a source of information and means to inspire. With poetry manifesting in the movement, as Dr. Richard's earlier quote concurs, one can be reminded of the infamous May 68 poster by Atelier Populaire of a woman throwing a brick with the phrase *"La beauté dans la rue"* [beauty in the street]. Beyond the visual, actual poetry was performed on the street during the protests, read out loud by students inspired. The creative initiative by UQAM students called Fermaille (2012) vocalised the student movement through poetry, texts, art and design. Fermaille explored the literary through its extensions, such as holding workshops and organising poetry readings in the park. The most known project as part of their initiative is a set of pamphlets they released weekly and distributed around campus, demonstrations and events. These pamphlets are also available as PDF documents and their texts as blog entries on their site. Each pamphlet contained a series of poems, texts, and illustrations created through their collaboration with École de la Montagne Rouge.[33]

Figure 6: Photographs of the limited edition book *Fermaille Anthologie,* Moult Éditions, 2013.
Photo credit: Tina Carlisi

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[33] Fermaille released an anthology of the pamphlets published by Moult Éditions in February 2013. A limited amount of copies were printed, with each one editioned and designed with a silkscreened cover by École de la Montagne Rouge (Refer to Beaulieu-April, Z. et al., 2013).

When one thinks of how art is made manifest in the context of social movements, powerful imagery accompanied by slogans immediately come to mind. Even though art is often an important dynamic in social movements, the discussion in the following section concerning initiatives that grew out of the Québec Spring can also be understood in relation to social art practice, more precisely, as pedagogy taking the shape as an artistic medium. The next section will discuss École de la Montagne Rouge. As their name suggests, the very idea of school, and specifically art school is philosophically integral to their political project.

4.3 Education On a Mountain: École de la Montagne Rouge

Any discussion on the art and design produced during the student movement should include École de la Montagne Rouge. Undoubtedly the most popular artistic form during the Québec Spring was poster art. In a recent publication on the posters produced for May 68, Phillippe Vermès, co-founder of the Atelier Populaire stated that posters made during that time were created to capture the popular imagination and awareness, speculating that it would be different [or perhaps not even possible] for the same scenario to exist today, due to accessibility to social media such as Twitter and Facebook, and with the rapid communication facilitated by mobile phones (Kugelberg & Vermès, 2011). The art production that came out of the Québec Spring movement, and more specifically by École de la Montagne Rouge challenges Vermès ideas on the possibility for traditional silkscreen poster art to contribute to and make its mark in the context of a contemporary social movement. École de la Montagne Rouge was directly influenced by and recognized the power of traditional printing techniques to mark the movement and through images, participated in mobilizing others.

Figure 7: Students participating in École de la Montagne Rouge's first studio day.
Image source: http://ecolemontagnerouge.com/. Reproduced with permission from EDLMR.
Photo credit: École de la Montagne Rouge

École de la Montagne Rouge was an initiative of young artists who were primarily students from the bachelor of graphic design program at UQAM (École de la Montagne Rouge, 2012). As their name suggests, they considered their initiative to be more of a "school" rather than an artist collective. Inspired by the former Black Mountain College, an experimental art college in North Carolina (1933-1957) based on John Dewey's philosophy of education (Katz, 2003) and Atelier Populaire, a renegade print shop which created the posters for May 68 in Paris (Kugelberg & Vermès, 2011), École de la Montagne Rouge was informed by a process of teaching and learning. Similarly to Atelier Populaire, École de la Montagne Rouge used a studio in the university as their production site. According to Routledge (1996), it is constructive to use the academy as a time and place for creative work that is not directed to intellectual recognition, promotion or remuneration. For Routledge, this not only raises questions of the academy, but

how this location and its resources could be purposed (ibid). École de la Montagne Rouge was founded at the beginning of the student strike and retreated when the strike was over, and within this seven-month period, they participated in a variety of activities and collaborations.

Figure 8: École de la Montagne Rouge's studio.
Image source: http://ecolemontagnerouge.tumblr.com. Reproduced with permission from EDLMR.
Photo credit: École de la Montagne Rouge

Kester (2011) argues that in contemporary practices "there is a political renewal today from worker-run factories to university-based protest movements where new forms of social organization, resistance and identity are being used" (p. 6). The author points out that the "May 68 student protesters refused to 'take' power, and instead engage in poetic gestures in the streets of Paris, seeking to spread the spirit of the revolution through sheer contagion rather than conversational forms of political organization and action" (ibid, p.45). As I discuss throughout this thesis, new forms of social organization, resistance and identity have not necessarily replaced traditional creative gestures on the street. In other words, to collectively manifest requires a physical occupation of space, therefore objects such as posters and banners are still utilised to create a consensual enthusiasm. In a recent article by Rick Poynor (2012), a writer for

various magazines and journals on the subject of graphic design, he discusses the role the poster has played in the Occupy movement:

> The claim that in an age of social media posters have become redundant simply doesn't square with the continuing enthusiasm with which they are made and put to use. The poster is clearly just one of many creative, intellectual and organizational tools in the struggle to shape public opinion and exert pressure on policy-makers grasping the levers of power that might some day lead to change. (para 7)

During the strike, members of École de la Montagne Rouge contributed to their initiative in a number of ways, from demonstrating to each other and others how to silkscreen to sharing influential literature which informed their cause. The movement provided the group with opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration with various artists and organizations. These collaborations resulted in the creation of posters, magazines, animations, happenings as well as artist residencies with other collectives and organizations. As I argued earlier, social movements create a third space or site for exchange and learning for those involved. This is certainly evident in École de la Montagne Rouge's projects, activities, and collaborations.

With the primary purpose of creating art for the student movement, the school as a form is explored in École de la Montagne Rouge. The first blog entry on the "school" website is a explanation on how to enroll and be part of École de la Montagne Rouge. This includes their staple uniform which was an orange worker overalls with "École de la Montagne Rouge" silk-screened on the backside. For art historian and critic Claire Bishop (2005) "politically engaged

collaborative practice constitutes today's avant-garde" (p.179). Through their actions, research and artistic production, École de la Montagne Rouge builds upon historical avant-garde practices, and presents them in innovative contemporary forms. The idea of adopting a worker apparel as part of their initiative references avant-garde ideals explored by Russian Constructivists, and particularly Alexander Rodchenko's *Production Clothing* (1922). Their uniforms became part of École de la Montagne Rouge's imaging, in other words, an embodied representation of the relationship between their art and their role as cultural workers within the student strike. École de la Montagne Rouge's work can be partly understood in relation to their twentieth century influences, from avant-garde practices to traditions of poster art, but what is also important to consider is how they are situated within the tradition of protest art in social movements in Québec's history.

Dr. Jean-Philippe Warren offers his reflections on the artistic expressions that came out of the student movement in 2012, specifically comparing the similarities and differences with previous social movements in the province. For Warren, the means by which a message is communicated is not so determinate in building a movement, but rather what is determinate is the message conveyed (J-P. Warren, personal interview, March 6, 2013):

> These messages are really important and I think the student movement rests on the shoulders of half a dozen people. It is serendipity to a certain extent, but it did a fabulous job in mobilizing through images which people could identify and share in a way that I have not seen in the history of Québec ... It not only provided people with images of symbolism which was needed for them to reassert the reasons for fighting the tuition hikes, but it also embodied or gave credit to the

claim that yes, there should be a unity between what people do when they are

artists, what people do when they are engaged politically, what people do when

they study at university, what people do when they are learning about the world.

École de la Montagne Rouge not only provided a strong visual identity to the Québec Spring, but it also embodied a unity between being an artist, a student and a politically engaged citizen. "Just by looking at the images gave the sense of the philosophy that is behind the movement. It was not only effective politically, it was also effective in illustrating what type of society people want to build" (ibid). The initiative created images that were full of hope and inspiration with slogans such as *Le combat est avenir* [The fight is the future][34], *Mouvement historique, victoire historique* [Historical movement, historical victory] and *Restons unis* [Stay united]. École de la Montagne Rouge's credo *Aujourd'hui pour moi, demain pour toi. Hodi Mihi, Cras Tibi*, is French and Latin for "For me today, for you tomorrow" captures the overarching purpose for their initiative and more extensively, the purpose of the student movement.

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[34] It is interesting to point out here the double meaning of a word or phrase which exists in one language and not another. "There are two words for 'future' in French which cannot be adequately rendered in English: *futur* and *avenir*. *Futur* stands for "future" as the continuation of the present, as the full actualization of tendencies already in existence; while *avenir* points more towards a radical break, a discontinuity with the present — *avenir* is what is to come (*a venir*), not just what will be. (Žižek, 2013, p. 134)

Figure 9: Silkscreen posters on cardboard by École de la Montagne Rouge used in a manifestation. Image source: http://ecolemontagnerouge.tumblr.com. Reproduced with permission from EDLMR. Photo credit: École de la Montagne Rouge

The language of hope and inspiration is not the only dimension found in this collective initiative. Many of École de la Montagne Rouge's images are humorous, and provocative. The tradition of humour in protest art in Québec is a quality Dr. Warren observes:

Humour was present in the 1960s and it was a way for people to communicate their message in a very efficient way without having to be aggressive towards anyone ... Humour is a way to engage with, maybe the population at large, but certainly with other students who were uncertain if they wanted to be part of the movement because they may think it was too politicized, too aggressive. [Humour communicates that] having them on board is about building something and not about destroying a social order. It is also about being part of a society that feels

good about itself. When you are laughing, you are in a good mood. You feel that you are in a certain zone of comfort. (ibid)

Humour, like poetry, has a greater potential to incite engagement rather then violence, anger and aggression, but at the same time, humour can be provocative, especially by a generation that feels their future is being compromised by a neoliberal agenda. In Poynor's (2012) article, he argues that protest posters today are surprisingly polite and restrained, compared to those produced in the Reagan and Bush I era of the 1980s. What Poynor does not consider is today's anger is disguised as humorous cynicism. For example one of the Occupy movement's slogan "I lost my job, but found an occupation," is not polite, but rather it affirms a complete loss of trust in its society, except for those who want to change it. The Québec student movement, unlike the Occupy movement, is not in response to a dire economy brought on by raw capitalism and the social injustices that are a result from it, but rather stems from preventing such a situation to unfold. Detractors of the student movement often asked why are young québecois "complaining" about the tuition hike when they have one of the lowest tuition in Canada and one cannot even begin to compare it to the average tuition in the United States. To ask this question is to answer it. Maintaining a relatively low cost for education and protecting other social goods is a constant battle best fought before it is too late.

To conclude, this section is titled *Education on a Mountain* because it is as a reference to the title of the first article written about Black Mountain College.[35] In addition to being one of École de la Montagne Rouge's influences, in terms of a rich avant-garde associated with the

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[35] *Education on a mountain: The story of Black Mountain College* by Louis Adamic in Harper Magazine April 1936 issue.

former college and the school's philosophy for art education, the title references back to their initiative. Their name, École de la Montagne Rouge uses the iconography of the city's mountain, but broadly envisions what education should be. In the book *Art School: Propositions for the 21st century*, Madoff (2009) states that "No school is a school without an idea" (p.ix). In many ways, École de la Montagne Rouge momentarily became a school, not only through its exchanges and collaborations, but through engaged ideas that were provoked by a form of politicization and its vision for possibilities in art and education.

CHAPTER 5: ATELIER LIBRE

5.1 Studio Inquiry: Praxis

> *Practice [noun] is defined as "the actual application or use of an idea, belief, or method as opposed to theories about such application or use" and [verb] "perform (an activity) or exercise (a skill) repeatedly or regularly in order to improve or maintain one's proficiency.*[36]

I do not propose that art and design should always be political or activist in its application. Instead, my main research question asks what can we learn from cultural practices during times of social change in matters of post-secondary art and design education. In this chapter I survey the interrelationship between art, activism and education in relation to material. I have decided to have an artistic component for this project because the research question directly involves thinking about art practice and its specificities. Doing so led to a better understanding of the types of material practices explored during the Québec Spring in relation to the traditions of social movements and their unique processes of learning. I argue that reflecting on art produced during social movements offers solid indicators of how contemporary art education needs to consider the world in which the student lives and learns. On the one hand, my practice tries to understand these relationships through the process of making, while on the other it acts as a visual response to the various ideas found within this paper.

École libre was shown at Galerie Nowhere in May 2013. The site for this project was

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[36] Oxford University Press (2013). *Oxford Dictionaries*. http://oxforddictionaries.com/

appropriate for a number of reasons. Galerie Nowhere is located in an old tire factory building that houses eight artist studios and the gallery space. Leased by frequently changing tenants, the gallery has an ephemeral existence, which is also suggested in its name.[37] For me this presented a parallel with the movement itself, which was also ephemeral by its very nature. In the following section, I will discuss my process and final installation of *École libre*. The main component of *École libre* were silkscreen posters with other elements that included wall text, knitted and felt fabric. This practical part of the thesis was inspired by the history of the province's commitment to accessible education, by ideas associated with free education, and by art practices that emerged during the student movement. It is meant as a reflexion on the potential for creativity during periods of social upheaval.
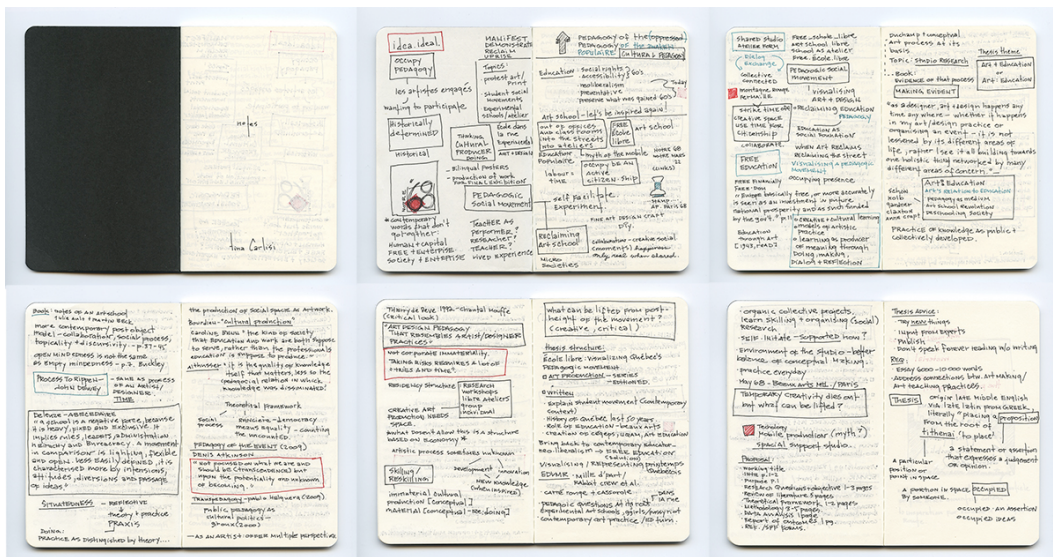

Figure 10: Preliminary research and project notes in notebook
Photo credit: Tina Carlisi

5.2 Art Production: Process and Meaning

The adage "change [or revolution] is not an event, it is a process," has been used in a variety of literature to express methods, duration, and motivations for social uprisings. Authors Cossens, Crispin & Douglas (2009) propose that the artist as researcher model is inscribed in an artistic approach, therefore is situated in relation to material processes, formal properties of art, production, dissemination and in relation to its own history. Through an artistic analysis, I attempt to reflect on the relationship between methods of production, materials, duration and motivation of art practices that emerge in the Québec Spring. The artist-researcher, as discussed in *The Artistic Turn: A Manifesto* (Coessens, Crispin & Douglas, 2009), proposes that art research should take "understanding further and deeper towards singularity of human beings, towards a revaluing of the individual, artistic and specific experience in a growing knowledge society" (pp. 16-17). The authors argue that the artistic turn, in this sense, implies a profound questioning of the place of the artist and her or his practice in contemporary society. In developing my art as part of this inquiry, I made specific choices based on my understandings of the issues pertaining to the student movement.

Figure 11: Refined sketches and project notes in notebook
Photo credit: Tina Carlisi

First, it was critical that this work did not behave as protest art because it was not created

for manifestation purposes; or more directly to fall in what artist and activist MacPhee refers to

as "fetishizing activist culture" (as quoted in Thompson, 2012, p.31). At the same time, the work

does make reference to the traditions of political art making[38] as a mean to discuss common ideas

that emerge from a period marked by possibilities. For example, there is a tradition of silkscreen

poster art that grew out of social movements, causes and revolutions throughout the twentieth

century, which continues today (Caplow, 2009). The low tech requirements and possibilities for

rapid reproduction of silkscreening lent itself to spreading messages within movements.

Silkscreening is a process that essentially involves a framed mesh screen which has been

exposed through light with an image and ink passed through to create a print. Multiples of the

same image can be reproduced through this process. Hence, silkscreening in the twentieth

century was largely adopted by artists and activists as a way to convey a political message.

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[38] I would like to stress here that although throughout the twentieth and twentieth-first century, numerous artists and artist collectives have participated in political art making, my artistic body of work for this research project specifically considers practices by art students and artists in the context of social movements.

Secondly, I decided at the beginning of the project that all material references remained hand made, no-tech, accessible and using a restricted colour palette. These choices are a direct reflection of how work of limited means can rapidly occupy space as well as be easily reproduced and shared. Third, any text appearing in the work was to be written in French as a direct acknowledgement of the student movement's context.
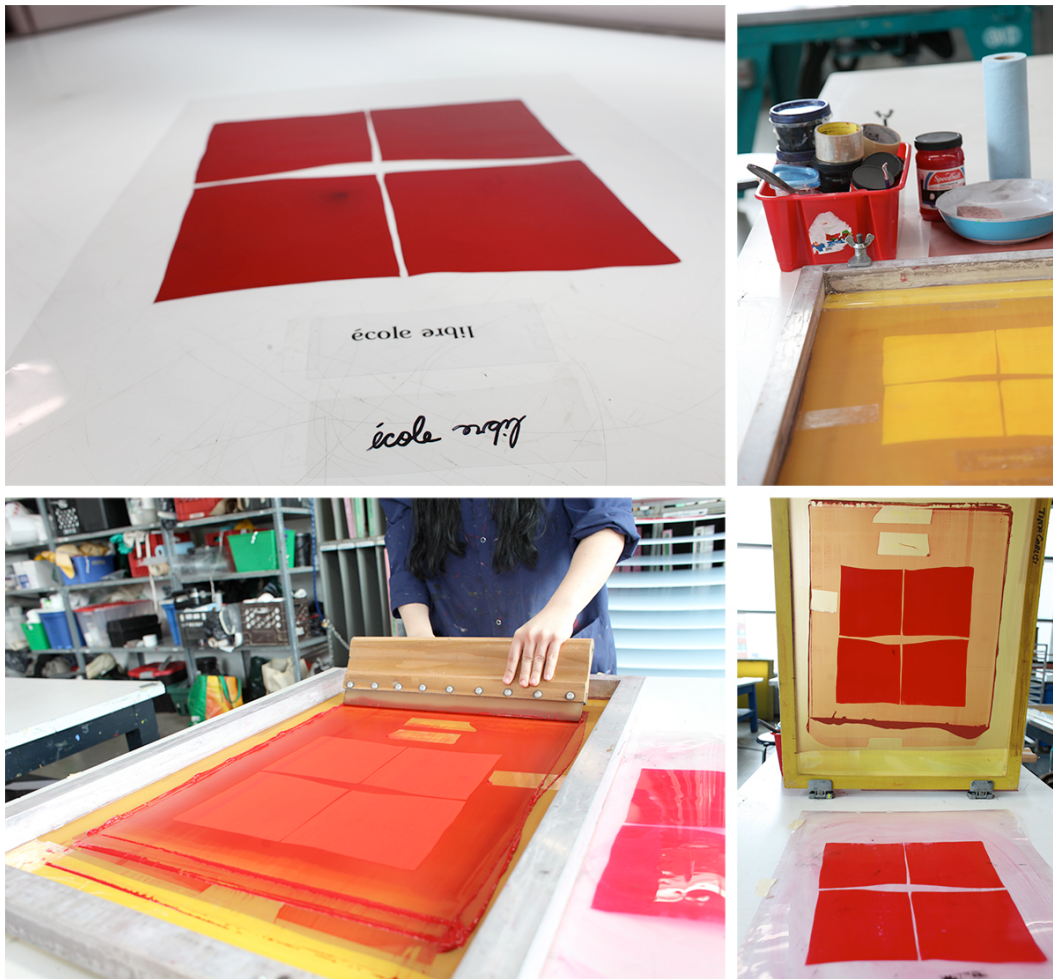

Figure 12: Photo-montage of silkscreening process for *École libre*. Left top: Acetate of image for burning screen. Right top: Basic silkscreening supplies. Bottom left: Passing ink through the screen with a squeegee. Bottom right: Acetate to register prints on paper.
Photo credit: Anke Burger

"A central feature of art practice is that it embodies ideas that are given form in the process of making artworks" (Sullivan, 2006). By considering materials processes during the student movement, in relation to the various themes I have presented throughout this thesis, I will describe in the next section *École libr*e in detail. I will conclude with a more general understanding of the issues at hand which came through both in practice and with other methods that are interweaved throughout this thesis.

5.3 *École libre*

Figure 13: Installation photograph of *ça prend du temps* [*it takes time*]
Photo credit: Tina Carlisi

The first work visitors encounter in the exhibition *École libre*, titled *ça prend du temps* [*it takes time*], considers the Québec Spring in terms of the duration of the strike and the possibilities of what a devoted amount of time means to creative activities. Conceived as a

calendar, each square represents a marked day of the strike.[39] The word *jours* [*days*] is hand

drawn and hand cut-out wall vinyl. The one inch squares are made from red felt and pinned to

the wall with straight pins. Although each square appears to be the same, the hand-cut quality

gives a slight variance in the square's size and shape. The hanging method of the squares causes

them to be positioned differently, giving a sense of movement. Having the installation wall

mounted acted as a poster, or a graffiti that marks off days.
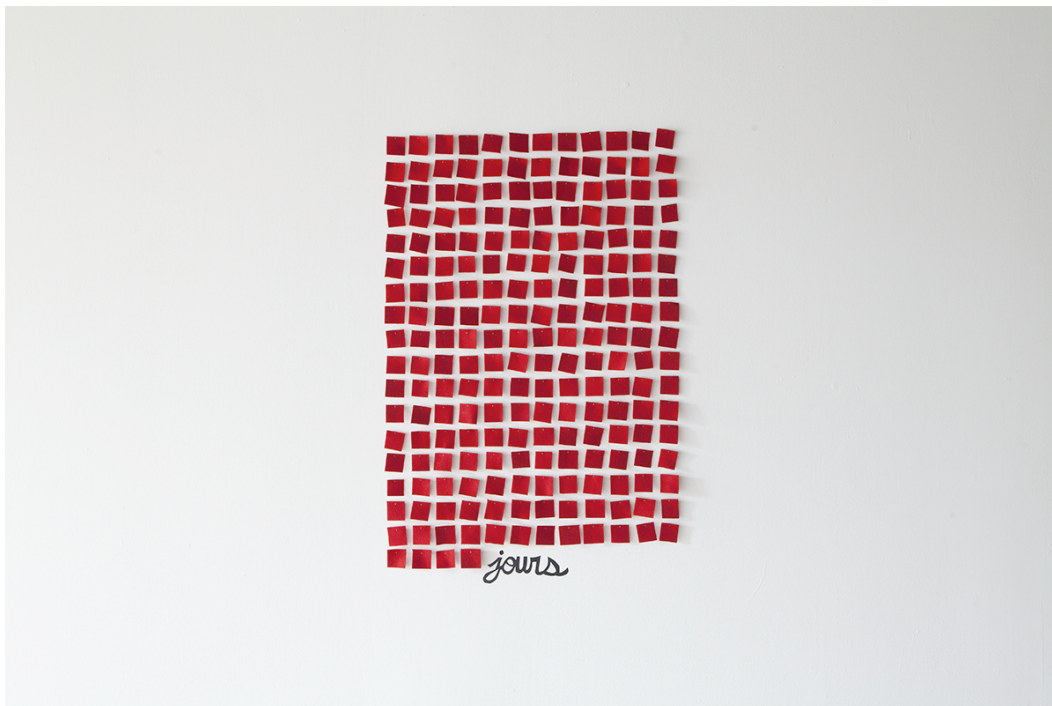
Figure 14: *ça prend du temps* [*it takes time*]
Photo credit: Tina Carlisi

The Québec student strike was voted as unlimited by supporting students. During that

time, as I discussed through out this thesis, students were creating art, whether for manifestation

marches or as tactics for bringing the movement to public view and gain support, in spontaneous

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[39] The installation *ça prend du temps* is composed of 208 squares. This number generally parallels the amount of days UQAM was on strike.

and timely frameworks over an extended amount of time. A common curriculum model for post-secondary art and design programs is made out of different courses where the educators determine deadlines and number of projects. What is interesting in times of social movements, as I have stressed, is how art students self-initiate, collaborating with various peers and producing the amount of work they deemed necessary. One of the commitments of going on strike is to devote time to the cause. These conditions allow students to experiment with ideas over extended periods of time. On the other hand, crucial deadlines in relation to demonstrations and other related activities also meant students were producing work in very short periods of time, and sometimes meant devoting all night to get the work done collectively. Meeting these deadlines had meaning for students and allowed them to be flexible with their time. It is interesting to parallel artistic models to educational ones, as discussed in chapter three which are based on these forms of learning.

Figure 15: Installation photograph of *illimité* [*unlimited*]
Photo credit: Tina Carlisi

Occupying a recessed space in the gallery, the installation *illimité* [*unlimited*] is composed of black vinyl wall text, which is hand-written and hand-cut, and knitted red squares. The wall text reads: *grève illimitée, idées illimitées, collectif illimité, éducation illimitée, avenir illimité, créativité illimitée* [*unlimited strike, unlimited ideas, unlimited collective, unlimited education, unlimited future, unlimited creativity*]. The text is a reference to the form of graffiti or posters found in the urban landscape during times of manifestation. The knitted red squares refer to different types of squares people made to wear, as well as yarn bombing activities such as those by the collective Maille à part, who are introduced in chapter four. As I previously suggested, the time committed to making knitted work allows for spaces of discussions and reflection. These types of activities also encourages skill sharing in informal environments. To

produce the knitted components for *illimité*, I learned basic knitting.[40] This type of learning allows for acquiring skills that may not otherwise be taught in traditional educational settings. Intentionally framed with the phrase *créativité illimitée* [*unlimited creativity*], the practice of individualizing one's red square directly reflects on the whole exhibition's form of creating with limited material resources and limitless imagination.

Figure 16: Installation detail of *illimité* [*unlimited*]
Photo credit: Tina Carlisi

The main body of work for *École libre* is a series of eleven silkscreen posters. I produced each poster image using hand made techniques such as illustration, cut outs and transferable lettering. The posters were printed using one to three colours. Each poster is intended to offer a narrative of the student movement and dialogue with each other as a series. Designing and

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[40] I would like to thank my sister Susanna Carlisi for teaching me the basics of knitting and contributing to the work by knitting some of the red squares. A thank you to Emily Paige also for her knitted squares contribution.

producing the posters is an active method for me to think about the interrelations between art, education, politics, activism and social histories. In this sense, the posters become a visualising of my research and ideas, similar to the art produced by students and artists during the Québec Spring. In the following paragraphs, I will briefly discuss each poster and link this discussion to insights and understandings from the research.

Figure 17: Installation photograph of poster series in *École libre*
Photo credit: Tina Carlisi

The work *plus que un* [*more than one*] depicts four red squares with the words *école libre* [*free school*]. The word *libre* is turned upside down, suggesting that the poster can be read in the opposite orientation: *libre école* [*school free*]. The individual four squares visually create one larger square, referring to the many individuals who come together to support a cause. The double reading of the phrase *école libre* and *libre école* is meant to be understood in a number of ways relating to the multiple conversations about the student movement. It can refer to free

education, education as a mode for individual liberation, education that is free from corporatization, and so on.

The poster *la rue, la ville* [*the street, the city*] is composed of squares rendered in different sizes and two shades of red. The hand drawn squares are organized in a one point perspective composition, suggesting movement towards a single focal point at the top centre of the image. As the title proposes, *la rue, la ville* portrays a street demonstration. The red squares can be read as individuals, or again as posters and placards that were present during the demonstrations. The different shades of red, as in all the works presented in *École libre*, including the red knitted squares in the installation *illimité*, foregrounds the variety of red squares that people wore in terms of size, colour or textile. These varieties contemplate resourcefulness and creativity during the movement as a point of inspiration.

Figure 18: *plus que un* [*more than one*]
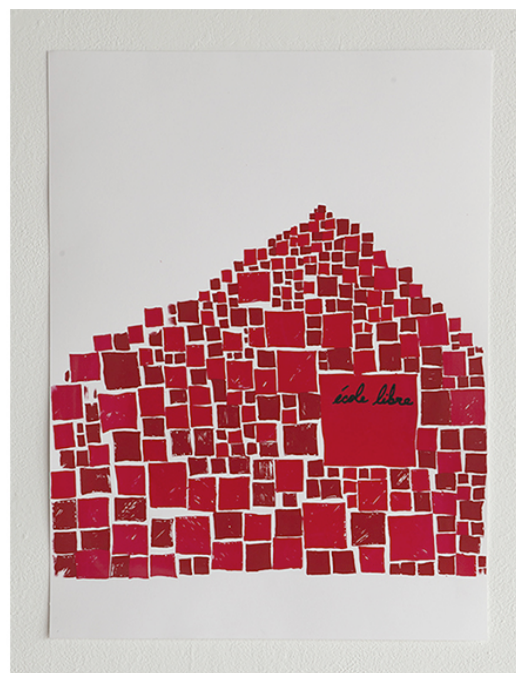Photo credit: Tina Carlisi

Figure 19: *la rue, la ville* [*the street, the city*]
Photo credit: Tina Carlisi

The silkscreen posters *illimité* and *ça prend du temps* are both poster versions of the two installations with the same name. Conceived first as posters and then site-specific works, the idea behind the different versions is to reflect on art practice, education and social movements. Repetition and variation are understood as a mode of learning. Specifically, the red knitted squares in the installation *illimité* embody these ideas, with the different qualities of each square making evident the process of learning a new skill. The phrase *la liberté c'est normal* [*freedom is normal*] in the poster *pour tous* [*for all*] comes from the three volume catalogue *Québec Underground 1962-1972: Dix Ans D'art Marginal Au Québec* (Robillard et al., 1973). *Québec Underground* "constitutes one of the most important reference works on Québec art during the decade" (Centre for Contemporary Canadian Art, n.d.). Born out of a cultural and social turbulence, the catalogue assembles together various elements from the 1960s counter culture and alternative practices by artists, collectives and intellectuals such as posters, articles, brochures, flyers, etc. The poster *pour tous* appropriates the phrase *la liberté c'est normal* within the context of the student movement of 2012, linking alternative ideas on art practice, education and activism in Québec's past and present histories.

Figure 20: *illimité* [*unlimited*]
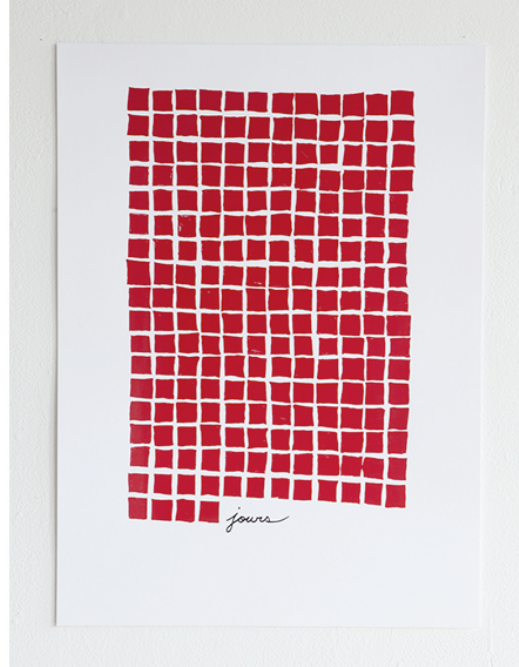Photo credit: Tina Carlisi

Figure 21: *ça prend du temps* [*it takes time*]
Photo credit: Tina Carlisi

Figure 22: *pour tous* [*for all*]
Photo credit: Tina Carlisi

Figure 23: *université* [*university*]
Photo credit: Tina Carlisi

The works *université* [*university*], *q.u. no. 1* and *q.u. no. 2* all appropriate elements of *Québec Underground* as an exploration of the connections between the Québec Spring and previous social movements in the past. These similar acts of reflection are drawn in the works *pouvoir étudiant, montréal, 1968* [*student power, montréal, 1968*] and a 1968 summer edition of *Parti pris*.[41] This specific edition of *Parti pris* was published right after May 68 in Paris and before a major student movement in October 1968 in Montréal, referenced in the poster *pouvoir étudiant, montréal, 1968*. The editorial of this issue stands as evidence on the influence of social movements on each other, specifically student movements. This can be understood as a process for Montréal's transition into an international city. The red square in *pouvoir étudiant, montréal, 1968* is a flag, a known symbol associated with leftist movements. Although movements today are different than those in the past, they fundamentally share similarities in that artists are the ones that visualise the marking of a possibility. The student movement of 2012, I argue, differs from previous ones, in that it pushes models of schools, collectives and collaborations in ways not seen before. Periods marked by possibility can become sites for understanding their dynamics, which in turn can be profound in thinking about art and design education.

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[41] *Parti pris* was a radical journal created by a group of young leftists. In the dual context of the Quiet Revolution and the rise of neo-nationalism, the journal quickly established itself in the intellectual and political environment of 1960s Québec (Pelletier, 2013).
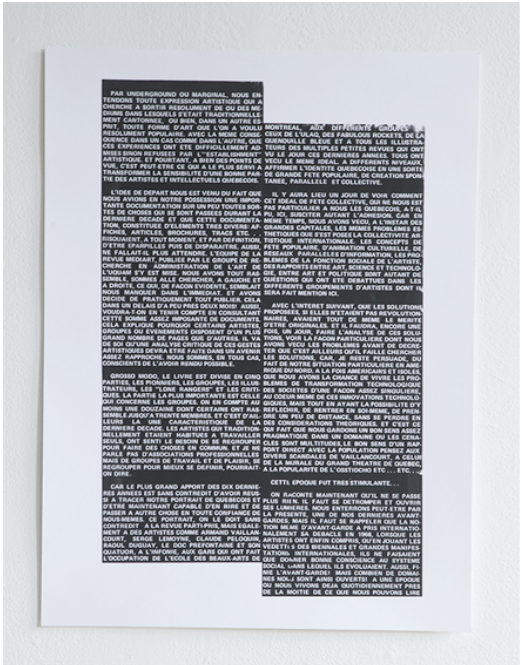
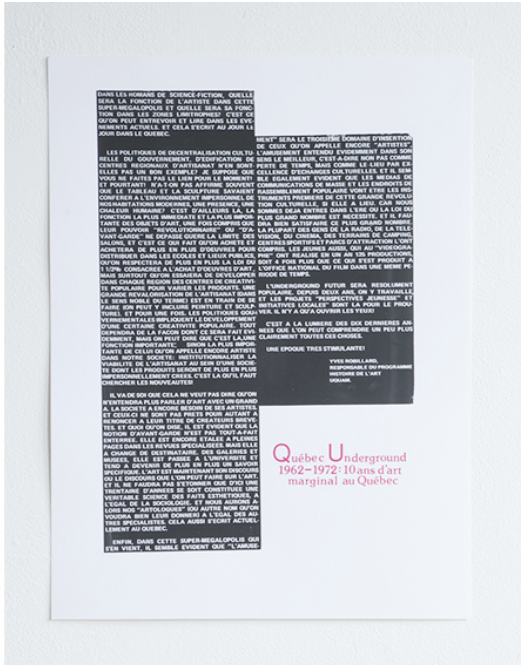Figure 24: *q.u. no. 1*
Photo credit: Tina Carlisi

Figure 25: *q.u. no. 2*
Photo credit: Tina Carlisi

Figure 26: *pouvoir étudiant, montréal, 1968*
[*student power, montréal, 1968*]
Photo credit: Tina Carlisi

Figure 27: Editorial spread for 1968
summer edition of *Parti pris*
Photo credit: Tina Carlisi

Figure 28: Installation photograph of 1968
 summer edition of *Parti pris*
Photo credit: Tina Carlisi

The poster *éducation sur une montagne* [*education on a mountain*] is the most illustrative in the series of posters. Representing a mountain with a red square and the phrase *éducation sur une montagne,* it references the title of the first article written about the Black Mountain College (see discussion in section 4.3). As discussed earlier, the school was an influence on École de la Montage Rouge. The mountain also references the iconic Mont Royal in Montréal, with a red square taking the place of the cross. The mountain also acts as a metaphor for higher education and the slightly off balance square seems to be in the process of getting to the top. This poster ultimately references École de la Montagne Rouge and stands as a contemplation on education as form. The last poster in this series is *les idées* [*ideas*]. Simply composed of two words in a subtle two shades of red, the words *atelier libre* come together for a double meaning: free studio

and open workshop. Atelier is proposed here as the overarching idea of a free and open space, both physically and intellectually in duration, as an inspired model for art education.
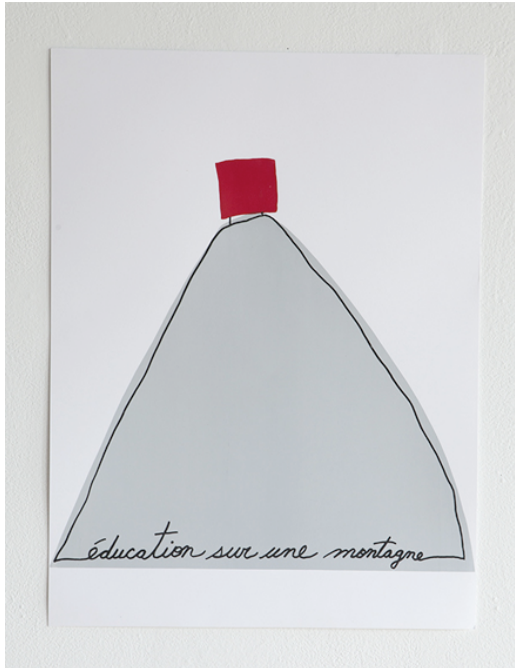

Figure 29: *éducation sur un montagne* [*education on a montagne*]
Photo credit: Tina Carlisi

Figure 30: *les idées* [*ideas*]
Photo credit: Tina Carlisi

The body of work and public exhibition of *École libre* was intended to engage with proposed ideas on art and design education during the Québec student strike. As discussed earlier, through the works' materiality and use of hand made processes, the project considered reflection on protest art in relation to creativity and social histories. The specific insights that resulted from this process include the importance of time. Art students and artists had time to take on self-initiated projects, to collaborate and ask others to participate in their initiatives. Another insight is that the types of handmade processes allowed for skill sharing and created forums for dialogue amongst different students. Chosen materials and techniques reflected a resourcefulness in creativity, learning and sharing. These practices were all based on repetition,

which I argue is inherently reflexive. Reflexivity allows for students to critically think about their subject as a building process. Furthermore, these practices demonstrated an awareness of traditions between media and ideas, and an awareness of contemporary art practices. More precisely, the art production during the Québec Spring paralleled discussions about social art practices that explore pedagogical ideas, as well as those that critically examined art school education. Through analysis and reflection *École libre* expressed a spirit for potentiality, both in creative and pedagogical sense. In most broad terms, it was inspired by the political ideas and artistic actions of the Québec Spring.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

Any discourse about the future has to begin with the issue of youth because more than any other group, youth embodies the projected dreams, desires and commitment of society's obligation to the future (Giroux, 2011, p.108).

The Québec Spring has brought into public discussion the future of affordable education. The multiplicity of conversations the movement has activated in numerous fields is made evident in a variety of forms, which includes the recent proliferation of publications on the subject. This thesis cannot address the multiple perspectives on the student movement, but instead proposes to consider how the artistic production during the Québec Spring can inspire a critical re-thinking or re-imagining of post-secondary art and design education. This research has led me to explore the opening up of a new space where politics, art and pedagogy converged.

The Québec Spring has demonstrated that youth in this province has profound questions concerning its future. With similar global social movements taking place, young people are concerned with the affordability of their future, asking in the same breath that we dismantle this neoliberal structure for one that is more socially just, with less poverty and more equity. "Young people today are protesting against a strengthening global capitalist project that erases the benefits of the welfare state and the possibility of a radical notion of democracy" (Giroux, 2013, p.xv). Québec students mobilized to fight for the preservation of affordable education, a commitment to a model for society the province put forth fifty years ago. Many have argued that a tuition hike of $325 annually is reasonable and that the province's university tuition still constitutes one of the lowest in all of North America. But where do we draw the line on a

"reasonable" raise of tuition? In Great Britain the privatization of certain aspects of higher education has resulted in dramatically growing tuition (Deem, Hillyard & Reed, 2007); an increase from 1000£ (approx. $1500) in 1998 to 9000 £ (approx. $14,000) in 2012 is just one example.

The tuition debate and its related socio-economic issues in Québec are far from being resolved. The student movement did force a provincial election in September 2012 that resulted in a change of government and the election of the Parti Québécois. Unfortunately the newly elected party did not fulfill their promise to freeze tuition and remove oppressive laws against the right to public protest. Instead, the party proposed a tuition indexation of 3% annually based on individual income, averaging $70.00 annually (Chouinard, 2013). This may be seen as an improvement, but at the same time the government forced university rectors and principals to cut 124.3 million dollars by the end of the fiscal year (CREPUQ, 2013). Instead of these budget cuts inviting a rethinking of how finances can be re-redistributed and re-structured within institutions, they will result in cuts in classes, services and assistantships for students. In conversation with Warren, I asked for his perspective on how the student movement of 2012 may impact the future of education in Québec:

> Maybe in ten years we will have complete free access to universities in Québec
> and people will say that it is thanks to the student strike of 2012, or maybe tuition
> fees will go up 200% and people will say the student strike was not successful. I
> think it is well beyond that. It is a moment that serves as an inspiration. As a way
> to measure the degree to which you live up to the promises and ideals that were
> formulated in the past. And perhaps we will live up to those promises and ideals,

or perhaps we won't. It is a constant debate ... but it gives us the parameters. It gives us the frame in which to view society and I believe that the student strike will do that. The Québec summit[42] did it a little bit, but the student strike was no comparison ... If the Québec summit did it a little bit, then you can feel confident that the Maple Spring will invite that kind of discussion. (J-P. Warren, personal interview, March 6, 2013)

As with all social movements, it is a process of continual struggle, where initial goals cannot be gained in a few weeks, months or even years. That being said, what has been made manifest during the Québec Spring is that people have profound questions about their future, particularly about the way in which society can protect a democratic model of education. This was vibrantly articulated through art and design, on the street, where creative initiatives became a vehicle to express what is possible. I propose that studying the spontaneous cultural production and pedagogic frameworks during the Québec Spring allowed for an in depth and close analysis of the emergence of new ideas during times of social turmoil that can be applied to art and education.

The art produced during the Québec Spring was not only intended to communicate what the strike was about and to persuade others to join, it also marked a moment and left a trace for future students to keep inspiring towards. This is made evident, for example, in École de la

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[42] In April 20– 22, 2001, the third Summit of the Americas was held in Québec City. Thirty-four heads of state attended the summit, "where one of the main foci was the eventual implementation of the FTAA [Free Trade Area of the Americas] agreement, the largest trade agreement in the world. The FTAA promises to extend the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) to the entire Western hemisphere, further widening inequality between and within countries. In response to the clandestine negotiating process of the FTAA and its potential harmful effects on the environment, human rights, health, education and labour, thousands of people, so-called 'protesters,' converged in the city to voice their opposition to 'free market' logic, corporate-driven globalization and capitalism" (Chang et al., 2001, p.20).

Montagne Rouge's credo *Aujourd'hui pour moi, demain pour toi, Hodie mihi, cras tibi* [Today for me, tomorrow for you]. This phrase asserts their action to strike was both to protect affordable education for their and future generations. Through their production, École de la Montagne Rouge also left a rich visual narrative for future students to better understand the social and political ideas that motivated the strike of 2012. Another example is the fourteen volume journal *Fermaille*, that was released each week during the strike. The articles, poems, quotes, images, and reflections will remain as a vocalization of the movement. In the press release of *Fermaille Anthologie (*Beaulieu-April, Z. et al., 2013), the collective ends their text with *C'est fini pour nous, découragez-vous pas* [It is finished for us, do not be discouraged] (Moult Editions, 2013). Implied is that even though striking students of 2012 have or will graduate and move on, this does not mean that the student movement is over. On the contrary, similar to École de la Montagne Rouge, their statement asserts that the movement is part of a larger social commitment, and will emerge again with a new generation of students, and perhaps taking on different forms.

The imaginative projects and initiatives that grew out of the movement were engaged and critical. According to Giroux (2011), "critical pedagogy asserts that students can engage their own learning from a position of agency, and in doing so can actively participate in narrating their identities through a culture of questioning that opens up a space of translation between private and public, while changing the forms of self and social recognition" (p. 14). Throughout this thesis, I assert that the Québec Spring did provide a ground, in the margins between the private and public for students to assert a position of agency, and as a result created meaningful and inspired work. Driven by active citizenship, students and artists participated in the movement

through their own knowledge production which took form in initiatives, collaborations, skill sharing and even as a temporary "art school." These practices visualised the movement, stimulated situations of open engagement and allowed for a re-imagining.

As an artist, researcher and educator, I strive for cohesion between my interrelated practices. In parallel, this thesis research has allowed me to critically examine how young artists, when given the time, place, space and agency to be fully engaged in something they find meaningful, a correlation between what they want to express as creatives and individuals within a larger social collective emerges. An important insight that resulted from this research is the realization that a specific quality of time, which allows for experimentation and focus is an essential basis for creativity and critical thinking. The Québec Spring has inspired me and activated a dialogue both within my research and art practice. Social movements are ephemeral in their nature, therefore they cannot be used as a model in art and design education in their entirety, but as discussed throughout this thesis, I assert that certain aspects can. With the end of the student strike a year ago from this writing, I reflect on how I have also been enriched by participating in something larger than one individual. What has been the most inspiring is the notion of possibility and hope as it relates to education and art practice will continue to find its place in my art, research and teaching, by building upon ideas and questions about what is, inevitably possible.

Figure 31: Installation detail of *illimité* [*unlimited*]
Photo credit: Tina Carlisi

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CERTIFICATION OF ETHICAL ACCEPTABILITY
FOR RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

Name of Applicant: Tina Carlisi

Department: Faculty of Fine Arts\Art Education

Agency: N/A

Title of Project: Ecole Libre: Visualizing a Social
                                  Pedagogic Movement

Certification Number: 30000727

Valid From: February 20, 2013   to: February 19, 2014

The members of the University Human Research Ethics Committee have examined the application for a grant to support the above-named project, and consider the experimental procedures, as outlined by the applicant, to be acceptable on ethical grounds for research involving human subjects.

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Dr. James Pfaus, Chair, University Human Research Ethics Committee