

ÉRIK BORDELEAU
(MTL)

AGGRAVATING THE POLITICAL?

Text commissioned by Skol for the
exhibition *Faut-il se couper la langue?*

He who desires, but acts not, breeds pestilence.

William Blake, The Marriage of Heaven and Hell

How do we define our style of engagement in the struggles of our time? In the range of lifestyles, the political generally tends towards a certain gravity, with tragico-initiatory connotations. It's that the question of political subjectifications or politico-existential contractions is eminently *dramatic*: it comes from the way a life is intensified and brought to its creative limit, polarized by the need for a move towards action and the risks it carries, or in waiting for a change that might overturn everything.

Emerging from the affective propulsion generated by the printemps érablé, *Faut-il se couper la langue?* carries a will to *aggravate* the ecology of Montreal's artistic practices, to lower its centre of gravity so that its *ginga*¹ takes on a note of irreversibility, as in the style of Foucault when he says: "the only courage there is, is physical." Aggravating in this sense, with the incongruous and repellant connotations that the word entails, except maybe for those wait-and-see nihilists who believe that we approach redemption wherever things worsen. For it is a matter of taking stock of the desire to exacerbate the political aspects of certain practices, which remain too latent for the taste of the artist (especially in regards to discourse); and at the same time to clear a path for a question that runs throughout the project, writing it straight into history and tracing a truly infernal dividing line²: *can we politicize without mutilating ourselves?*

The life and work of Barcelona philosopher Santiago López Petit offers an exemplary testimony: "to have a political life is, often, to have a broken life."³ But what exactly do we gain by declaring ourselves "political"? Why pledge ourselves in this way, why get "involved"? Men and women without content, artists or blooms who are more or less qualified,

projectiles loaded with the cultural capital and discarded subjects of the global economy; in order to ward off our eternal dread of consistency, must we brand each other with the red hot iron of true politics? Is this not what small avant-garde groups have always done, sought to become fascies of unilateral affirmation at the risk of becoming terrible communities, terrible because they are searching in all ways to intensify their subjective stakes with no end?

Whichever it is, in a Quebec that was thought to be in an irreparable and chronic depression, the printemps érablé showed us that the will to live gains power when we collectively assume the irreversible character of political action, confirming, in this transition, that those who refuse to join are, in the end, more gravely injured than those who take part in the fight.

1 The name of the footwork and rocking that make up the basic position of capoeira.

2 In Mandarin, the 8th Buddhist hell is called *wu jian dao*, literally "the path without end" or "without gaps."

3 *La haine du vouloir vivre : aimer et penser*, L'harmattan, Paris: 2010.

Érik Bordeleau is an instructor at l'UQAM and a post-doctoral researcher in philosophy at l'Université libre de Bruxelles. He completed his PHD in comparative literature at Université de Montréal and recently published *Foucault anonymat* (2012) through *Le quartanier*, as well as many articles.

EDITH BRUNETTE (MTL)

**FAUT-IL SE COUPER LA
LANGUE? (MUST WE CUT OFF
OUR TONGUES?)**

January 11 - February 9
documents, video, conversation
public conversation Feb. 8, 6 pm



In Jacques Giraldeau's 1970 documentary *Faut-il se couper l'oreille?* (Must we cut off our ears?) there were artists, an architect, a designer, a woman who did not speak, and many cigarettes. There were Marxist references and radical discourse. Around *Faut-il se couper l'oreille?*, there was the political effervescence of 1968: nationalist impulses, linguistic debate, disobedience raised as principle. Artists invited themselves everywhere, spoke loudly, organised themselves, occupied and were pre-occupied.

At Skol in 2013 there will be artists, women who speak, men too, and tea of course. References to a printemps érable from which all the leaves have not yet fallen...radical discourse? Around *Faut-il se couper la langue?* (Must we cut out our tongues?), there will be the comfort of the institutionalized artworld: the sense of struggles won, the promise of possible careers, and the standardizing effect of grants. There will be artists betrayed by their own words, but above all, who will ask the question: How does our discourse define our rapport to the political - the way that we become engaged...or remain withdrawn.

In the gallery there will be an itinerary beginning with the research documents produced by Edith Brunette during a residency at the artist-run centre *La Chambre Blanche*, continuing with Giraldeau's documentary and finishing with conversations with the artists Sophie Castonguay, Michelle Lacombe, Clément de Gaulejac, Hugo Nadeau, Mathieu Jacques, Steve Giasson et Andrée-Anne Dupuis-Bourret - to be seen live in the gallery or on video. At the end of this collective research, on February 8th, these same artists will participate in a public conversation in the gallery, letting us find out if, in fact, they let their tongues be cut out.

Edith Brunette's work marries artistic practice and theoretical research. Both are concerned with the forms of prevailing discourses, their way of representing the world—including the art world—excluding some elements and simplifying others. Recently, her work has been shown at *Galerie de l'UQAM* and *Praxis* (in Sainte-Thérèse). Her texts have been published in *ETC*, *Inter*, and *Cassandre/Horschamp*. The current project was initiated during a residency in the documentation centre at *La Chambre Blanche*.

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actuels Skol

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