

We conceived a project whose purpose and form yet needs to be defined—it could be a magazine or a small gallery. We called it *L'escalier*, having in mind Jacques Diderot's *L'esprit de l'escalier*, an expression he coined in his book *Paradoxes sur le comédien* (1830) to describe the regrets one feels after ending a conversation, descending the staircase, thinking about the witty words one could have said to an interlocutor that would have “won” the verbal battle. More commonly, this expression describes the lingering feeling of a missed encounter, unspoken words, and sometimes (in opposition to Diderot) the impression that what was said over the course of a conversation has been misinterpreted. It is however only one aspect of the referential constellations that the staircase can bring along. If I remember well, this motif came up in our conversations around the *Parachute* metaphor, once used as the title of the now-defunct Montreal-based magazine. When the publication was launched in 1975, this metaphor of the parachute alluded to the necessity of slowing down the process of assimilating (and to a certain extent, evaluating) information on contemporary art coming from abroad. We believed that the staircase could bring along a vast amount of associations, as it is the space where one enters and exits a situation. In his novel *La vie mode d'emploi* (1978), Georges Perec uses the motif of the staircase as a divider between chapters in which he recounts the existence of an apartment building and its tenants. While describing the noise that is heard between closed doors and echoed in this common space, he alludes to what will happen next (...)

“Staircases.

We don't think enough about staircases.

Nothing was more beautiful in old houses than the staircases.

Nothing is uglier, colder, more hostile, meaner, in today's apartment buildings.

We should learn to live more on staircases. But how?”

- Georges Perec, *Espèce d'espaces*, 1974.

“For a minimal event to happen – like the consecration devoted to one writer when deeming him “publishable” –, an image of the writer must exist. The writer deserves to exist

even if he doesn't have a public.” (...) “We need something like institutions of freedom, institutions, that, by being the products of a struggle (*lutte*) against normalization (...) carry within them a sort of acknowledgement of freedom.”

The above is from an unpublished excerpt (our translation) of an interview between PB and ARG posted by DE on facebook - September 13, 2013.

DE owns the manuscript of the text that was sent to him by PB in 1987 when the former was the student of the latter. He took a photograph of one random page with his mobile phone and posted it there. There is missing text on the margins.

The last sentence reads: “This is where lies my question: would ARG, at the initial phase, when he was minimally recognized as published, declared deemed to be published, deserving to be read, could have existed (*aurait été possible*) without these eminently two social things, the image of the writer (? cut off text in the right margin...) public and an institution that gives itself the goal to defy the laws of the market?” [1]

In a comment DE mentions: “on a sheet, PB scribbled ‘last version.’”

This is probably enough for DE to publish it on his wall, but he'll need the permission of the Estate to edit it as an “*inédit*.” Anyway, people commenting seemed ok with the page being online, asking DE about his project of making the interview available as a booklet.

I don't recall having read elsewhere in his oeuvre about the concept of an “institution of freedom.” Anyway, I just reposted it on my tumblr, and so it goes.” [2]

MILIEUX PLATEAUX

“...oh yeah, well they didn't replace the grey table you see there...yeah it's kind of a relic where the visitors have always presented their lectures from. It's just in front of the blackboard. I think that table was designed by one of the artists that used to teach here in the late 1970s, back when I first got this cleaning job. I came here from very far away, I had to replace someone last minute, it was the only job I could

get. So that table is over 30 years old...To arrive in this city and get THIS job...that guy, hmmm, I forget his name, he also designed the museum's furniture that was basically unusable, all it was good for was looking at and putting your drink down on, they used it up until the mid 1990s. The benches visitors sit on were able to stack really easily, they just folded down and you could place them one on top of another, sometimes I used to think they looked better than the art! This grey table here was made when press board became available in north America, so the table has stayed in good shape, better pressboard then nowadays that's for sure. [3] What's his name again? Gee whiz, I really can't remember...the champagne and the trinkets on the table seem slightly out of place, they'd been lying there for over a week, before R went on vacation. R seems kind of surprised in this picture doesn't he? Some of the students like to fool around on that table, I mean not in a naughty way you know, they just use it for having their little book club meetings. I've overheard all kinds of things crazy talk from that table, sometimes it reminds me of the union literature our rep brings us, but I don't like to read that shit, if it's important. [4] I just ask M. You know R vacations up in Maine with his wife and a few of their old buddies, I think the guy who did the table lives up there year round actually. When R first bought a house there he would bring back all kinds of souvenirs for us, he even brought back lobster once! At the end of the afternoon, R sometimes brings us a platter of biscuits that the students or guests don't eat. But you know, that day was special, when R brought us some champagne: we forgot that we were poor for that brief moment of sipping on that lovely stuff, it was because it was R's birthday, the Administration threw him a lovely little party, all kinds of folks came by, people I hadn't seen for years, everyone felt like a million bucks. R's been there for so long, and so generous to us all. He deserved the celebration. We love R. When I see that picture I recognize almost all of those people, but who is that guy in the corner in the hooded sweatshirt? Let me think...I think he was a student a couple of years ago and now he's squatting the place next door, he kept bringing around flyers and photocopies from the occupy wall street, he was

really pushy about all of that, I listened to him at first when he tried to get us to come by and talk about the museum working conditions, but after a while I got kind of tired of it...He's a friend of R's still, so he comes around to use the equipment and computers. Everything is for free if you are buddies with R. I think he tried to get R to go to the meetings but R's health doesn't always allow for all the goofing around anymore.... Anyway, that's all I can say for now about this picture, it's late. Goodnight"

[1] industry / signals / transparency / opacity / intellect / glass / ambivalence / painting

[2] once removed / found / marginal / real / contrived / staged / mediated / background / layering / standstill / chroma

[3] de-context / removal / severing / stretch / floatation / verticality / horizontality / absorption / glaze / exit

[4] found / technology / institution / gallery furniture / didactic / exchange / surface / sight lines / floors

DAVID COURT (NY)

MILIEU
(GALLERY 1)

October 18 - November 16, 2013
Multi-disciplinary



Ranging across independent and collaborative studio-based and theoretical activity, Court's work approaches exhibition-making as a form of experimentation around and within the confines of cultural exchange and experience.

His practice follows a logic of bricolage, deferring hierarchies of figure/ground or center/periphery in favor of a diffusion and entanglement of things, images and perceptions. Materials are orchestrated through a diffuse form of authorship to construct an atmosphere of self-consciousness in relation to the procedures of identification and contextualization, pointing out that it is in the margins that the myriad connective tissues of contemporary life can be intimated.

For Skol, the artist will develop a project that builds on this practice, informed by, and adapted to, the local conditions of the gallery.

“This is the work, a process that is always ahead of and behind itself; the exhibition always-already figured as a template, a sequence of arrivals and departures, traces and fragments. Materials collected and recontextualized, rendered and rearranged through the generic media of presentation: support structures, objects, images, etc. A contingent and migrant presentation. A milieu of duplicity and dislocation.”

– David Court

David Court has exhibited solo and collaborative projects across Canada and in New York. Recent projects include commissions for the Toronto Sculpture Garden and CAFKA Biennial in Ontario, and projects for Printed Matter and BRIC Contemporary in New York. His writing has been published in *C Magazine*, *Fillip*, *Art Papers*, *Canadian Art*, and *Espace*. He lives in Brooklyn, New York.

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