

BERNARD SCHÜTZE (MTL)

**DRAWN BY
AN INVOLUNTARY
ENGAGEMENT**

Text commissioned by Skol for
the exhibition *Motifs raisonnables*
(*reasonable motives*)

Clement de Gaulejac's *Motifs Raisonnables* drawing series exceeds a singular artistic gesture, for it is carried by the collective force and eruption of politics that was at the core of the Québécois 2012 student strike and social uprising. On March 22, 2012, the artist was swept up in the Montréal student protest that unleashed a block of multitudinous singularities and generated a new force field of possibilities. He experienced a mutation of subjectivity and found himself involuntarily engaged, as it were, in the immanent unfolding of events. An engagement driven primarily by a political stance in which the imperative to act was spontaneously actualized through a frenzied drawing activity. Each drawing was an anonymous intervention in the conflict's visual and discursive terrain and was never intended as art per se, or even less so as a vehicle to promote the artist's visibility. It is willy-nilly, as the byproduct of a sustained political gesture, that art emerged in the process. Viewed from a tactical perspective, the drawings used pointed humour to divert government and media generated statements to seize their force—jiu- jitsu style—and turn them against the opponent. They were arrows fashioned from the abundant semiotic ammunition fired against the dissenters. Shot off in response to each emerging situation, the arrows pierced the government's shield of legitimacy and exposed the duplicity and bad faith of its actions and rhetoric. In this regard, the unsigned and freely distributed drawings were directly operative in reconfiguring the "distribution of the sensible" (Rancière) in the everyday order of Québec. As such they are woven into the movement's very fabric and cannot be severed from it, they are as much a creation of the collective movement as they are the trace of a singular gesture.

This is to pose the question of the body of work's destiny and resonance—both political and aesthetic—after the events. How can the drawings be displayed in respect of this simultaneously collective and singular

authorship? And in a related vein, how is one to ensure a conservation of the works that perpetuates their underlying political message to counter the commoditization of higher education and the general erosion of the common good that underpins neo-liberal policies. Faced with these questions de Gaulejac has remained true to the spirit of involuntary engagement by letting himself be guided by the imperatives of the situation. In order to translate the events as a rupture in the regulated temporality of everyday life: display the series in a timeline fashion punctuated by the various mega protests that took place on the 22nd of each month for the duration of the student strike and social uprising. To underscore the indissociable bond between the drawings and the protest movement: glue the drawings to the gallery wall so that they become a direct part of the physical space from which they can no longer be removed as intact objects, just as they cannot be severed from the political circumstances they echo. To sidestep potential art market recuperation: donate the complete series to a Montréal archive to be safeguarded as a document belonging to the common good which. In presenting this panoramic perspective on the (now historical) movement as fixed through his gestures, and leaving future control over the *Motifs raisonnables* series in archival hands, de Gaulejac is bidding farewell to a charged event in which the artistic and political conflated to open possibilities that could only be seized and not willed.

Bernard Schütze is an art critic, communications theorist, and translator. He has authored many essays for diverse art magazines, and has also produced opuscles, catalogue texts, and artist monographs. Additionally, he has presented texts as part of artistic projects and exhibitions in Canada and Europe.



Between March and September 2012, Clément de Gaulejac produced several dozen posters in support of the student movement. After a strong and widespread dissemination campaign – during which they were posted online (eau-tiede.blogspot.ca), reproduced as silkscreened prints (Diffuse et résiste collective studio), glued to walls or brandished during the massive spring rallies – the complete series of posters will be gathered at Skol. At the end of the exhibition, a special edition of these documents will be preserved in an archival fonds in Montréal.

The artist would like to thank everyone who helped and supported him in the production and dissemination of these posters. They will recognize themselves behind one of these masks, under one of these banners: Diffuse et résiste; L'école voit rouge; The Mile-End Apac; Le Port de tête; the anonymous gluers; the tireless night walkers; Menue Fretin and my precious Shoal of Sardines. He also thanks also to the Casseroles; the Fausses nouvelles; the Bonhommes; the Panda; the Perforeuses; and in general to all the artists of circumstance who gave the Spring of 2012 the colour we all know. Finally, he would like to thank Skol and Artexte who have offered a final artistic destination to the traces of these political gestures.

Clément de Gaulejac has lived in Montréal for over 10 years, where he worked as a press cartoonist, and is currently pursuing a PhD in Art theory and practice at UQÀM. In recent years, his work has been shown at the Feng Zikai Museum (Shanghai, 2012), at L'Oeil de Poisson (2011), at Occurrence (2010), at Dare-Dare (2007) and at Galerie B-312 (2006), as well as in several group exhibitions (Atelier Punkt, 2009; Charles H. Scott Gallery, Vancouver, 2006; Galerie Saw Gallery, Ottawa, 2006). With Le Quartanier Press, he has published *Grande École* (2012), as well as *Le Livre noir de l'art conceptuel* (2011). His magazine articles include “Valoir le clou” which appeared in *Altérités* (2011), and “Téléphone Arabe,” published in *Marges* (2012).

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Centre des arts
actuels Skol

SKOL

372, rue Ste-Catherine Ouest, Espace 314,
Montréal, QC, H3B 1A2
www.skol.ca / skol@skol.ca / 514.398.9322

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