



*Anonymous. Lady Liberty Leading the People
Being Pepper Sprayed by Lt. Pike. 2011.*

Occupy Derivatives!/ Politics “smallest p”

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As a diffuse force field of political actions (as opposed to a politics of party or unified movement), Occupy has trained our eyes on the problem of finance capital as invisible entity and abstracted zone of *agiotage*¹—on the way that, as Christopher J. Arthur has put it, “capital does in reality constitute itself through abstraction and the march of abstract forms.”² This non-visible and non-localizable character of the contemporary finance form has been eloquently underscored by Frederic Jameson, who compares it to the state form in its elusiveness as an “untheorizable singularity”:

Economics posits invisible entities like finance capital on the one hand, and points to untheorizable singularities like derivatives on the other. And as for political theory, the traditional question—what is the

1. *Agiotage*, an eighteenth-century term for stockjobbing and speculation that acquired currency after the South Sea Bubble of 1720, seems appropriate to revive at this juncture because of its association with new cultures of economic risk. In today’s context it would refer to insecurity, financial whales, and black swans.

2. Christopher J. Arthur, “Contradiction and Abstraction: A Reply to Finelli,” *Historical Materialism* 17 (2009), p. 172. See, too, Roberto Finelli, “Abstraction versus Contradiction: Observations on Chris Arthur’s *The New Dialectic and Marx’s ‘Capital,’*” *Historical Materialism* 15 (2007), pp. 61–74. The debate between Finelli and Arthur over “real abstraction” is a complex one involving the question of how or whether, in Marx’s *Capital*, the concrete stands in for an invisibility of mediation. Finelli makes the interesting case that Marx, read against the grain of his humanism and historical materialism, becomes the premier theorist of real abstraction for a definition of wealth today:

Properly seen, the intensification of the production of capital, in an ever-greater production of real abstraction, is therefore accompanied by an effect of invisibility: more exactly, a game of overturning of opposites, a dialectic of essence and appearance, for which real abstraction, even though it becomes ever more real and present, does not appear, paradoxically, as the subject of the economic process. Instead, machines, labor and human knowledge appear as its protagonists, liberated from and less constrained by effort than has ever occurred in the history of humanity. It is a dissimulation of the abstract in the concrete that occurs through an *overdetermination* of the concrete; that is, through the taking up by the concrete of a dynamic, a value, an energy which does not derive from the concrete but which, nevertheless, coincides with its appearance and its activity. This is the fetishism of the concrete *in as much as it is the invisibility of mediation*, of the relations which establish the concrete, which give expression to it and which make it

state?—has mutated into something unanswerable with its postcontemporary version, where is the state?—while the former thing called power, as solid and tangible, seemingly, as gold coin, or at least as a dollar bill, has become the airy plaything of mystics and physiologists alike.³

Is it really impossible to visualize derivatives, credit-default swaps, leveraged buyouts, or what the business reporter Eduardo Porter calls “liar loans” (described as the housing bubble’s “most toxic, no-doc, reverse amortization” loans)?⁴ The parlous effects of such economic transactions are modeled in relief in the non-abstract guise of foreclosures, despoiled pensions, income disparity, wage deflation, and spiking poverty rates, but economic decisions as such, taken by largely unseen technocrats and *responsables*, remain moving targets.

With OWS, it would seem, there is an attempt to confront finance capital’s disappearing act; its vastly inventive arsenal of techniques for dissembling or destroying evidence of insider trading, illicitly hedged debt accumulation, predatory lending, tax-shelter abuse, hostile takeovers, dummy-corporation duplicities, interest-rate fixing, money-laundering, and political lobbying of every stripe disguised as public interest. While obviously unable to reverse the damage of vulture capitalism, OWS has experimented with ways to respond to Wall Street in kind. Anonymous interventions, hacks, leaks, flash mobs, acts of de-centered leadership, viral imaging: such tactics give new life to the impassive politics of what Roberto Esposito has dubbed “the impolitical” (civil disobedience, non-cooperation, abstinence from action, and a “mode of seeing politics” or “way of looking” politically).⁵ Shows such as *No Comment*, organized by the Loft in the Red Zone art collective at the JPMorgan building near the New York Stock Exchange (which boasted the burning of a flag made of dollar bills) and *This Is What Democracy Looks Like*, curated by Keith Miller at NYU’s Gallatin School, drew on the agitprop the-

move in determinate ways. . . . It is also necessary to affirm resolutely *that the historical subject posited by Marx is a non-material subject, or, rather, an invisible subject* (p. 67).

Finelli goes on to argue that “the theory of abstract labour and the theory of the accumulation of wealth connected to it—which many critics from diverse tendencies have held against Marx as a merely subjective hypothesis, as a merely mental abstraction and generalization—is being confirmed, in the diffuse and generalized reality of everyone’s life-praxis, as an abstraction completely real rather than merely mental, because it is precisely produced and reproduced by the effective behaviors of us all” (71).

3. Fredric Jameson, *Representing Capital* (London: Verso, 2011), pp. 4–5.

4. Eduardo Porter, “The Spreading Scourge of Corporate Corruption,” *New York Times*, July 11, 2012, B1.

5. Esposito states in an interview: “I prefer to call the impolitical, more so than a category, let us say, a perspective, a way of looking, a mode of seeing politics; and I do not call it a category because the latter already gives the idea of something complete and definite, something like a concept, whereas in this case it is in fact rather a question of a tonality, of a way of looking.” Roberto Esposito, “L’impolitico,” in *Encyclopedia multimediale delle scienze filosofiche* (1993), emsf.rai.it/aforismi/aformismi.asp?d=40 (accessed May 15, 2012); trans. Bruno Bosteels and cited in his essay “Politics, Infrapolitics and the Impolitical: Notes on the Thought of Roberto Esposito and Alberto Moreiras,” *The New Centennial Review* 10, no. 2 (2010), p. 207.

atrics, cheaply printed texts, and Internet media effusions flowing out of Zuccotti Park. The year 2012 has seen OWS, in alliance with the NYC & Vicinity Council of Carpenters, extend the concept of “art” to protests against the London-based Frieze Art Fair’s employment of nonunion labor. A small group calling itself Occupy Museums staged demonstrations at New York City museums—the Frick, MoMA, the New Museum of Contemporary Art—to publicize its objections to the rampant financialization of art and the too-cozy relations between the one percent and nonprofits. The idea of a post-market barter economy animated the “Free Art for Fair Exchange” event that took place on the sidewalk in front of the March 2012 Armory Show. On February 24, 2012, an open letter denounced the Whitney Biennial for preying on the willingness of economically vulnerable young artists to indebted themselves in order to produce work for the exhibition.⁶ Another action took the form of a fake press release (under the domain name whitney2012.org), declaring that the Whitney Museum had renounced financial backing for the Biennial from Deutsche Bank and Sotheby’s on the grounds that these sponsors had committed “reckless and even fraudulent financial speculation” (and, in the case of Sotheby’s, locked out unionized art handlers).⁷

In each of these interventions, some related directly to OWS, others not, the idea was to match Wall Street’s business-as-usual, non-transparent procedures with concealed methods of running interference that sometimes entailed, paradoxically enough, making an appearance where Wall Street least desired attention to be drawn, paper trails to be uncovered, or premises to be breached. Let’s call this politics “smallest p” and situate it somewhere between the “big P” politics of political philosophy and theory and the “small p” politics of political realism.⁸

Part of the difficulty, but also the interest, of thinking through what a theory of politics “smallest p” might be derives from the opposition between the distinction in French between *le politique* and *la politique*, roughly translatable, respectively, as “the Political” and “politics”—as “polity” and “policy.” In his entry on *le* and *la politique* in the *Vocabulaire européen des philosophies*, Philippe Reynaud observes that “*la politique*” in English covers both “politics” and “policy.”⁹ In

6. “We love art and art exhibitions. But the art system as it is currently organized is unjust and unsustainable, and we are confident that new alternatives will emerge based in principles of inclusion, mutual aid, and collective creativity . . . as we all begin to imagine the possibility of art institutions being unshackled from the interests of the 1%.” “Anonymous cultural worker,” quoted in Matt Seaton, “The Whitney Biennial Web Occupation,” *The Guardian*, February 28, 2012, guardian.co.uk/world/us-news-blog/2012/feb/28/whitney-biennial-web-occupation?fb=ative# (accessed March 5, 2012).

7. *Ibid.*

8. See Roberto Esposito, *Categorie dell’impolitico* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1989, 1999). Esposito distinguishes the impolitical from the depoliticized technics derided by Carl Schmitt and a political theology arguing that sovereign power subsists on the theological supplement, which permits the attribution of value to politics. See his “Categories of the Impolitical,” aldiqua.blogspot.com/2006/10/categories-of-impolitical.html (accessed May 20, 2012).

9. Philippe Reynaud, “(Le) politique, (la) Politique,” in *Vocabulaire européen des philosophies: dictionnaire des intraduisibles*, ed. Barbara Cassin (Paris: Seuil, 2004), pp. 963–66.

English, *politics* is commonly keyed to American pluralism—electoral politics, political participation, party formation, the recruitment of governing elites, and regime competition—whereas *policy* is taken to refer to strategies of state power. Reynaud stresses that this tends to get lost in French, where distinctions between state power and deliberation, or civic relations and strategic action, are more stringently maintained by the *le/la* divide.

The political theorist Oliver Marchart reminds us that “[a]lthough the theoretical differentiation between ‘politics’ and ‘the political’ occurs for the first time in German political thought with Carl Schmitt, the habit of differentiating between these two concepts started in French thought as early as 1957, with the publication of Paul Ricoeur’s essay ‘The Political Paradox.’”¹⁰ For Ricoeur, polity (*le politique*) denotes ideal political organization and historical rationality, whereas politics (*la politique*) refers to the empirical and concrete manifestations of this ideal sphere. Ricoeur factors temporality into the equation:

Polity takes on meaning after the fact, in reflection, in “retrospection.” Politics is pursued step by step, in “prospection,” in projects; that is to say, both in an uncertain deciphering of contemporary events and in the steadfastness of resolutions. . . . From polity to politics, we move from advent to events, from sovereignty to the sovereign, from the State to government, from historical Reason to Power.¹¹

Ricoeur’s remarks on time raise the question of whether a “real politics” could possibly be hatched by reshuffling the chronotopes—untiming, if you will, the temporal progression from politics to polity, from Power to historical Reason.

10. Oliver Marchart, *Post-Foundational Political Thought: Political Difference in Nancy, Lefort, Badiou, and Laclau* (Edinburgh, 2007), p. 4. Marchart is referring to Carl Schmitt’s *Der Begriff des Politischen* (1927, 1932); see *The Concept of the Political*, trans., George Schwab (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2007). A basic contention of the book is that the state (associated with “a specific entity of a people”) is not equatable with the political, the latter being a concept most often used adjunctively with morality, economy, politics, and civil law. Arguing against liberalism’s predication on a state consisting of abstract citizen-subjects defined by rights and universal morality, Schmitt posits “the political” as antecedent to the state, autonomous from politics as “the state of affairs,” and beyond political prescription. Leo Strauss, interpolating and citing Schmitt, argued that Schmitt’s primary concern was “to replace the ‘astonishingly consistent systematics of liberal *thought*,” which is manifest within the inconsistency of liberal *politics*, by “another system . . . that does not negate the political but brings it into recognition,” Leo Strauss, “Notes on Carl Schmitt,” in *The Concept of the Political*, pp. 100–01. The question of how to recognize “the political” in Schmittian terms remains a vexed and much-debated one, devolving around the ontological, existential, life-affirming, responsibility-taking, conflictual affirmation of “our” selves in the face of “our” enemy. For concise and pointed elucidations of Schmitt’s contestation of liberal decisionism, see Samuel Weber, “Taking Exception to Decision: Walter Benjamin and Carl Schmitt,” *diacritics* 22, no. 3–4 (Fall–Winter 1992), and Etienne Balibar’s introduction to the French translation of Schmitt’s *Der Leviathan in der Staatslehre des Thomas Hobbes. Sinn und Fehlschlag eines politischen Symbols* (1938): Balibar, “Le Hobbes de Schmitt, le Schmitt de Hobbes,” in *Le Léviathan dans la Doctrine de l’Etat de Thomas Hobbes. Sens et échec d’un symbole politique*, trans. Denis Trierweiler (Paris: Seuil, 2002), pp. 7–65.

11. Paul Ricoeur, “The Political Paradox,” in *History and Truth* (1965), trans. David M. Rasmussen (Evanston: Northwestern University, 2007), p. 255.

In addition to foregrounding paradoxes nested in political thought, Ricoeur stages an interesting face-off between Machiavelli and Marx. *The Prince*, he notes, showcases “the logic of means, the pure and simple techniques of acquiring and preserving power.”¹² It is on the basis of “this essential *untruth*, of this discordance between the pretension of the State and the true state of affairs, that Marx meets with the problem of violence.”¹³ At stake is “a political mode of existence that combines the Marxist critique of alienation with the Machiavellian, Platonic, and Biblical critique of power.”¹⁴ Here Ricoeur would have us extend “polity” into politics by bracing together subjection and calculated maneuvering. This move runs parallel to Etienne Balibar’s much later use of the term *politique* (devoid of any definite article) when glossing Carl Schmitt’s *The Leviathan in the State Theory of Thomas Hobbes*. The “Political” (taken substantively and adjectivally) names the process by which the state of nature (essentially an anti-political force) becomes the state, straddling the rule of law (polity) and the police (politics).

Though Ricoeur and Balibar reveal the fungibility of the distinctions between polity, politics, and the Political, it is arguable that in the wake of bitter post-’68 schisms between *nouveaux philosophes* and *purs et durs*, the theoretical gulfs separating these terms widened considerably. Chantal Mouffe, for example, lays claim to “the Political” as a means of cutting loose discourses of the liberal subject from American-style pluralism (a craze that swept France in the 1980s and ’90s). She defines “the Political” as “a space of power, conflict, and antagonism” in contradistinction to Heidegger’s notion of a politics with “ontological essence” or Hannah Arendt’s idea of “a space of freedom and public deliberation.”¹⁵ Mouffe is interested in showing “how the rationalist approach dominant in democratic theory prevents us from posing the questions which are crucial for democratic politics.”¹⁶ “My aim,” she states, “is to bring to the fore liberalism’s central deficiency in the political field: its negation of the ineradicable character of antagonism.”¹⁷ Mouffe notes that in Schmitt’s 1932 *The Concept of the Political*, he “declares bluntly that the pure and rigorous principle of liberalism could not give birth to a specifically political conception. Every consistent individualism must, in his view, negate the political since it requires the individual to remain the ultimate point of reference.” What she proposes (joining a host of progressive theorists from Arendt to Agamben, Derrida, and Hardt and Negri) “is to think ‘with Schmitt against Schmitt,’ using his critique of liberal individualism and rationalism to propose a new understanding of liberal democratic politics instead of following Schmitt in rejecting it.”¹⁸ For Mouffe, “the Political” must recur to new social movements and political identities to become operative.

12. Ibid., p. 257.

13. Ibid., p. 259.

14. Ibid., p. 260.

15. Chantal Mouffe, *On the Political* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 8.

16. Ibid., p. 9.

17. Ibid., p. 10.

18. Ibid., p. 14.

In *Aux bords du politique* (commonly translated as “On the Shores of Politics,” though “On the Shores of the Political” might be a more accurate rendering), published in 1992, Jacques Rancière is not as programmatic as Mouffe, but like her he targets neoliberal ideologues who trumpet “the end of political divisions and social antagonisms” under market capitalism and bemoan the “exhaustion of egalitarian and communal (mis)adventures.”¹⁹ Rancière is committed to identifying “a few paradoxes which may prompt us to reexamine not just philosophy’s political role, but also the status of the peculiar activity which we call politics.”²⁰ “Politics” here is “empirical politics,” and it traces back, via Plato’s *Gorgias*, to maritime sovereignty and the sailor’s ethical code of “profit and survival.”²¹ After maritime imperialism makes it to shore, it swells in scale, eventually occupying the cartographic and temporal expanse of infinitude. For Rancière, equality is the only countervailing force, qualified as the “Two of division”; that is, “a One that is no longer that of collective incorporation but rather that of the equality of any One to any other One.”²² Against empirical politics, against what he calls “the new ‘liberal’ dream of the weights and counter-weights of a pluralist society guided by its elites,” Rancière poses the old class struggle and the new “humanizing power of division.”²³ They alone seem to have the capacity to make any “politics” (in terms that Rancière would be willing to call “politics”) visible. They alone seem up to the task of stripping democratic pluralism of its depoliticizing foils.

Badiou concurs with Rancière in assuming that politics “big P” does not appear. His 1984 broadside *Peut-on penser la politique?* [*Can Politics Be Thought?*] affirms that “it is totally exact that *the political* finds itself in retreat and becomes absent, whence the interrogation as to its essence.”²⁴ “The Political” takes on the form of a “sinister fiction” (“une fiction funèbre”) that fraudulently posits the existence of a kind of transitivity between social relations and their sovereign representations.²⁵ Given that for Badiou, events must be preceded by irrefragable breaches if they are to count as such, his status as a theorist of “the Political” can only be understood in relation to his militant call for a politics that does not yet exist. This would be an order of political thinkability concentrated in the event,

19. Jacques Rancière, *On the Shores of Politics*, trans. Liz Heron (London: Verso, 1995), p. 4.

20. Ibid.

21. Rancière writes: “Athens has a disease that comes from its port, from the predominance of maritime enterprise governed entirely by profit and survival. Empirical politics, that is to say the fact of democracy, is identified with the maritime sovereignty of the lust for possession, which sails the seas doubly threatened by the buffeting of the waves and the brutality of the sailors. The great beast of the populace, the democratic assembly of the imperialist city, can be represented as a trireme of drunken sailors. In order to save politics it must be pulled aground among the shepherds.” Ibid., p. 32.

22. Ibid., p. 22.

23. Ibid., p. 23.

24. Alain Badiou, *Peut-on penser la politique?* (Paris: Seuil, 1985), p. 68. The translation is taken from Alain Badiou, *Can Politics Be Thought?*, trans. Bruno Bosteels (New York: Verso, forthcoming). In citations of this text I use the manuscript draft of Bosteels’ translation.

25. Ibid., p. 15.

positioned outside the tyrannical logic of calculation (“La politique ne sera pensable que délivrée de la tyrannie du nombre” [“Politics will be thinkable only if its delivered from the tyranny of number”]) and oriented towards the Marxist hypothetical of “la capacité politique prolétaire—d’une politique qui ne soit pas une politique de la représentation” (“a proletarian capacity—of a politics that is not a politics of representation”).²⁶

Rancière and Badiou have in common their rejection of ordinary democracy, which they understand as having euthanized political truths through “the opinion system,” the institutionalized manipulation of soft power, and the narcotic effect of consensus. “Democracy is never,” writes Badiou, “anything but a form of the State.”²⁷ The grounds of their critique seem irrefutable—*sans reproche*. And yet, their alternate republic seems eternally elusive—irksomely elsewhere and in retreat. Case in point: in his *Second manifeste pour la philosophie* (essentially a distillate of positions elaborated in *Logiques des Mondes*) Badiou runs through what he calls the four major truth procedures—experimental formal logics in mathematics and science, art, love, and emancipatory politics—allowing that under present conditions they are all blurred beyond recognition. The incursion of technological neuroscience, culturally relativist post-medium art, the boxing-in of love between familialism and libertinism, and incoherent political admixtures of economics, technocracy, and police control, have taken their toll.²⁸ Though he may brighten the outlines of truths with his concepts of category theory with respect to the matheme, the affirmation of the sensible with respect to art, an anti-statist International with respect to politics, and non-heteronormative sexuality with respect to love (all of them tending to renew the possibility of a “Platonism of the Multiple” and fulfill the dream of “a communism of the Idea”), Badiou leaves us with a formula more poetical than political, one taken from the final line of Rimbaud’s *Une Saison en enfer*: “La vérité, dans une âme et un corps.” The full quote is “et il me sera loisible de posséder la vérité dans une âme et un corps,” which has been translated by Louise Varèse as “and I shall be free to possess truth in one soul and one body” and which might also be rendered as “and I will be freed up (or at leisure) to have truth in one soul, one body.” This finale connects Badiou’s second manifesto to the more recent *Le réveil de l’histoire* (2011) [*The Rebirth of History: Times of Riots and Uprisings*], in which there is a kind of poeticization of the insurrection. As the embodiment of a “subject” that warns Capital (defined as the “what exists” of the state form) that it lacks the power to forever impede change, the insurrection is the closest we come to materialist truth.²⁹

Badiou’s fidelity to the truth of the Idea affords a hypostasis of ethical mil-

26. Ibid., pp. 66, 68.

27. Ibid., p. 8.

28. Alain Badiou, *Second Manifeste pour la philosophie* (Paris: Fayard, 2009), pp. 135–35.

29. Alain Badiou, *Le réveil de l’histoire* (Paris: Nouvelles Editions Lignes, 2011), pp. 42–43. My translation.

itancy, and while this certainly does not necessarily preclude the existence of an algorithm for “the Political” that factors empiricism, it confirms a determined refusal to accept the terms of engineered consent and opinion polling on offer in the mediocracy. Consistently, *le politique* is summoned to delegitimize “plurality of opinion” as a way of bringing about the “possibility of a rupture with what exists,” as Badiou has put it.³⁰ Judith Butler, writing in *Tidal* (an Occupy broadside), advocates a comparable posture of rupture, calling it “the impossible demand”:

Perhaps to the skeptic the idea of making “impossible demands” is equivalent to vacating the field of the political itself. But that response should call our attention to the way that the field of the political has been constituted such that satisfiable demands become the hallmark of its intelligibility. In other words, why is it that we have come to accept that the only politics that makes sense is one in which a set of demands are made to existing authorities, and that the demands isolate instances of inequality and injustice from one another without seeing or drawing any links among them? . . . We might say the particular politics that defines practical and intelligible politics as the production and satisfaction of a list of discrete demands is committed in advance to the legitimacy of existing economic and political structures, and to a refusal of the systematic character of inequality.³¹

“Impossible demands” confirm the imperative to “retreat the political” (to borrow the phrase of Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy), which is to say: to insist that politics be cognized otherwise, regrounded in an alternative semantics of equality, partitive being, singular community, distributive and social justice, deprivatization, and the creative commons.³² Once again, it is a concept of the Political as yet un-thought: a communism-to-come, a democracy relieved of applied ethics, an “inarticulable” subject of politics.³³

There are obviously strong arguments for forsaking the terms of conventional political science on the grounds that they privilege pragmatics at the expense of political imagination. *La politique*, from this perspective, forecloses the possibility of a critical politics that confines intervention to the sphere of what Ross McKibbin calls “whatworks politics,” the term for a “realist” politics that is sup-

30. Alain Badiou, “Against ‘Political Philosophy’” in *Metapolitics*, trans. Jason Barker (London: Verso, 2005), p. 24.

31. Judith Butler, “So, What Are the Demands? And Where Do They Go from Here?,” *Tidal* 2 (March 2012), p. 10.

32. Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy, *Le retrait du politique* (Paris: Galilée, 1983); trans. Simon Sparks, *Retreating the Political* (London: Routledge, 1997).

33. Badiou: “La politique ne représente nullement le prolétariat, la classe ou la Nation. Ce qui fait sujet en politique, quoique avéré dans son existence par l’effet politique même, y demeure inarticulable.” *Peut-on penser la politique?* (Paris: Seuil, 1985), p. 87.

posedly party-neutral and beyond ideology though in reality it is anything but.³⁴ And yet, in the rush to discredit politics “small p,” big-P thinkers may have underestimated or temporarily forgotten the extent to which the formless force field of politics “smallest p” must be taken into account when militating against the global reign of capito-parliamentarianism. As Roberto Mangabeira Unger has argued in his attempt to keep social theory attuned to micropolitics, “the illusion of the indivisibility of formative contexts,” which has led to the belief that “all changes short of total revolution must amount to mere conservative tinkering . . . induces in its adepts a fatal oscillation between unjustified confidence and equally unjustified prostration.”³⁵ The amphibolous logic of unjustified confidence and unjustified prostration, which is of a piece with the logic of *le* and *la* politique, admits of no supersession. Within the confines of such constraints, however, there is a space for activism—for impolitical gestures that disqualify the status of “non-occupant of society” or “resource outcast” accorded by neoliberal economies to the poor and disenfranchised. These would extend the promise to defenestrate the society of calculation, in which every aspect of human vivacity and exchange has been amortized, actuarialized, and transmogrified into a medium of publicity and profit extraction.³⁶

In this context, and insofar as the impolitical or politics “smallest p” relies on ways of seeing politically (“*We are the 99 percent* remains a great slogan because it’s not only about income and taxation but also about representation and influence”) rather than on concept-driven programs, art practice and critique prove crucial to its effects.³⁷ OWS-related art practice, in this scheme, is not to be identi-

34. Ross McKibbin, “What Works Doesn’t Work,” *London Review of Books* 30, no. 17 (September 11, 2008), pp. 20–22. “The culture of the focus group does not, however, lead to an apolitical politics. On the contrary, it reinforces the political status quo and encourages a hard-nosed, ‘realistic’ view of the electorate that denies the voter any political loyalty, except to ‘what works.’ ‘What works,’ though, is anything but an objective criterion: these days it is what the right-wing press says ‘works.’ The war on drugs doesn’t work; nor does building more prisons; nor, one suspects, will many of the anti-terror laws. But that doesn’t stop ministers from pursuing all of them vigorously. New Labour in practice is much more wedded to what-works politics than the Conservatives were under Thatcher, who was openly and self-consciously ideological” (20).

35. Roberto Mangabeira Unger, *Social Theory* (London: Verso, 2004), p. 158.

36. Rob Nixon cites Rebecca Solnit’s phrase “non-occupants of society” in his discussion of the politicization of what he calls “resource outcasts”: “If the many sense that they are being asked to bear more and more communized costs while the few privatize and monopolize more and more resources, hoarding profits, social movements will arise demanding a different distributive politics of the commons, in all its forms. When people feel reduced (in Rebecca Solnit’s phrase) to “non-occupants” of society, such discounted casualties—such resource outcasts—will have every incentive to make common cause against neoliberalism’s disinheritance plot. In this regard, the 99% or Occupy movements that have spread across the world’s wealthier nations are playing catch-up with movements in the global South—from the Cochabamba uprisings in response to the privatization of water to the Maldivians’ protests drawing attention to the global warming that threatens to submerge their island nation. In such scenarios, the predatory threat arrives in the form not of the greedy, unattached pastoralist, but of unregulated, voracious emissaries who have no respect for limits and no sustainable, inclusive vision of what it means, long-term, to belong.” Rob Nixon, “Neoliberalism, Genre, and ‘The Tragedy of the Commons,’” *PMLA* 127, no. 3 (May 2012), p. 598.

37. “The Intellectual Situation: A Diary. Song for Occupations,” *n+1* 13 (Winter 2012), p. 9.

fied with a specific art form despite its association with low-budget, low-tech, DIY, ephemeral, recyclable, and performative mediums. We are not dealing with “OWS art” or with an inchoate movement with standing in Art History; rather, we are presented with an impolitic look at financial-sector injustice enabled by OWS-inflected injunctions to “occupy” status quo politics. In this spirit, then, I would add to the series that includes “Occupy Museums” and “Occupy Theory, Occupy Strategy” (*Tidal’s* catchphrase) two more: “Occupy Capitalist Realism” and “Occupy the Society of Calculation.” In both instances, finance capital’s intangibility surrenders a significant measure of its immunity to critical regard.

The term “capitalist realism” is borrowed from Mark Fisher’s 2009 book *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?* Fisher himself takes it from an exhibition of German Pop artists held in Düsseldorf in 1963 titled *Demonstration for Capitalist Realism* (featuring the young Gerhard Richter and Sigmar Polke), where it was used in relation to postwar consumerism and commercial media. A catchall for neoliberal triumphalism and for “post-belief” in Fisher’s ascription, it signifies “the way that capitalism subsumes and consumes all of previous history,” extending the regime of general equivalence in monetary value to such disparate orders as religious iconography, pornography, or *Das Kapital*. Arguing that “capitalist realism is therefore not a particular type of realism; it is more like realism in itself,” Fisher emphasizes the term’s propinquity to political realism *qua* politics stripped of ideological pretenses.³⁸

Though “capitalist realism” was not a term in circulation during Occupy’s full-flush period of direct action, the political attitude with which Fisher associates it can be ascribed to the “look” of the one percent as seen through an OWS lens. Just as banks and wealth-management corporations and nonprofits dependent on institutions engaged in unfair labor practices and resource exploitation “appeared” as sites ripe for occupation, so the representational modes of luxury and patrician social life at a time of acute economic recession emerged as loci of politicized spectatorship.

T. J. Clark plumbs this politics of the aesthetic in his reading of the “fulsome materialism” and “madness all around” discerned in Gustave Courbet’s paintings at their most representatively Second Empire: “Matter can, and regularly does, press in on us and give us no room to breathe. A painter whose view of the world begins from an actual realization of this closeness and fulsomeness is a materialist to be reckoned with.”³⁹ Clark’s description of Courbet’s world, as projected in *Les Demoiselles au bord de la Seine*, is worth quoting at some length as a form of politics “smallest p” as defined through the phenomenology of perception. There one sees

. . . two tired, blowsy women, out for a row up the river, who have moored their boat and spread themselves and their petticoats on the grass. They are pinned unconvincingly to the ground like shopsoiled butterflies in someone’s collection. And the lack of a felt relation

38. Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?* (Winchester, U.K.: Zero Books, 2009), p. 4.

39. T.J. Clark, “The Special Motion of a Hand: Courbet and Poussin at the Met,” *London Review of Books* 30, no. 8 (April 24, 2008), p. 5.

between them and the earth they rest on matters not at all. They and their underskirts are a territory. We go exploring. We smell the sweat and loosen the corset. . . . This is a version of materialism. . . . If it is possible to say of Courbet . . . that in his art the world becomes all one body, perceived as so many extensions of self, then it is equally true that the qualities of the object-world we find most alien to our vitality—its heaviness and slowness and hard-edged resistance to change—are taken into the body, and give it a strange new consistency.⁴⁰

This “strange new consistency,” this “practico-inert” (to borrow Sartre’s term) of corporeal “placidity,” has, Clark insists, “something to do with Courbet’s politics.” While most art critics are content to deflate the myth of Courbet the revolutionary at the level of content by noting his paintings of soft-porn nudes and Second



Gustave Courbet. *Les Demoiselles au bord de la Seine*. 1857.

Empire patrons, Clark discerns politics at the level of *techné* and *facture*.⁴¹ He maintains that “Courbet’s great moments of matter-of-factness tend to happen

40. Ibid., p. 6.

41. See Paul B. Crapo, “The Problematics of Artistic Patronage under the Second Empire: Gustave Courbet’s Involved Relations with the Regime of Napoleon III,” *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 58. (Berlin: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 1995), p. 240. Crapo is interested in investigating what the imperial regime gained from courting “an unpredictable, vainglorious painter, who professed radical politics,” emphasizing that “contrary to accepted opinion, which portrays Courbet as a staunchly democratic painter standing aloof from an authoritarian Second Empire, the artist carried on a complex relationship with Napoleon III’s regime throughout the two decades of its existence.” For a political reading of Courbet’s nudes, see Petra Ten-Doesschate Chu, “Gustave Courbet’s Venus and Psyche: Uneasy Nudity in Second-Empire France,” *Art Journal* 51, no. 1 (Spring 1992), pp. 38–44.

when the social material he is working with touches him—above all, touches his class position—most intimately and confusingly. . . . The deeper the political undertow in Courbet, the more untroubled—the more completely empirical his picture of matter.⁴² Matter, registered in the heaviness and pallor of flesh, is treated here as a politics of sensation associated with Courbet’s subterranean compromise with an imperial aesthetics of materialism, which is no less suasive for its being embedded in the impasto of paint.

French Second Empire style fused repressive governance and state functionalism, which Clark associates with Courbet’s late realism. Indeed, the very fact that Courbet, in Clark’s estimation, is all about style at this careerist juncture of his trajectory indicates the workings of politics “smallest p” as an aesthetic of materialism imbued with clientism.⁴³ Arguably, something like Second Empire realism, now in the guise of capitalist realism, flourishes anew as *the* grand style of finance capital in the work of an artist like John Currin. In Currin’s paintings, figurative realism is marshaled for social scenes celebrating hilarity and high spirits. There is a full-on appeal to the senses: you can hear the laughter and clink of glasses or revel in the jubilation of meal-sharing before a cornucopia of rich meats and sauces. And of course the painting surface affords the ultimate commodity sheen, with its tongue-in-cheek nod to Old Master technique. Beyond his reliance on allegorical emblems typical of seventeenth-century Dutch scenes of wealth and worldliness, Currin adapts a nouveau riche, Second Empire salon sensibility—fleshy, densely material, surface-driven—for a patron portraiture of today. Together with his partner and muse, the artist Rachel Feinstein, Currin has perfected an aesthetic for the finance class; one that fully recuperates the “fulsome materialism” perceived by Clark in Courbet’s nudes and expensively accoutred bourgeois.⁴⁴ Feinstein and Currin deliver the American imperial aesthetic fully capitalized as a luxury form, marketing their own celebrity images as natural extensions of the art that they produce and the spaces they inhabit.



John Currin. Park City Grill.
2000. © John Currin.
Courtesy Gagosian Gallery.

42. Clark, “The Special Motion of a Hand,” p. 6.

43. “Clientism,” or its variant “clientelism,” is used here as a politically marked term with reference to how the patron-client relationship leaves its trace on the painting medium and on the artist’s choice of subject.

44. On the idea of finance as a class, see Thomas Michl’s review of Gérard Duménil and Dominique Lévy’s *The Crisis of Neoliberalism*. The authors track how the managerial elite, working for its shareholders, has “effectively disincentivized investment in favour of shareholder value.” Thomas Michl, “Finance as a Class?,” *New Left Review* 70 (July/August 2011), p. 121.

Anticipating the mobilization of *ressentiment* by OWS, Silvia Kolbowski, in her 2004–5 photo essay *With What Should the Artist Be Satisfied?*, included Feinstein’s image from a 2004 Marc Jacobs ad in which she appears swathed in the designer’s fur, jewelry, and dark glasses. In her accompanying text, Kolbowski quotes Melania Trump from a 2005 *Harper’s Bazaar* “Luxury Report” (where she is billed as “wife of developer and television personality Donald Trump, and owner of a \$1.5 million engagement ring”): “For some, luxury shopping is about creativity. It is like you are buying art. It isn’t necessary for survival, but it makes the journey more beautiful.” Kolbowski shines a light on the ludicrous appropriation of the myth of artistic freedom and creativity for “a marketable image of *high bourgeois* bohemianism,” while pointing to the still more troubling evidence, typified by Feinstein’s Marc Jacobs ad, of the “Faustian bargain” struck by artists with luxury labels.⁴⁵ There may be nothing inherently radical about exposing the unabashed embrace of self-marketing by artists, or the present-day acceptance of art’s complicity with commercial branding, yet seen through Kolbowski’s editorializing frame, Feinstein’s glamorous portrait becomes a visual indictment of life in the one percent lane.

Where Kolbowski subjects capitalist realism’s luxury look to an infrared glare that illuminates complicities between wealthy sponsor and wealthy celebrity artist, William Powhida makes visible the art world’s grand sellout to Wall Street with charts, diagrams, and manifestos.

Even before OWS, Powhida was experimenting with political satire in ways that had him compared by critics to William Hogarth, Honoré Daumier, and the caricaturists of *Punch* and *Private Eye*. An installation in February 2008 at the Schroeder Romero gallery titled “The New York Enemy/Ally Project” was an electoral parody that arranged framed caricatures of power players on a scale of “equivocal” to “absolute” depending on how “voters” cast their ballots. In *Cosmology Number 1*, a mixed-media work from 2010, the heads of critics, curators, and collectors, arrayed on a wheel of fortune, were assigned a symbol (or hex sign) designating their status as “Saintly Benefactors,” “Rebels and Cynics,” “Dominators Diabolical,” “Destroyers Demonic.” Larry Gagosian, Jeff Koons, Jeffrey Deitch, Lisa Phillips, and Maurizio Cattelan faced off against the gallerist Elizabeth Dee (a “dealer angel”), Michael Waugh (an artist known for works focused on “The Wealth of Nations,” “The Accumulation of Capital,” and “The Inaugurals”), and the critic Ben Davis (dubbed a “World-class badass”). Davis’s “9.5 Theses on Art and Class” had gained particular notoriety: they charged art criticism with the task of critiquing the conditions “of middle-class creative labor

45. Silvia Kolbowski, “With What Should the Artist Be Satisfied?” in *The Artist as Public Intellectual*, ed. Stephan Schmidt-Wulffen (Vienna: Schlebrügge.Editor, 2008), p. 52. Originally presented as a slide projection during the symposium of the same name, sponsored by the Academy of Fine Arts and the Friends of the Secession, Vienna, October 16, 2004.

in a capitalist world”; discrediting art institutions that extract free labor from aspiring artists who challenge “art’s current definition as a luxury good, or the primary concern of a specific professional sphere”; and militating for projects that surmount the paralyzing “critique of the art market paradigm.”⁴⁶

Powhida incorporated Davis’s “Theses” into a show co-organized with Jennifer Dalton at the Winkelman Gallery (March 2010), posting them in the gallery vitrine. Their installation, *#class*, featured a classroom, chalkboard, and panels on topics like “Success,” “Access,” “The System Works,” and “Bad Curating.” It mined the double meaning of class as scene of instruction and socioeconomic category. It also provided a space for experimenting with attitudes and tactics that became prevalent during OWS, as with Mira Schor’s lecture on failure and anonymity as political resources and the Fine Art Adoption Network’s proposal of “care of the object in the place of ownership.”⁴⁷

Interviewed in *Idiom* about *#class*, Powhida had recourse to a statistical language of class that once again would seem to foretell the use of what I call a “quant aesthetic” by OWS: “As artists, if we feel uneasy with selling work, I think it’s because we feel uneasy being so isolated from other social interests and dependent on 1% of society.”⁴⁸ In the midst of the OWS groundswell, Powhida would produce *The 1%*, a set of propositions grouped under the banner title “A Philosophy of the Super Wealthy (or the 1%),” among them: “We won’t feel SAFE [this word in red] until we have 20%, 40%, 80%” [all three percentages blacked out but with just enough transparency so the figures are legible]; “We read Atlas Shrugged AND the Fountainhead at Yarvard”; “Seriously, it’s like having another super power besides having TONS of money”; “No income? No employment? You’re a high-yield, high-risk investment vehicle”; and “GIVE ME MY FUCKING MONEY!” qualified by the footnote: “While this is an article of faith, I BELIEVE Lloyd Blankfein said this to the FED.” Formally a cross between a ransom note and a broadside for a protest rally, with its mix of fonts, exclamation marks, obscenities, and blacked-out words, the document unleashes explosive effects.

Though Powhida is a problematic artist on account of his pseudo-Warholian publicity stunts (to wit, his *Art Newspaper* cover lampooning Art Basel Miami Beach with the fake headline “MARKET CRASH: Collectors Abandon Miami,” and *POWHIDA*, his spoof on artist-centric installations staged at Marlborough Chelsea in 2011), he excels at the “art” of the financial derivative, staging and reproducing what a derivative does by bundling, packaging, and redistributing images.⁴⁹ *Dear*

46. Ben Davis, “9.5 Theses on Art and Class,” docs.google.com/document/pub?id=19eLFwrANmn56UcF2-PhRf1t50f25QLRmZgdsN5y7VBw.

47. “Interview with William Powhida and Jennifer Dalton,” *Idiom* (July 13, 2010), idiommag.com/2010/07/art-class-interview-with-william-powhida-and-jennifer-dalton (accessed May 15, 2012).

48. *Ibid.*

49. Ken Johnson seems amused by *POWHIDA*, but what comes through in his review is a certain fatigue with yet another attempt to deflate the cult of the artist-genius: “Who is Powhida, the artist

Art World (Derivatives), produced during the full sway of Occupy in December 2011, makes ample and amusing use of trademark, copyright, and hashtag symbols, underscoring how corporate entities have succeeded in privatizing every facet of existence, branding concepts, beliefs, and speech and turning every act of creative expression into a test of the right to ownership.

I mean, everyone ALREADY has the Answer, it's just that every ELSE ~~just~~ has 'it' all wrong. It's really simple, apparently, to fix everything by applying some JESUS™, REGULATION®, or CONSTITUTION™ to it. If only we'd just free the Market, convict some bankers, spiritually channel the Founding Fathers, regulate derivatives, STOP eating GM corn syrup, spend more . . . time with your Family OR LEGALIZE DRUGS.

EXCEPT WE don't do shit*, because this is AMERICA, Land of the Mr. Softee® and home of the BRAVES® where we are FREE to ARGUE about the CAUSES of social and ECONOMIC inequalities until the grass-fed cows come home. We argue in comment threads, on Facebook™, and twitter™. AND, when we aren't arguing, We agree with our favorite 'experts' on FOX®, CNBC™, and CNN™ as we slide into RECESSION 2.0.

. . . One of the OBVIOUS conclusions I've arrived at is that a very FEW people LIKE it that way. WHILE SHIT is bad for MOST of us—9%+ unemployment, \$14 TRILLION+ debt, and a perpetual War on Terror®—*THEY* hope we'll all just pull a lever next fall 'PROBLEM SOLVED' and argue some more about the INTENTIONS of the CLIMATE, BECAUSE the 1% is doing fine.

The only FACTS worth stating are that 20% of the population controls 85% of the net worth and earned 49.9% of the income last year. IN the AMERICAN SPIRIT™ of BLAME and recrimination I'm going to point the finger at . . . deREGULATED CAPITALISM®! IT is in the very spirit of Capitalism to ACQUIRE MORE CAPITAL. To quote @O_SattyCripnAzz, fellow citizen and member of #Team #1mmy [?], "Money is money no matter how u get it."

whose name is spelled on the gallery wall facing the street? For one thing, he is a jerk. He is here in aviator sunglasses and a black suit sitting on a black leather sofa drinking beer all day and verbally abusing the staff. . . . Powhida is a fictional character played by an actor hired by William Powhida. . . . Mr. Powhida, as distinct from Powhida the lout, is a quixotic gadfly. It is unlikely he will ever topple the windmills of vanity, mendacity, and gullibility that power today's art world. But he will never lack targets for his idealistic ire." Ken Johnson, "POWHIDA," *New York Times*, Aug. 5, 2011, C24.

So, in my useless capacity as a ~~tool~~ artist, I've made some pictures about this SHIT that are FREE to look at**, and they're ALL DERIVATIVES.

Sincerely,

[signed William Powhida]

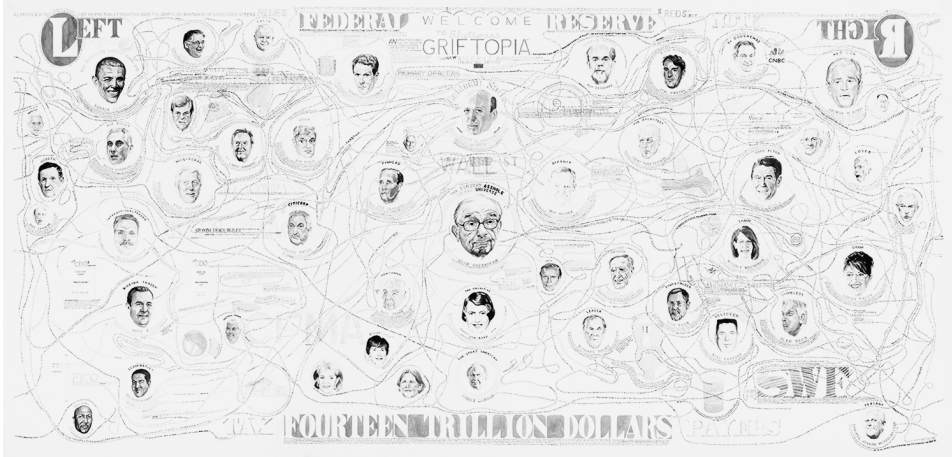
*#OWS? ** Bring a chair

and: What do PRICES reflect?

In addition to repurposing the “art” of the logo (in a way reminiscent of Adbusters’ “Corporate America Flag,” where the stars are replaced by Citi, Visa, CNN, Exxon, Pfizer, Google, etc.), Powhida mobilizes the outlaw ethics of hacking, piracy, and depropriation. By making pictures of “Derivatives” “free to look at,” he presents the work as an affront to the sacrosanct logic of profit and exclusive access. *Dear Art World (Derivatives)* delivers its punches without any subtlety whatsoever, but this does not prevent it from denaturalizing the workings of a financial instrument that enriches itself through other people’s debt and posits its own speculated value as economic sufficient cause.

Powhida uses economic statistics and the lexicon of finance capital as raw materials of aesthetic practice. *A Painted (Revised) Guide to the Oligopoly Market* literalizes the pyramid scheme. Inside the pyramid in a variety of graphics and colors are the names of market-hyped artists like Jeff Koons, Damien Hirst, and Takashi Murakami, followed by those of major commercial galleries. Outside the pyramid, and continuing the “bite-the-hand-that-feeds-you” politics of ingratitude, palimpsests of critical journals like *Artforum*, *Frieze*, and *Flash Art* and academic institutions known for art programs (Columbia, RISD, Yale, Cranbrook) vie for space with descriptive statements about the buyer’s market. *What Can the Art World Teach You* (2012) employs similar put-downs: a trompe l’oeil rendering of a sheet ripped out of a spiral notebook contains a cynical glossary of art business terms (for example, “flipping,” defined as “the ugly opposite of collecting where gamblers, speculators, colluders, investors, and desperate people sell ‘their’ art for a profit, essentially telling the artist to go fuck themselves”). In *Gristopia* (2011), targets that were singled out for excoriation by Matt Taibbi in his book *Gristopia: Bubble Machines, Vampire Squids, and the Long Con that Is Breaking America* are carefully diagrammed. Here Powhida adapts Mark Lombardi’s “connect the dots/follow the money” technique (on display in Lombardi’s large-scale drawings of various banking scandals from the 1970s through the ’90s), with paths connecting caricatures of the heads of America’s most wanted financial miscreants and corporate lobbyists. This is “smallest p” politics insofar as the selected subjects approximate a rogues’ gallery of contemporary American political culture. It is as if Powhida

were saying that if it is impossible to make convincing art that allows you to see a “cap,” a “floor,” a “collar,” a “swaption,” a “put,” a “call,” a “tranche,” a “PAC” (Planned Amortization Class), or an “SMBS” (Stripped Mortgage-Backed Security)—all jargon for financial instruments in the derivatives market—at the very least you can point out the names and faces of the players manipulating those hidden transactions or make use of tactics for visualizing capital that may not be new to OWS but that are energized by it.



William Powhida. GRIFTOPIA. 2011.

By tracking, plotting, counting, and graphing finance operations, Powhida mobilizes a “quant aesthetic” for OWS. His work is set off from OWS-related actions—it is after all highly produced and contextualized as art—but it is arguably part of an OWS continuum inasmuch as it derives political charge from the relocation of statistical measurements of class and income inequity (99%, 1%) from the boardroom or laptop to the public façade or Tumblr.⁵⁰ His sardonic

50. The Tumblr “wearethe99percent” has been credited with helping to generate a real-time archive that raises class consciousness: “The creation of an archive or memorial, even in real time, doesn’t by itself constitute resistance and it may be that the 99-percenters represented by the Tumblr will be viewed by future historians as the necessary fallen of the Great Adjustment, or whatever name they give our present moment of wracking socioeconomic realignment. At the same time, by writing “I am the 99 percent” or in some cases “We are the 99 percent” at the end of their litanies, the individuals who post their miseries on the web are doing something that Americans of recent generations have been averse to doing. They are actually creating class consciousness, for themselves and those around them. It’s not just a gesture but a speech act, in the way that declaring Jesus Christ your savior makes you a Christian. When an individual follows the instructions of wearethe99percent.tumblr.com—*Let us know who you are. Take a picture of yourself holding a sign that describes your situation. Below that, write ‘I am the 99 percent’*—he or she writes a letter of resignation from the American Dream and pledges allegiance to the 99 percent movement, the goals of which remain undefined.” “The Intellectual Situation: A Diary. Song for Occupations,” pp. 6–7.

regard on the one percent as a culture driven by ratings and bids to “occupy” top percentiles complements Jameson’s vision of a “repressed” phenomenality of distinct “qualities of work” that elude quantitative expression: “[L]abor here orients the exploration of quality in a new and unexpected direction: the quality of work involved as an existential or phenomenological activity. Digging gold, mining iron, cultivating wheat and weaving silk are qualitatively different kinds of labour,”⁵¹ and this is why their qualities must be repressed from the quantitative, or, better still, why they must fall out of its frame, remain undetected on its screens of measurement. This absent persistence of the body, of the existential quality of physical work and activity, will inform the text [*Capital*] throughout. . . .⁵²

It would take another discussion to adumbrate Jameson’s politics of persistent bodies; his phenomenology of work, unemployment, and the labor form more generally. Suffice it to say, by way of conclusion, that elements of this political aesthetic appeared in OWS adventures in anticapitalist representation and “media as direct action.”⁵³ Some involved a politics of deregulated *espacement*, a reformation of public and private space through bodily assembly. Some relied on poster art that returned to public view the faces of historic activists, from proponents of the general strike (Georges Sorel, Rosa Luxemburg) to the grand examples of noncooperation (Mahatma Gandhi). And others still deployed guerrilla efforts to “Occupy Art History,” redolent of the way in which *Guernica* served as a flash point of contested censorship after the U.S., preparing to announce the invasion of Iraq in 2003, insisted that a reproduction of it hanging in the anteroom of the UN Security Council be placed behind a curtain:

The episode became an emblem. Many a placard on Piccadilly and Las Ramblas rang sardonic changes on Bush and the snorting bull. An emblem, yes—but, with the benefit of hindsight, emblematic of what? Of the state’s relentless will to control the minutiae of appearance, as part of—essential to—its drive to war? Well, certainly. . . . Did not the whole incident speak above all to the state’s *anxiety* as it tried to micromanage the means of symbolic production—as it feared that every last detail of the derealized décor it had built for its citizens had the potential, at a time of crisis, to turn utterly against it?⁵⁴

In the wake of the pepper-spray incident at UC Davis, which prompted Nathan Brown, an assistant professor of English and critical theory at Davis, to call for Chancellor Linda P. B. Katehi’s resignation in the name of “faculty and stu-

51. Jameson, *Representing Capital*, p. 29.

52. *Ibid.*, pp. 25–26.

53. See Katie Davison, “Media as Direct Action,” *Tidal 2* (March 2012), pp. 26–27.

54. Retort, *Afflicted Powers: Capital and Spectacle in a New Age of War* (London: Verso, 2005), p. 16.

A PHILOSOPHY¹ OF THE **SUPER WEALTHY** (or the 1%)

We are CAPITALISTS and we have a long-term² plan.³

It's like we are ⁴It's AMAZING!⁵

We realize working is the stupidest way to make money.⁶

We already have 40% of the country's wealth, BUT...

We won't feel SAFE until we have ████, ████, ████, 93%⁷

YOUR problems are not OUR problems.⁸

You couldn't *possibly* understand NEVER having enough,

When you have almost NOTHING, *peasant*.⁹

You smell like bacon to us.

We like your subSTANDARD of living.

But, OUR tides are rising and we will loan¹⁰ you our boats.

Unless we turn off the fucking TAP. "*Water carriers!*"¹¹

What is good for US, is good for ÜS.¹²

Actually, there is no "us."¹³ There SHOULD only be I

As in **THE** 0.0000003257259%¹³ Objectivist. *Say it.*

Get a job, sir. Your revolution is over!¹⁴

and "GIVE ME MY FUCKING MONEY!"¹⁵

1. We read Atlas Shrugged AND The Fountainhead at Yarvard.

2. By long term we mean yesterday.

3. It's obviously not a conspiracy. That would require secrecy.

4. Seriously, it's like having another super power besides having TONS of money.

5. No, really we can go anywhere, do anything. It's like people UNsee us.

6. We don't really count income, that's not fair.

7. There is some internal disagreement on the duration of subsistence living.

8. No income? No employment? You're a high-yield, high-risk investment vehicle.

9. Please, continue to argue about making more or less of yourselves while we take your homes.

10. The variable Annual Percentage Rate is 21.99% or higher.

11. LOL! We are SO proud of the Tea Party.

12. We just call it enlightened self-interest or greed, for short.

13. Fuck Ayn Rand, it's not an ISM. That implies other people.

14. Jeffrey Lebowksi IS an achiever and a hero, even without the use of his legs.

15. While this is an article of faith, I BELIEVE Lloyd Blankfein said this to the FED.

dents who are well trained *to see through* rhetoric that evinces care for students while implicitly threatening them,” the old pitched battle between authoritarianism and revolution was comparably restaged at the scale of image micromanagement and the “minutiae of appearance.”⁵⁵ Drafted for the medium of Tumblr and in the guise of what Roberto Esposito calls “the implant” (the pathogen of biopolitical autoimmunity), politics “smallest p” became fleetingly visible in the insertion of the Lieutenant John Pike meme—a viral memorial to the pepper-spray attack and to moments of solidarity within OWS—inside major tableaux of the art-historical canon: Delacroix’s *La liberté guidant le peuple*, Manet’s *Déjeuner sur l’herbe*, and Picasso’s *Guernica*. . . .⁵⁶

55. Nathan Brown, “Open Letter to Chancellor Linda P. B. Katehi,” Nov. 18, 2011, ucdfa.org/2011/11/open-letter-to-chancellor-linda-p-b-katehi (accessed May 28, 2012). Italics mine.

56. Roberto Esposito, *Immunitas: The Protection and Negation of Life*, trans. Zakiya Hanafi (London: Polity Press, 2011), pp. 145–77.

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