

ENTREPRISE de SÉDUCTION

Sharon Kivland

Espace d'art contemporain HEC Jouy-en-Josas



Il est juste et meme pour l'interêt de tous que je sois le maître chez moi.

Christophe-Philippe Oberkampf

*Beneath the discourses and ideologies in which the colonial web is spun
lies the appetite of the merchant. While colonialism is made up of many pieces,
its core is economic, a machine of production and manufacture,
profit and reinvestment, appetite and consumption.*

Aimé Césaire

*Give some ribbons, gauze, muslin, and flowers to a tasteful young girl who despises fashion.
[...] she is going to produce for herself an outfit that will make her a hundred times more charming.*

Jean-Jacques Rousseau

This is an exhibition in five parts, each corresponding to a room in the exhibition space of the Haute École de Commerce (HEC), Jouy-en-Josas. The work developed from research on the Manufacture Oberkampf in the archives of the Musée de la Toile de Jouy, and will be followed by a publication. The period of activity of the Manufacture Oberkampf spans early industrial development in pre-revolutionary France to its closure in 1843; the end of the empire marks the decline of the enterprise. The Manufacture may be noted for the 'benevolent' factory conditions, the pastoral and political images of the printed cloth it produced, and its somewhat concealed relation to the colonial enterprise. Oberkampf's factory displayed the conditions of production of the transition to what E. P. Thompson calls 'industrial capitalism', not only in the changes in techniques of manufacture that demand greater synchronisation of labour and increasing exactitude in time-routines, but also in how these changes are lived through. A 'factory system' and a 'domestic system' overlap.

The works address the complex relations between desire and consumption under capitalism, reconceptualising as the capture and remoulding of desire. Two figures set the boundaries: Rousseau and Robespierre, both present as a corpse in some form: the tomb of the former, as an etching derived from a *toile de Jouy*, and the latter as the cadaver of a headless mannequin.

The exhibition is composed of five *tableaux*. Each provides a scene or staging. Each incorporates similar elements in different forms: skin, furniture, image/s, naturalised creatures, and an object or objects made by hand, by a skilled producer in four cases, by a diligent amateur in the fifth. In each scene there is a reference drawn from the Manufacture Oberkampf. The works are conceived as objects with the form of visual literacy. They have material agency. They are seen. They are read. The exhibition includes antiques, trifles, skins and leathers, ribbons, silk and lace, *déshabillés*. It is *incroyable* and *merveilleux*.



LA CHASSE

A wall drawing in *garance* that sets the scene (after a *toile*), a *chaise longue*, stripped down to its carcass, two red deerskins of the softest leather, two etchings derived from a *toile* – a stag and a doe, a fine set of stag antler's (*bois de cerf*), and a white linen *redingote* lined with red silk and a *robe de chemise* in the finest white linen, with a red silk belt that has migrated to the antlers, made by dress-maker Marie-Andrée Bernard-Trébern.



LA PASTORALE

A wall drawing in *garance* that sets the scene (after a *toile*), a *bergère*, stripped to its bones, a stuffed cock, two sheepskins, on one of which a copy of Rousseau's work *Émile* lies open, two etchings of sheep, one with a wolf, realised by the master-engravers, Bev Stout and Neil Woodall, derived from a *toile*, a straw hat embellished with a red silk ribbons and red cock's feathers, a parasol of silk dyed with madder, a pair of red lamb's leather gloves lined in silk, one of which is hanging from a set of ram's horns, a fox with a red wool felt Phrygian bonnet on a red glacé leather lambskin, and on the other sheepskin, the most exquisite red leather slippers, made from lambskin, with red silk ribbons and lined with ivory *Duchesse* satin, made by shoe-designer Phèdre Calvados.



LE PROCÈS

A red carpet, eight gilt chairs with red velvet seats, eight deer heads with red ribbons around their lovely necks, a variety of stuffed songbirds perched on the chairs, holding lace-embellished handkerchiefs of fine cotton in their beaks, the handkerchiefs embroidered in red silk with mottos of the revolutionary period, in the font of the *Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen* of 1789, by unskilled labourer Sharon Kivland.



L'EXÉCUTION

An etching of the tomb of Rousseau (on a small island on the lake at Ermonville, where he spent the last six weeks of his life) derived from a *toile*, an etching of a hunted boar, derived from a *toile*, a boar's head, a nineteenth-century *mannequin* with painted wooden boots, standing on a *marcassin* rug, around whose headless neck is a contemporary version of an eighteenth-century *jabot* in *dentelle à l'aiguille point d'Alençon* (after the *toile de Jouy* 'Bonnes herbes', the most popular *toile* of the revolutionary years) and *dentelle au fuseau*, appearing to be blood-stained, and lined with ivory *Duchesse* satin) by former *dentellière* (there is no masculine name for the profession) in the Atelier National du Point d'Alençon and now artist Thomas Gaugain.



To these is added a final room, which cannot be viewed from the outside, for a private film-screening:

L'INVITATION au VOYAGE

A single rocking chair, upholstered in linen, a false *toile de Jouy* depicting Rousseau collecting wild flowers, hand-painted in a madder dye, a boar-skin rug, a wall lamp made of a deer's foot with a *toile de Jouy* shade, or the viewing of a short film of the unfolding and folding of a number of *toiles de Jouy* from the archives of the Musée de la toile de Jouy, with as chapter titles the names of cloths, beginning and ending with a few lines from Leo Ferré's 1957 version of Baudelaire's poem *L'Invitation au Voyage*. A voiceover calmly and neutrally recites the cargo-lists of some of the ships leaving France for Africa, carrying goods to trade (*guinées, indiennes, handkerchiefs, two large crimson parasols, twelve redingotes...*) and to provision the colonies (sugar, rice, coffee, three hundred slaves from Angola, two hundred from Senegal ...). The lists contain many elements that appear in the exhibition.



<https://vimeo.com/247984676>
Password: Jacobin1789



FURTHER NOTES

While the phrase *toile de jouy* literally translates as cloth from Jouy, it has come to refer to the single-color print of a pastoral scene (usually) on a white ground. In 1770 Oberkampf began using copperplate printing at Jouy – the technique had been used abroad in England and Ireland for a number of years, but Oberkampf was the first cotton manufacturer to bring copperplate printing technology into France. Because the lines on the engraved copperplates are finer than those on wood blocks, effects of light and shade were introduced. The copperplates also allowed for a larger repeating pattern. This opened the possibility for designs – no longer limited to florals or geometric designs – Oberkampf commissioned artists, notably Jean-Baptiste Huet (whose pastoral paintings may be seen at the musée Nissam de Camondo, a private home designed to recreate a residence of the eighteenth-century in the style of the Petit Trianon) to design pastoral scenes with human figures. Fabrics in this style also depicted major events of the time such as the first balloon flight. By 1805, the factory employed 1,322 workers.

While parts of the production process were increasingly mechanised, some aspects, especially at the beginning of the enterprise, could only be completed by laborious handwork. A third of the workforce was women, earning half the wage paid to male workers. Workers worked in groups, each with its own hierarchy. The *pinceauteuses*, who added colours to the printed toiles, worked in formations called ‘tables’, which is echoed in the term ‘tableau’, describing the *mise-en-scène* of the exhibition. In the final room of the exhibition, the screening-room, a restored rocking-chair has been re-upholstered with a hand-painted linen cloth, depicting Rousseau as ‘*herboriste*’. The cloth is painted in a *garance* dye. One stage of the printing process of a *toile* is the *garancage*: the printed cloth is passed through a bath of dye made from the madder root, which reveals the colours printed by the use of mordants, obtaining a range of colours from dark red to pale pink, black to lilac. The background is pink, and left to bleach in sunlight. Yellow and blue were printed directly on the cloth by the *pinceauteuses*; until 1808 green could only be obtained by superimposing blue on yellow.

Tableaux I and II reproduce scenes from *toiles*, not exactly but as impressions. One may think of these as stagings for seduction: first, the pastoral setting, the woman shepherdess (an aristocrat who plays at this, like Marie-Antoinette and her farm[?]), embodied (or disembodied) in linguistic terms by the *bergère* armchair (a chair which is also a woman), stripped to its skeletal form, or metonymically by the red leather shoes, the gloves, the parasol. There are the skins of the sheep, the sheep in the engravings, and then the man (the seducer[?]) may appear as the horns of the ram or the cock mounted on the *bergère*. In one image, a sheep is carried away by a wolf. The female sheep is wearing a ribbon as a leash: *le mouton chéri*. On one of the sheepskins, a copy of *Émile* by Rousseau lies open, as though its reader, while seeking to educate herself, has been interrupted.

In the second scene, the boudoir entitled *La chasse*, seduction takes place on a sofa, but again, it is no more than a form, flanked by the skins of deer. The skins are of the softest nappa leather, dyed red; my supplier says its touch, density, and sponge-like softness cannot be replicated. These echo the deer depicted in the etchings, a stag and a doe, while from the antler’s of a stag, symbol of phallic power, a man’s *redingote* hangs, lined with red silk. A dress

in the then-shocking style of a *chemise de la reine* is draped over the sofa; it has a sash of red silk, echoing the lining of the coat. Elisabeth Vigée le Brun painted a portrait of Marie-Antoinette in 1783, wearing a scandalous *robe chemise*, which she wore at her Petit Trianon. There is a painting of Madame Oberkampf in a later version of the dress. In 1798 a writer criticises this style: ‘*cette mode est in piège perfide [...]; ce costume de nudité flétrit les appats les plus frais. L’empire de la beauté s’évanouit, parce qu’elle est trop montrée.*’ This is not to say that these garments belong to a man and woman, though this might be assumed. It should be noted that in the eighteenth century the wearing of men’s clothing was forbidden to women, save for the costume of hunting (*la chasse*); shirt, tie, tricorne hat, and jacket.

Later, in the last part of the exhibition, in the voiceover of the film, some of these object reappear: a number of silk dresses a crimson parasol, a redingote ... others. These are found in the cargo list of the slave ships, sailing from Brest, Le Havre, Bordeaux, and La Rochelle, bound for West Africa to take on a new cargo of human lives in exchange.

The shoes and garments have been made by hand. They are luxurious objects. Objects of luxury, they are costly in material and time to produce. They are not made in a factory, in a line of production when each step of production is separated from the next (as in the Manufacture d’Oberkampf and others). They are singular items, ‘originals’ even when copied. Their production has been recorded, and it may be feared that their producers have been paid improperly for their skilled work. The makers are skilled, highly trained. It should be noted that today child labourers work in the fashion supply chain, making the textiles and garments to satisfy the demand of consumers in Europe, the US, and beyond, and that workers in the garment and textile industry are largely women, some working on piecework at home. Even today, while textile production is fully automated, garments are sewn and pieced together by human hands on sewing machines. While industrialisation introduced the factory production of materials such as cotton, much of the production of clothes continued to be made in home workshops. As John Berger writes, in 1969: ‘The last need of imperialism is not for raw materials, exploited labour and controlled markets, it is for a mankind [sic] that counts for nothing.’

The next tableau is entitled *Le Procès*, yet it could also be a fashion show with its red carpet, its gilded chairs. All these scenes are implied. On the wall there is a row of deer heads, the does of the etching in the *chasse* scene, naturalised, decapitated. The head face the chair; the chairs attend an audience, occupied only by birds, each holding an embroidered handkerchief in its beak. Around each neck is a red ribbon, like that sported in defiance by those attending the *bals de victimes* (which may be apocryphal). They came to prominence after the death of Robespierre, first mentioned in popular writing in 1797. They are supposed to have been attended by those who lost a member of their family under the Terror, and, their property now restored to them, they established aristocratic, even decadent balls. Some attendees wore mourning clothes; others wore elaborate costumes. Women dressed in the style of the *merveilleuses*, in Greco-roman attire, sandalled or barefoot (for one went barefoot to the *guillotine*). Women and men alike often wore a red ribbon around the neck, at the point the blade of the *guillotine* would have made its fatal cut.

The birds range from a tiny sparrow to a magpie. The handkerchiefs are embroidered by the artist in red *soie de Paris* with the slogans of the Revolution, of which there were many variations during the Revolutionary years. Revived in 1830, in the short-lived revolution of that year, the present motto was not adopted officially until 1848, the year of revolution that came too soon. *Soie de Paris* is a filament silk, reeled from the silk cocoon, with a high sheen, difficult to work for its snags on rough fingers and must be controlled. Redwork embroidery is a simple technique, worked in a single shade of thread, first made popular in the 1800s due to the colourfast nature of red dye. The stitch is satin stitch, used often for monograms. The night before he was guillotined (28 July 1794) Robespierre tried to kill himself with a pistol but only shattered his lower jaw (there is another version of this: the *gendarme* Charles-André Merdra claimed to have shot him). In the room of the Committee of Public Safety he lay on the table until a doctor was summoned to attempt to staunch the bleeding from his jaw. Robespierre's last recorded words may have been '*Merci, monsieur,*' to a man who had given him a handkerchief for the blood on his face and clothing.

The final *tableau* is the scene of an execution. On 28 July 1794 Robespierre went to the *guillotine* in Place de la Révolution, without trial. When clearing Robespierre's neck, the executioner tore off the cloth holding his shattered jaw in place, causing Robespierre to produce an agonised scream until he was silenced by the fall of the blade. He was buried in a common grave. A Stockman mannequin *circa* 1871 is headless; around its neck is a lace *jabot*, intricately worked in lace, both needle and bobbin. The *jabot* appears to be bloodstained but in fact the thread has been dyed with *garance* before being worked. The blood, one might say, is there from the beginning. The support for the *jabot* is an ivory satin called *Duchesse*, usually used in bridal wear, now seemingly soaked in blood. It has also been used to line the red leather slippers in the pastoral scene. The mannequin stands on a red nappa lambskin, from which, as noted already, the shoes are made also. My supplier tells me that their gorgeously soft nappa lamb skins make simply luxury products, where a luxurious lightweight tempered touch is required. There is a boar's head on the wall, and an etching of a boar brought down by dogs. On 9 Thermidor Robespierre was denounced by members of the National Convention. Robespierre's political thought was influenced by Rousseau (though the historian Sophie Wahnich argues that this is less than is generally believed), to whose spirit he writes:

I want to follow your venerable path, though I may leave nothing but a name of which centuries to come shall be wholly incurious. I shall be happy if, in the perilous course that an unprecedented revolution has just opened up before us, I remain constantly faithful to the inspiration that I have from your writings.

The other etching in the room depicts the tomb of Rousseau. This is taken from a *toile* designed by Huet, after Jean Michel Moreau. Rousseau died on 2 July 1778, and was buried on the Île des Peupliers, Ermenonville. Sixteen years later he was interred in the Panthéon. In the spring before his death he collected botanical specimens and taught botany to the son of his host, the Marquis Girardin. Girardin commissioned Rousseau's tomb from Hubert Robert and it was sculpted by Le Sueur. It is far from the common grave of Robespierre in the Errancis cemetery, conceived as a charnel-house, later closed and the skeletal remains moved to the

catacombs *circa* 1848. Girardin had radical political ideas. In 1787 he barred aristocratic hunters, who claimed the right to hunt anywhere, from his park, proclaiming: ‘The carpenter is master of his own house.’ He fled France to return after the start of the Revolution, joining the Jacobins in 1790.

The final room of the exhibition is reserved for a screening of a short film, entitled *L’Invitation au voyage*. *Toiles de Jouy* are folded and unfolded, as though it were possible to read them like a book. The music at the beginning and end is taken from Leo Ferré’s 1957 recoding of Baudelaire’s poems, and promises a lovely voyage. A voiceover reads the cargo-lists of the slave ships, held in the National Archives. There are the names of cloths, the *indiennes*, first from India then produced in France, also called *madrás*, *pékin*, *perse*, *gougouran*, *damas*, the *guinées*, a blue-dyed cotton *mousseline* that is in its name both a cloth and a region. It makes for salutary listening; one might almost calculate the price of a body, subject to the rate of exchange and also subject to fashion. The inflows of European wealth and commodities linked to the largest forced migration in history. In lieu of violence, slaves were bargained for, exchanged for coloured and printed cloths. Robespierre opposed slavery on French soil or in French territories and played an important role in abolishing it. He denounced the slave trade in a speech before the Convention in April 1793. The radical constitution supported by Robespierre and the Montagnards, ratified by a national referendum, granted universal suffrage to French men and explicitly condemned slavery:

Ask a merchant of human flesh what is property; he will answer by showing you that long coffin he calls a ship [...]. Ask a gentleman [the same] who has lands and vassals [...] and he will give you almost the identical ideas.

— Robespierre, ‘The Principles of Property’, 24 April 1794

The solitary viewer may rest for a while, accepting this invitation to a voyage, gently rocking, leaning back against the painted image of Rousseau, who did not denounce slavery in his writings. The value of slaves and the good exchanged to buy them was measured in pieces of cloth, leading to their euphemistic designation as *pièces d’Inde*. Human beings, then, are equivalent to commodities, and as Marx writes:

political economy conceals the estrangement in the nature of labour by ignoring the direct relationship between the worker (labour) and production. It is true that labour produces marvels for the rich, but it produces privation for the worker [...] it produces beauty, but deformity for the worker. it replaces labour by machines, but it casts some of the workers back into barbarous forms of labour and turns others into machines.







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