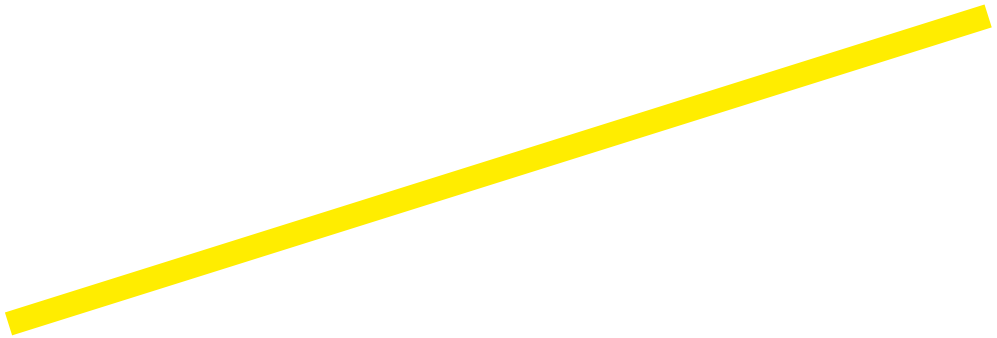


Learning



for



Life





Learning

for

Life

Exhibition catalogue

A project by Ane Hjørt Guttu and Tone Hansen

Henne Onstad Kunstcenter

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Learning for Life: A Project about Life in School

Tone Hansen

The vast majority of us spend the better part of our childhood and teen years in school. Many of us continue with several years of higher education. Some of us never leave school, choosing to work in academia after completing our studies. School teaches our wee ones how to divvy up the day between work and play, leisure time and homework, between discipline and freedom, between activity and sitting still. Education no longer ends with one's entrance into the workforce. Most of us will supplement our knowledge and expertise with professional courses and other forms of post-higher educational programs as a part of our life at work. Education is seen as the foundation for a good life and a healthy society. Dropping out is catastrophic.

Museums have also to a greater extent assumed an educational capacity. The museum's pedagogical objectives have evolved from being closely connected to the curator's exhibition making and research work to fostering independent departments within the museum, separated from the curators' and conservators' activities.

Many artists have taken an interest in and explored the relationship between freedom and discipline and the role of education within this relationship. "Learning for Life" has been a unique process in several ways. Artist and fellow at the Oslo National Academy of the Arts Ane Hjort Guttu and I have developed "Learning for Life" over an extended period of time, and the project is closely connected to Guttu's artistic research work.

Our objective with "Learning for Life" is to investigate how school as an institution has been represented in art over time and across various traditions. More importantly, we have sought to focus attention on the notion of art as a liberating force. Ane Hjort Guttu's introduction in this

catalogue elaborates on this particular aspect, and is followed by detailed information about the individual artworks, artists, and objects included in the exhibition.

Chronologically, "Learning for Life" spans the period from the 1900s up until today and includes new works produced specifically for the exhibition. Certain historical objects and archival material have been procured on loan, and important films and television series are also included.

The exhibition brings together cultural history and works of art, and allows us to pose such questions as: Which technological abilities were necessary in our society at the dawn of public education? By contrast, which capabilities does contemporary society require of its future citizens? What does art have to say about this, and what role can our experience and understanding of art play in the lives of society's future citizens?

Today, arts and crafts is a so-called elective subject in professional teacher education programs, and the arts are under-prioritized in primary and secondary school curriculums. Yet we live in a visual culture, perpetually bombarded with images from all possible directions. We communicate by means of images, we have commodified the visual image and images have thoroughly transformed the fabric of our lives. Thus the de-emphasis on the arts in education leaves an entire generation ill-equipped to analyze and critically evaluate the visual phenomena that surround us. If our schools cannot bestow critical, visual competence due to inadequate means of assessing development and quality, then our art institutions are compelled to assume this responsibility. Our experience of art is contingent upon being in space and developing a sense of our surroundings. Art and art institutions provide space, an arena for gathering together, where one can experience things in the company of others, over a period of time, and in three dimensions.

The impetus for "Learning for Life" came in 2010 when the Henie Onstad Kunstsenter (HOK) was invited to participate in a major European collaborative project initiated by Barbara Steiner, the then director of the Museum of Contemporary Art (GfZK) in Leipzig. After a lengthy collaborative process involving fourteen

other curators from several different European institutions, three scenarios for a future Europe were presented in three exhibitions in Leipzig from 2011 until 2012, affording the curatorial team the opportunity to test portions of the project. This major undertaking, "Europe (to the Power of) n," now continues with fourteen exhibitions in as many cities across Europe, made possible with funding from the European Union's Culture Programme and the Goethe-Institut in Germany. "Learning for Life" is a part of this initiative, and a number of the exhibition's projects already have or will tour under its aegis.

This long gestation leading up to the exhibition at HOK has enabled us to reflect on our own institution's role as a place for production and knowledge on all levels, and to contemplate precisely what changes are required if we are to meet the challenges postulated by the exhibition. The social responsibility of the art institution has been on the agenda since the 1970s when many art professionals argued that museums should prioritize the active cultivation of their audience. Relatively quickly, the institution's role evolved from being a place with classic museological functions – acquisition, conservation, research, and exhibition – to being a place with increasing emphasis on the development of an audience.

At HOK, what had long been called the *barneverksted*, or "children's workshop," (and is now called HOK LAB) lived a transient life: sometimes prioritized, other times hidden away, relegated to one or another basement space. The workshop has had a permanent encampment since the exhibition space we refer to as *Storsalen* was built in an area under this room – a spacious, but not particularly visible part of the museum's structure down a dark stairwell, behind a heavy, grey door.

Over the course of 2012 and with the help of consulting architects, we have made a dramatic change. The wall that divided the cellar floor in two has been removed and the space allotted to HOK LAB has been doubled, creating a 300-square-meter, open-concept studio with room for a variety of activities.

In "Learning for Life" we have developed a specific program for the workshops in collaboration. Kulturskolen's photography school has been

exploring the theme of daily life at school, and their photographs are included in "Learning for Life" as an essential reminder of young people's perspective. The museum's Sunday program for children is incorporated into the exhibition with a project that takes its title from that of Nils Christie's book, *Hvis skolen ikke fantes* (What If School Didn't Exist): together the kids will create a large mural on the west plateau over the course of the exhibition period.

Posters from several Oslo-area schools serve as the departure point for a workshop for children and youths who will use them to create their own texts and poems.

Many deserve our thanks. Collaborating with Ane Hjort Guttu has been an untraditional process and a unique way for the institution to work long-term with a particular set of issues. The artists have contributed with many exceptional works. Barbara Steiner, who is heading the major European network we are participating in, has given us the opportunity to engage in discourse with a large, international collegium. Oslo Skolemuseum (Oslo School Museum) has demonstrated great faith in this project by its willingness to loan handwriting exercises from Christiania's public schools dating as far back as 1900, as well as samples of pupils' handwork from the 1950s up until today, and we hope that this exhibition will generate new interest in the school museum's unique collection. The Munch Museum, MACBA, Moderna Museet, Preuss Photo museum, Darcy Lange Foundation, *Camera Austria*, and several Norwegian archives have all generously put works at our disposal and made the historical perspective possible. Musikk- og kulturskolen i Bærum (Cultural Evening School) has contributed to realizing HOK LAB. "Learning for Life" has received support from a number of organizations in addition to our primary underwriters, the Goethe-Institut and the EU's Culture Program. Fritt Ord Foundation, Mondriaan Foundation, Gulbenkian Foundation, Norsk Kulturråd, as well as Nordic Culture Point are also gratefully acknowledged for their generous contributions that have made possible the catalog, anthology, and the upcoming seminar in 2013.

The Child is father of the Man;
I could wish my days to be
Bound each to each by natural piety.

William Wordsworth, 1802

School Criticism Is Social Criticism

Ane Hjort Guttu

Historien (History), Edvard Munch's monumental painting in the University of Oslo depicts an old man and a little boy under a tree. It appears as though the boy is listening while the man is speaking. But he's not lecturing; perhaps he's telling a story or recounting tales from his own life. The boy is looking straight ahead, apparently deep in thought about what he is hearing. *History* is a depiction of teaching and learning from an era before schools were established as institutions for teaching us certain things in certain ways. Just as children learn to crawl, stand up, walk, talk, sing and play on their own, we learned all manner of things, prior to the invention of school, simply by participating, watching, listening, and trying.

We have tried to approach the exhibition "Learning for Life" with a similarly open frame of reference.

The Norwegian criminologist Nils Christie published his polemic "*Hvis skolen ikke fantes*" (What if School Didn't Exist) in 1971. Perhaps now and then we still need to ask that question. And if there was no such thing as school, what kind of people would we be then? What would learning be? A society without school would be a different society. And consequently; How can we understand our society through today's school? As adults we can peek into the school window and observe a kind of model world populated with small people going about their business. Where is this business heading?

In his book about the 17th century pedagogue Joseph Jacotot, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, the French philosopher Jacques Rancière writes:

To explain something to someone is first of all to show him he cannot understand it by himself. Before being the act of the pedagogue, explication is the myth of pedagogy, the parable of a world divided into knowing minds and ignorant ones, ripe minds and immature ones, the capable and the incapable, the intelligent and the stupid(...). The superior intelligence(...) allows the master to transmit his knowledge by adapting it to the intellectual capacities of the student and allows him to verify that the student has satisfactorily understood what he learned. Such is the principle of explication. From this point on, for Jacotot, such will be the principle of enforced stultification.

The Ignorant Schoolmaster describes Jacotot's alternative, "universal education," and recounts how the teacher's Flemish students taught themselves French with the aid of one book and their own self-confidence. One of Rancière's main points is to discuss pedagogical method; pedagogics is not simply concerned with the transfer of a certain amount of information or a particular skill from one individual to another. Inherent in this transfer is underlying ideology, acknowledged roles, and power. Rancière claims, for example, that the process of explaining something to someone comprises not only the depositing of a certain measure of information, but also the notion that someone must do the explaining while someone else must be explained to (i.e., that one needs to be taught in order to understand.) In this way, inequality is incorporated in traditional pedagogics.

This type of complex awareness of the structural sides of the pedagogical institution is entirely absent from discourse on schooling in Norway and Scandinavia today. But it hasn't always been so. A very simplified run-through of the development of primary schools in Scandinavia over the last 100 years describes a movement where school in the postwar era first gravitated towards a consolidated *enhetsskole* with a certain reform-pedagogical ideology. Some of those involved in the public school debate in Scandinavia were, for example, deeply influenced by the psychologist and pedagogue John Dewey, and there was widespread enthusiasm for a more experimental and egalitarian pedagogics. According to Norwegian historian Harald Thuen, this trend's paramount manifestation in Norwegian was the new national curriculum in 1974, the so-called Mønsterplanen or "model plan." By the middle of the 1980s the trend shifted, and school moved towards the results-oriented *kunnskapsskole* (knowledge school). This trend was adopted by means

of a few particular, significant reforms, such as the *friskolereformen* (independent school reform) of 1991 in Sweden and Reform -94 in Norway. At the same time, champions of progressive pedagogy fell somewhat silent and were replaced by more right-wing-oriented critics invoking Norwegian pupils' lack of skills and weak performance on international tests.

This entire course of events can be traced in "Learning for Life," although examining the ideological debate is not the exhibition's intent. The importance of analyzing and critiquing our school system has always lain in understanding and critiquing society via the microcosm that school represents. School is a power apparatus, and quite possibly the public institution with the most effective influence on the population. A critique of school thus functions as social criticism. Yet the overriding public debate on school's role and significance in contemporary society has been replaced by a number of "lesser" debates – about student performance, segregation, subsidized meals, homework. These are important discussions, to be sure, but they obfuscate our ability to look at education and *Bildung* in the greater context. We need to ask the bigger questions – about knowledge, about teaching and learning, about coexistence.

In "Learning for Life" we have taken the question of freedom as a departure point. What is freedom? And how can we learn to be free in an institution where the prevailing methodologies reside in subordination? This question has confounded pedagogical theory for several hundred years; Immanuel Kant put it quite succinctly in *On Education* in 1803:

One of the major problems in education is how subjection to lawful restrictions can be combined with the ability to make use of one's own freedom... How shall I cultivate freedom under conditions of compulsion?

In philosophy this conundrum is called the pedagogical paradox, and it neatly describes the strain between autonomy and paternalism, a perpetual concern in pedagogical contexts. Take for example the teacher who encourages free and open discussion in the classroom, but nevertheless insists on setting rules for how the discussion is to proceed. Or another example: a "family council" is established, and yet the most important matters are resolved by the parents. This is a paradox that we encounter daily in raising our children. It is perhaps irreconcilable, yet none the less it ought to be discussed again and again.

The primary objective of “Learning for Life” is to examine the pedagogical paradox through art. A number of the works in this exhibition reflect and elaborate on the history of school critique. They may take the form of documentary depictions, visual analyses, or research projects on school conditions. One notable example is the Swedish director Carin Mannheimer’s television series, *Lära för livet* (Learning for Life), which has also given the exhibition its title. The series of six episodes first aired in 1977. It was immensely popular and sparked intense debate on working and teaching conditions in the schools.

Other projects in “Learning for Life” are concerned with alternatives to the rigidity of the average school day. These works portray dissidents and rebels, or visualize forms for refurbishing or restructuring the school’s organization. Some of these works reject the educational institution entirely by referring to life outside of it. The first episode of Norwegian TV series *Ante* for example juxtaposes life with a flock of reindeer on the Finnmark plateau against that of Ante’s boarding school.

Finally there are a number of artworks that do not directly address the subject of school at all, but rather look at artistic and aesthetic activity itself as an alternative lifestyle. These works emphasize the liberating potential inherent in artistic endeavor through individual and revolutionary strategies. In Kjartan Slettemark’s *Leksjoner i kunsten å falle* (Lessons in the Art of Falling) (1968), the artist is acting as a teacher of balance, and of falling. Here artistic activity is closely aligned with explorations of conditions of freedom.

“Learning for Life” is a study of intersecting activities and their conditions in the transition between industrial society and a knowledge-based economy. The project is about art’s ability to postulate complex questions and respond with controversial answers. The aesthetic arena, or more precisely, each and every art experience, is an open space where it is possible to think new thoughts. The Danish artist Palle Nielsen is participating in “Learning for Life” with documentation from his 1968 project at Moderna Museet: *Modellen: En modell för et kvalitativt samhälle* (The Model: A Model for a Qualitative Society). Here the entire main exhibition space of the museum was transformed into a playground for children. From the catalog preface:

There is no exhibition.

It is only an exhibition because the children are playing in an art museum.

It is only an exhibition for those who are not playing.

This quote succinctly illustrates the ability to see the bigger picture through someone else’s eyes. What may be an exhibition for one is a playground for another. It is this pure wonder, this unadulterated perception that children have in common with artists, which today’s instrumentalized school is incapable of safeguarding.

Our schooling could have been an artistic process, one where we constantly relied on our instincts to explore forms and materials, signs and images, where we continually asked questions about the realities of life, about how we can engage ourselves and others and exceed our limitations. And not least, where we could work with alternatives to the hierarchical rift between those who can and those who can’t, those who instruct and those who take instruction. The haves and the have-nots, the ones at the top and the ones at the bottom.

William Wordsworth’s *My Heart Leaps Up*, quoted above, includes the famous line: “The Child is father of the Man.” The poem, also known as *The Rainbow*, is about being able to capture exactly the same feeling upon seeing a rainbow that you felt when you were little. The poet, as an old man, yearns to possess a “natural piety,” what we can interpret in this context as the child’s piousness: the sense of pure wonder. Hence the artists in “Learning for Life” and Wordsworth’s kin’s answer to the pedagogical paradox: as adults we must learn from the children we once were.

**from
A til Z**

Jeannette Christensen

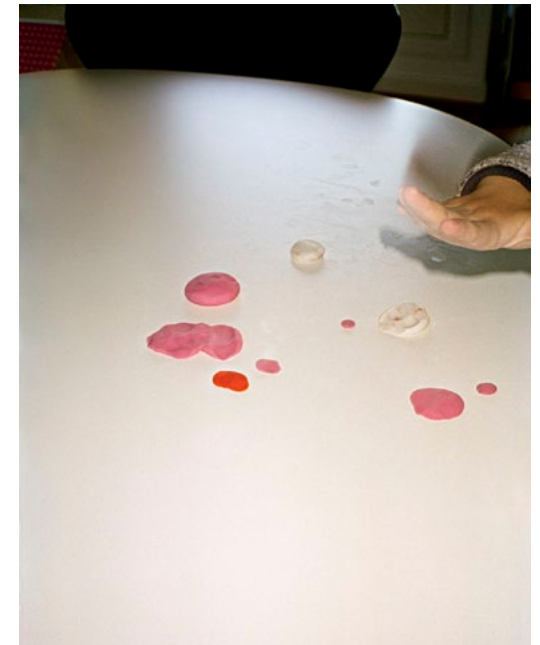
The Philosopher's Stone, 2004
School desk, granite

Exercises (I), 2002.
4 C-prints

The Philosopher's Stone is a mythical, alchemical substance with many properties. It is said to be able to turn base metals, such as lead, into gold, but it has also been viewed as the "elixir of life" with the potential to cure suffering and make humans immortal. The main task for Eastern and Western alchemists throughout the Middle Ages was to produce this elusive substance in different ways, and the history of alchemy is, in large part, the story of this laborious task. "Learning for Life" presents two works by Jeannette Christensen: a sculpture titled *The Philosopher's Stone* (2004), which consists of a heavy rock placed on top of a school desk, and the photographic series *Exercises (I)* (2002). The sculpture consists of cut granite based on a clay model; the four photographs depict children's hands shaping small balls of Plasticine, which are pummeled flat and rolled again – a potentially endless task of rolling and pummeling. These works have previously been shown at the Vigeland Museum in Oslo, where they were juxtaposed with the museum's sculpture of a fully developed fetus.

Together, these two works create a productive ambiguity. The granite rock on the desk is heavy and static, yet the title offers the possibility of an alchemical, refining process. The photographs may represent a positive counterweight to the almost somber sculpture, showing that the tiny hands have an ability to shape or transform their environment. Or is the case rather that children, from infancy and onwards, are destined to perform monotonous tasks – perfected to increasingly heavy stones as the years pass?

Jeannette Christensen (b. Oslo, 1958) lives and works in Oslo. In addition to a comprehensive national and international artistic practice, she has been teaching since 1998. She was head professor of the *Mur og Rum* Department at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen (1998–2000); Professor II at the Bergen Academy of Art and Design (2000–07); and has been Professor at the Academy of Fine Art in Oslo since 2010. The book *Fragments of Matter* concerning Jeannette Christensen's work, written by the Dutch cultural theorist Mieke Bal, was published in 2009.



Jeannette Christensen
Øvelser (I), 2002
C-print



Jeannette Christensen
Philosopher's stone, 2004
Desk and granite stone
Courtesy of Sørlænds Kunstmuseum
In foreground: Gustav Vigelandt: *Fetus*, 1923
Photo: Jiri Havran

Joost Conijn

Siddieqa, Firdaus, Abdallah, Soelayman, Moestafa, Hawwa, Dzoel-kifl, 2004
Video, 44 min.

Joost Conijn's video *Siddieqa, Firdaus, Abdallah, Soelayman, Moestafa, Hawwa, Dzoel-kifl* portrays seven siblings in a Dutch-Muslim family. They live in a port area outside Amsterdam that was previously dominated by the ADM Shipyard and is now occupied by homeless people. Over the course of a year, Conijn lived in a caravan next to the family, documenting the brothers and sisters as they played, scavenged for food, shared meals, and roamed the derelict industrial expanse. There is a hint of a gender divide, but otherwise the children operate on their own, seemingly unsupervised. They do not attend school.

Conijn's unsentimental camera faithfully records this independent life. He makes no attempt to explain the economic and social circumstances around the family. The aim is rather to portray the children as competent individuals. They move through the film in a semi-wild state, balanced between severe neglect and infinite, almost incomprehensible, freedom. *Siddieqa, Firdaus, Abdallah, Soelayman, Moestafa, Hawwa, Dzoel-kifl* is, according to Conijn, "made in the same way as a wildlife documentary: you sit waiting with your camera, patient and alert, for something to happen."

Joost Conijn (b. 1971, Amsterdam) lives and works in Tilburg, the Netherlands. Recent projects include the group exhibitions "GAGARIN The Artists in their Own Words," Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst, Ghent (2009); "Lover in the age of postponed democracy," Kunsthalle Luzern (2009); "Morality Act III," Witte de With, Rotterdam (2010); Prague Biennial (2011); and La Triennale, Paris (2012). He has recently published the book *Piloot van Goed en Kwaad* (Pilot, for better or worse), which was turned into a stage production for Amsterdam's Municipal Theatre (SSBA).



Joost Conijn
Siddieqa, Firdaus, Abdallah, Soelayman, Moestafa, Hawwa, Dzoel-kifl, 2004
Stills

Priscila Fernandes

For A Better World, 2012
HD-video, 8,3 min.

Naar de Speeltuin!
(To The Playground!), 2012
HD-video

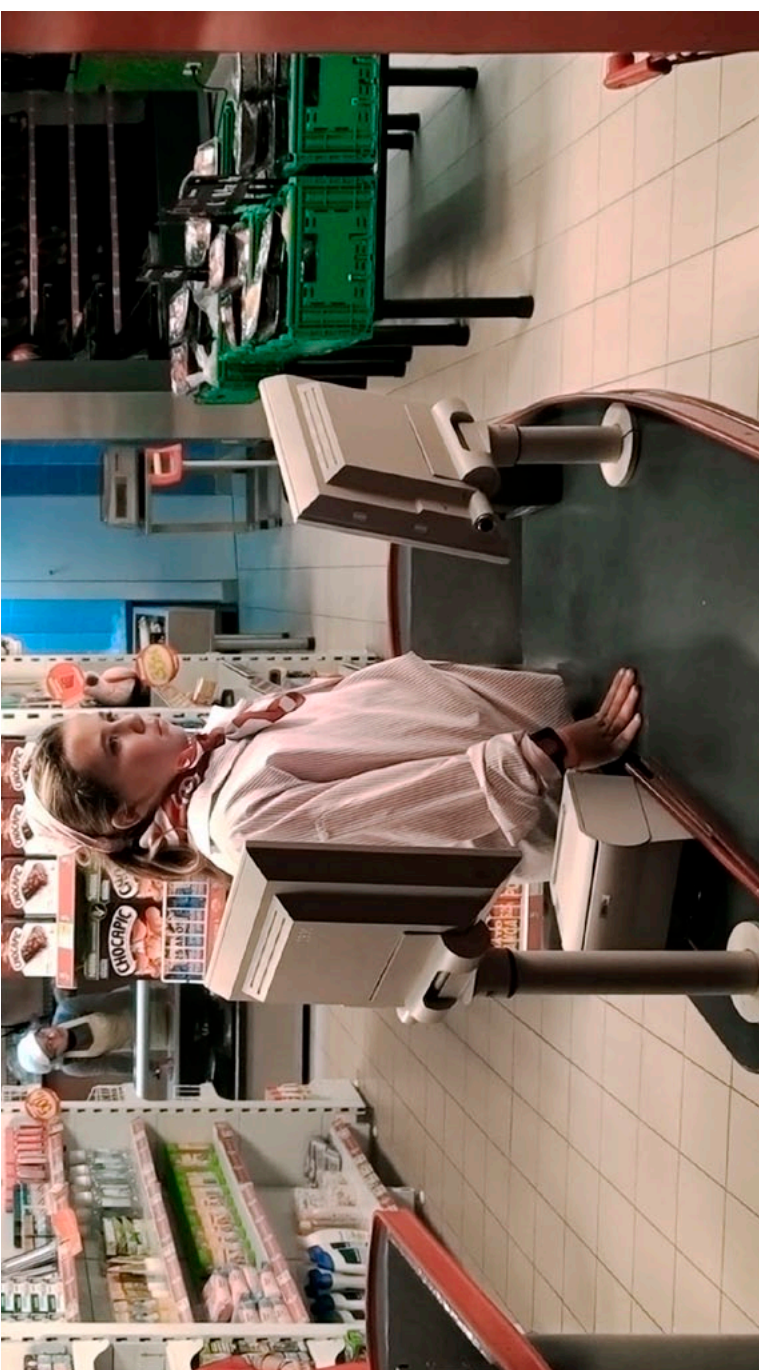
Priscila Fernandes's new moving image work consists of two films set in playgrounds. The first, *For A Better World*, takes place in the Lisbon branch of "KidZania," part of an international corporate chain of play areas for children in large shopping centers. KidZania stages working environments where the children assume various adult vocational roles – sales assistants, chauffeurs, doctors, etc. – within an economic framework where the currency is the "kidZo." Thus, the playground mirrors a real class-based society infused with a competitive computer game logic. Children can move to the next level and make more KidZo if they take a "university course" (a PowerPoint presentation on a computer), for example. And, according to the company's website, KidZania offers "recognizable destinations in the form of 'establishments' sponsored and branded by leading multi-national and local brands." Brand recognition and brand loyalty become an integral part of the children's play area experience.

Fernandes's second location is one of ninety remaining playgrounds in Amsterdam designed by the Dutch architect Aldo van Eyck in 1968. Van Eyck was influenced by Structuralist philosophy and had his own theories on how playgrounds could foster a child's sense of fantasy and creativity. Instead of traditional playground equipment, Van Eyck emphasized simple shapes for building and climbing with undefined and flexible functions. Whereas KidZania promotes a form of pre-determined role-play for social integration, Van Eyck's playground shapes resist any single definition or constraint offering instead an environment of open possibilities. Fernandes has approached these two environments in different ways. At KidZania she documented the children's play with a simple camcorder. At Van Eyck's playground, however, she hired a professional team builder to create a "play program" for *grown-ups* based on classic teamwork strategies for the workplace. As the children play at being adults, the adults play at being children. Fernandes's videos show a growing instrumentalization of play: whether designed to create brand-conscious consumers or promote better working environments and more innovative employees, it is facilitated by private enterprise.

Priscila Fernandes (b. 1981 in Coimbra, Portugal) lives and works in Porto and Rotterdam. Fernandes graduated from the Piet Zwart Institute in Rotterdam in 2010, and has participated in a number of exhibitions, including "Prix de Rome," Smart Project Space, Amsterdam (2011); "Abstract Possible: the Stockholm Synergies," Tensta Konsthall, Stockholm; "After the Future," EVA Biennial International, Limerick; and "Once Upon a Time – No Longer," Apice for Artists, Amsterdam (all 2012). She was the recipient of the Prémio EDP Novos Artistas prize and Basicprijzen from Prix de Rome. Future projects include the group exhibition "The dis-educational turn: re-thinking education in art" at the Fondació Juan Miró, Barcelona in 2013.



Priscila Fernandes
Naar de Speeltuin! 2012
Still



Harrell Fletcher

Ella Aandal

What Do We Do On Monday?, 2012
Workshop documented by still
image projection, written wall text

Harrell Fletcher (b. 1967 in Santa Monica, CA) has produced a number of social art and cross-disciplinary projects since the 1990s. His works have been shown at San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Royal College of Art, London; and the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne. In 2002, Fletcher set up the website *Learning To Love You More* with the American artist Miranda July; a printed version of the project was published in 2007 by Prestel. Fletcher is Associate Professor in art and social practice at Portland State University in Portland, Oregon.

Ella Aandal (b. 2000 in Oslo) is a 7th grade pupil at Lakkegata skole in Oslo. For the academic year 2010–11 she was based at a state school in New York City. She is interested in manga, mathematics, drawing, and the computer game Minecraft. She plays the double bass.

In the summer of 2012, Harrell Fletcher was commissioned to run a workshop at the Henie Onstad Kunstsenter. Fletcher had previously run the seminar *In Sweden, As In The Rest Of The World, It Is Time To Reread "Summerhill"* (2003) in which a group of children from Malmø made sculptures and drawings inspired by A.S Neill's book about the experimental boarding school, Summerhill. For "Learning for Life," Fletcher proposed to work with just one child – twelve-year-old Ella Aandal from Oslo. The idea for the workshop was that Aandal would introduce Fletcher to the city by taking him to places she knew and found significant. They went to the Freia chocolate factory; Outland comic-book shop; Botanical Museum; and mushroom picking; they read Knut Hamsun's *Hunger* aloud and documented their excursions along the way. An important aspect of the project was that the two would make common decisions regarding the finished work, and that Aandal would be paid the same fee as Fletcher. The result is a series of photographs that show Aandal at various locations in Oslo, along with Aandal's notes on each place.

At a glance, this work might seem simple: we observe Fletcher and Aandal at various locations, and afterwards they agree that it was a nice experience. But the project breaks with the conventional structure of a workshop in several ways: the participating child makes decisions and is remunerated for her participation, she is an equal author in the projects, and is responsible for the installation and completion of the project. The overall aim of *What Do We Do On Monday?* is, therefore, to question the power relations that operate in any pedagogical situation. Rather than the finished documentation of the process being particularly radical, the aim of the work is to suggest new and more democratic approaches to museum mediation, participatory art practices, or school pedagogy. *What Do We Do On Monday?* can also fuel a discussion around whether it is possible for two people with such diverging positions appear as equal producers of an artwork.



Harrell Fletcher / Ella Aandal
What Do We Do On Monday? 2012
Still from projection

Ane Hjord Guttu

Freedom Requires Free People, 2012
HD video, 33 min.

How to Become a Non-Artist, 2007
Video, 12 min.

The thirty-three-minute documentary film *Freedom Requires Free People* (2012) is the starting point for the exhibition "Learning for Life." The film depicts an eight-year-old boy, Jens, and his relationship to school, through interviews and documentation of his school day. It soon becomes apparent that Jens is strongly opposed to school and its rules and regulations. At one point he states:

"I feel like everybody come and decide, when they say like: Now we have decided that you should do this, we have decided that you should do that, now you should do this. It is like being in hell, it is like being in the old Egypt when they built those huge pyramids.... At school and... everywhere...I am not allowed to decide for myself. But...I still do it."

In other words: freedom is not something you are granted, but something you seize. Jens consistently tries to seize his freedom, which brings him into conflicts with the staff at the school.

A basic idea of *Freedom Requires Free People* is the study of a person who leads his life according to his own awareness of freedom, or of his own singularity. This awareness makes it necessary to constantly transgress boundaries. The work questions whether today's Norwegian schools promote independence and whether they can foster and safeguard all the varieties of critical thinking.

How To Become A Non-Artist (2007) is a film made up of still images. It documents the artist's four-year-old son as he reorganizes things he finds at home, by placing them in different contexts or combining them in unexpected ways. The voice-over analyzes the meaning of these creative acts and what they indicate. Along with the main protagonist's venture into ever more obscure and unnoticeable "works," we are taken on an art historical journey where his interventions are interpreted as forms of performance and ready-mades towards a final fusion of art and life.

Ane Hjord Guttu (b. 1971 in Oslo) lives and works in Oslo. She has co-curated the "Learning for Life" exhibition with Tone Hansen. Recent exhibitions include "Making is Thinking,;" Witte de Witt, Rotterdam (2011); "Genius Without Knowledge," de Appel Art Centre, Amsterdam (2011); "Szenarien über Europa," Galerie für Zeitgenössische Kunst, Leipzig; "De rike bør bli enda rikere," Kunsthall Oslo; "West to the East," Galleri Y, Minsk (all 2012). Guttu is currently a Research Fellow at the Academy of Fine Art in Oslo.



Ane Hjord Guttu
Freedom Requires Free People, 2012
Stills

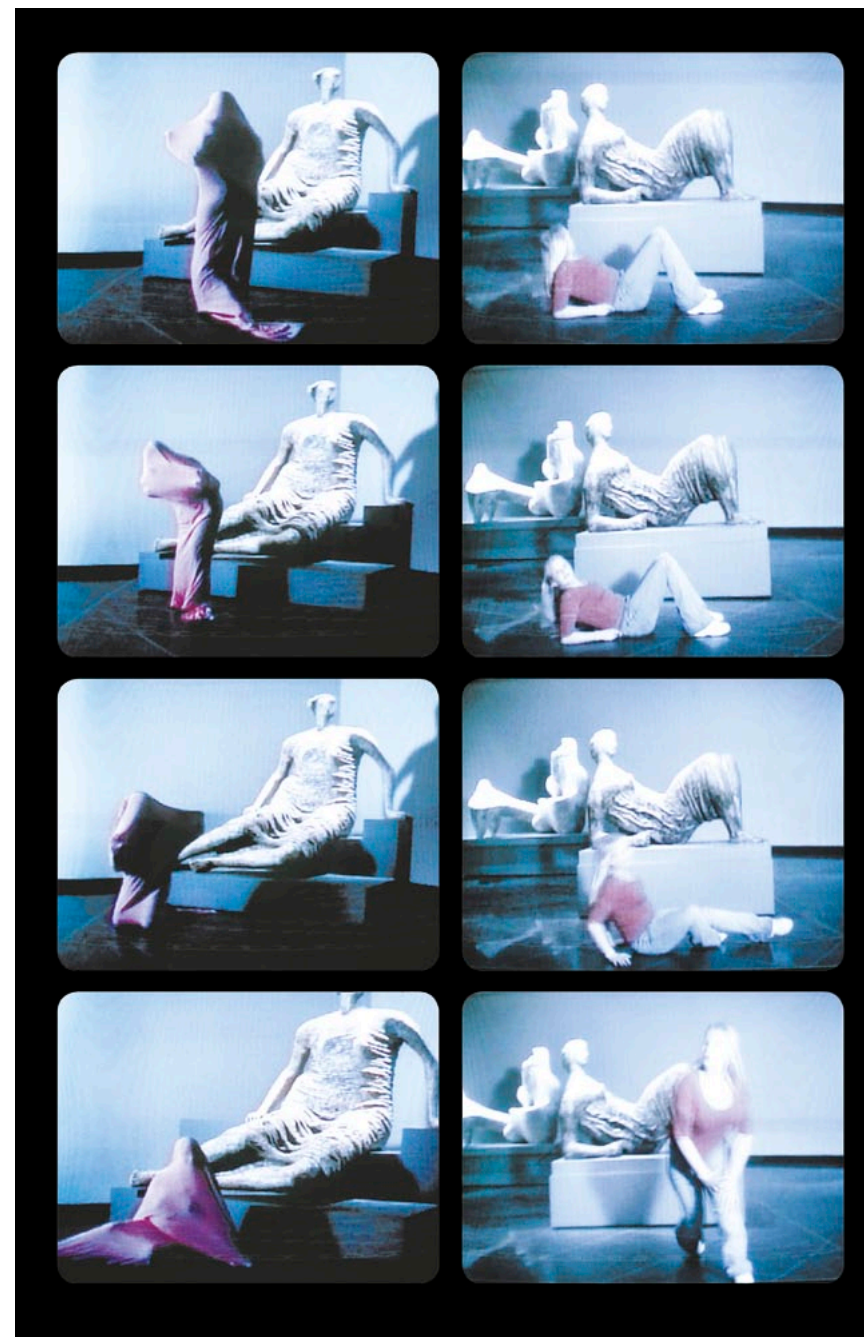
Luis Jacob

Towards a Theory of Impressionist and Expressionist Spectatorship, 2002
Two-channel video, 51 min.

Towards a Theory of Impressionist and Expressionist Spectatorship (2002) is a video installation depicting children encountering the British sculptor Henry Moore's works at the Art Gallery of Ontario in Toronto. The slow-motion recording shows the children dressed in full-length, elasticated costumes and mimicking the abstract sculptures. The children dance around Moore's work as well as "freezing" their movements and turning into sculptures. In this way, the children continuously shift the relationship between themselves and the sculptures through imitation, communicating with them, or by placing themselves in opposition.

For Jacob, this role-play is a way of staging and re-staging dichotomies such as active/passive, figure/ground, or, in this case, impressionist and expressionist reflection. These are Jacob's own terms, and they describe two approaches to looking at art: one analytical and contemplative, and the other active and immersive. In front of Jacob's videos we become exponents of an impressionist, detached form of spectatorship, while at the same time the children we are looking at interact with the sculptures just as the Surrealists contended we should "practice poetry." Why should we look at art? Could we not as easily do it or be it? Can we become one with art? In this way Jacob's approach resonates with other artists in "Learning for Life," such as Palle Nielsen or Kjartan Slettemark. As in Nielsen's *Model For A Qualitative Society* (1968) this blurring of the border between art and life is basically a revolutionary project, and children may teach us something about how to undertake it.

Luis Jacob (b. 1971 in Peru) lives and works in Toronto. In 1998 Jacob was one of the founders of The Anarchist Free School in Toronto, followed by the educational project The Anarchist Free University in 2003. Recent solo exhibitions include "A finger in the pie, A foot in the door, A leg in quicksand," Kunsthalle Lingen, Germany (2012); "The Eye, The Hole, The Picture," McCord Museum, Montreal (2012); "Pictures at an Exhibition," Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art, Toronto (2011); "Without Persons," Art in General, New York (2012); and "Habitat," Hamburger Kunstverein, Hamburg (2008). His work has also been included in group exhibitions at the Generali Foundation, Vienna; Kunsthalle Bern; Contemporary Arts Museum Houston; Documenta 12; and the Taipei Biennial 2012.



Luis Jacob
Towards a Theory of Impressionist and Expressionist Spectatorship, 2002

Abbas Kiarostami

Homework, 1989
35mm film shown as video, 96 min.

Homework consists predominantly of a series of interviews with Iranian schoolboys aged seven and eight, and some of their parents. The children have been selected because they have not done their homework on this given day, and the director, a menacing figure behind dark glasses, asks them why. The children reply that they did not have time, there was nobody to help them, or the living room was too noisy. The next question he asks is: "What do you prefer to do: watch cartoons on TV or do your homework?" The children surprisingly answer the latter.

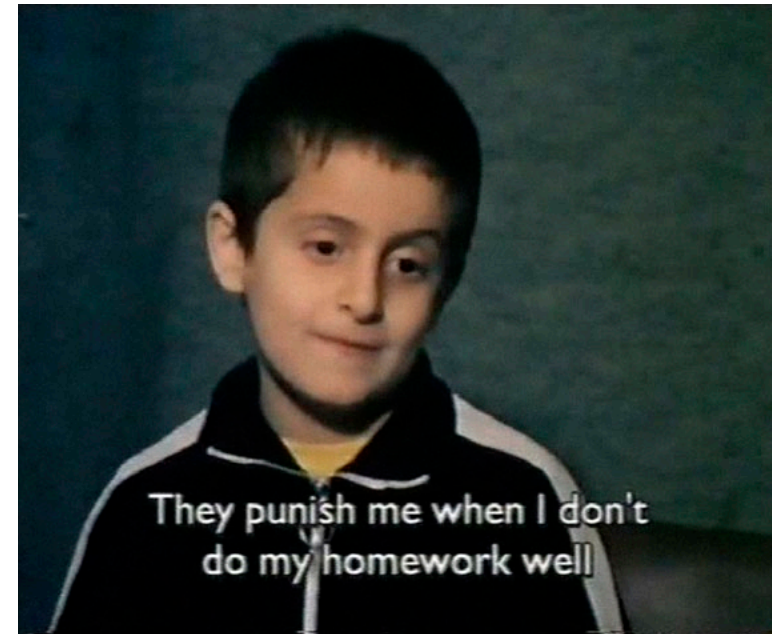
Homework is about unfreedom, lies, and suppression. The children have learnt to respond with what is expected of them, they are consistently guided by the fear of repercussions, and are far removed from their real desires. The interviewer asks them whether they are punished often and what sort of punishment they receive. *Homework* is a brutal film, the interviewer pushes his subjects and the children's faces and reactions are at times heartbreaking.

The film also includes another important feature: the recording of the general assembly in the school yard before and after school. This ritual consists partly of prayer and songs, partly of war mongering against Iraq. The children are concentrated at the outset, but soon their attention drifts and they start chatting and playing during the religious hymns. At the end, the director opts to remove the ambient sound and instead insert the following voice-over:

"In spite of the great care taken by the authorities to ensure a proper running of the ceremony, due to the children's mischievous manner and lack of comprehension, it was performed inappropriately. Out of respect for the ritual, we opted to delete the sound from this section of the film."

Homework was made under censorship in Iran. One, therefore, has to read between the lines to discover any critical devices. The silent scene in the school yard and the powerful final sequence of the film make it clear that *Homework* is both a sharp critique of the school system and a subtle attack on the repressive religious regime in Iran.

Abbas Kiarostami (b. 1940 in Teheran) lives and works in Paris. He is a director, scriptwriter, photographer, and film producer. Kiarostami is an important proponent of the so-called new wave in Iranian film, and has been involved in over forty film productions, including short films and documentaries. Important films of his include *Close-Up* (1990); *The Koker Trilogy* (1987–94); *Through the Olive Trees* (1994); *Taste of Cherry* (1997); and *The Wind Will Carry Us* (1999).



Abbas Kiarostami
Homework, 1988
Stills

Servet Koçyiğit

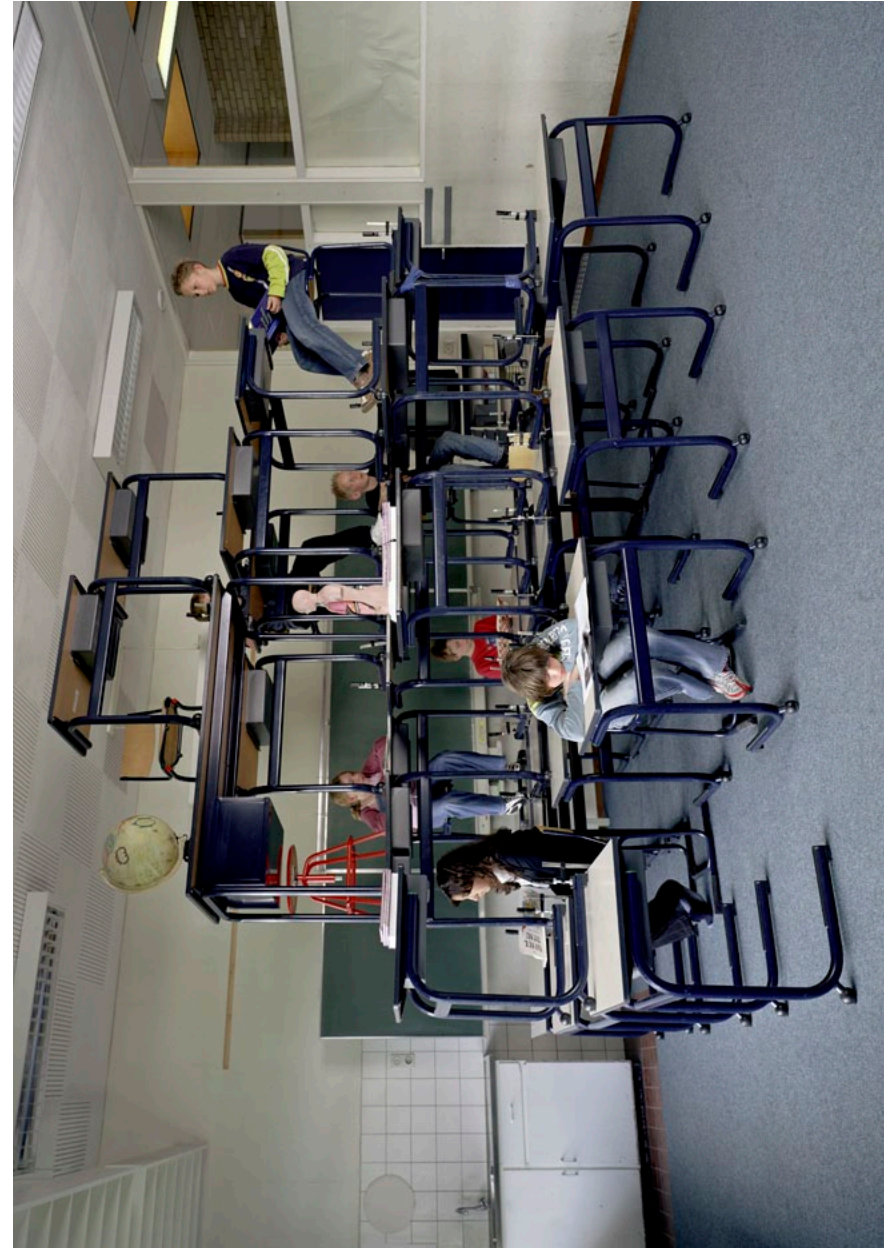
Higher Education, 2006
C-print

Servet Koçyiğit created his photographic work *Higher Education* (2006) for the former De Kleine Biennale (the Little Biennale), a popular art exhibition for children held in the Dutch city of Utrecht. The work is the result of Koçyiğit's collaboration with a group of school children in reorganizing all of the desks in their classroom for a large-scale, staged photograph. The desks were stacked into a pyramid formation with a few of the pupils seated at different levels.

The idea for this work came from Koçyiğit's own years at school in Kaman, Turkey. It was the pupils' task to stack the desks on top of each other every Friday afternoon to clear the way for the cleaning staff that came in during the weekend. And every Monday morning they had to take them all down again and make sure the right chair went with each desk. Koçyiğit has described rearranging the classroom structure at the end of every school week as a special, almost liberating experience.

Koçyiğit's photograph is taken at a distance, as one would do in order to document a monumental sculpture. This lends the work its static, somewhat "frozen" look, as if the pupils have been sitting and will continue to sit there in perpetuity. Given the scale of Koçyiğit's work, the children appear to be looking down on us while viewers are left to gaze up at the empty seats at the top and marvel at what it must feel like to be up there. It is worth noting how schools have incorporated such hierarchical notions of high and low, up and down, into their terminology. An immediate reference for *Higher Education* is the familiar representation of the pyramidal class structure, where one "moves up a rung" with every new supplementary course or class. Yet Koçyiğit's work is ambiguous and can be read both as a visualization of this vertical structure and as a call to school students to build, reorganize and upset the order of things.

Servet Koçyiğit, b. 1971 in Kaman, Turkey. Lives and works in Amsterdam and Istanbul. Koçyiğit works with sculpture, film, and photography. His most recent exhibitions include the solo shows "Inside Series," Chelsea Art Museum, New York (2007); "Good Things are Much Better in Pairs," Givon Art Gallery, Tel-Aviv (2008); "Under the Counter," Outlet, Istanbul (2010); "Ask-Mesk/Love and Other Matters," Rampa Gallery, Istanbul (2012); and the group exhibitions 9 Istanbul Biennale (2005); 27 São Paulo Biennale (2006); The Israel Museum, Jerusalem (2006); "BoysCraft," Haifa Museum of Art, Haifa (2007); "Field Work II," Smart Project Space, Amsterdam (2008); Biennale Cuvée, Linz (2008); "Istanbul Traversée," Palais Des Beaux-Arts Lille (2009); "Zwölf im Zwölfen," TANAS, Berlin (2011).



Servet Koçyiğit
Higher Education, 2006
C-Print, 280 x 400 cm

Darcy Lange

Studies of Three Birmingham Schools, 1976
3 videos, C-prints

Darcy Lange's *Studies of Three Birmingham Schools* (1976) was, in his own view, a research project on the British school system. The work was the first in a series of projects in which he used his own three-step method: first he filmed a class in session; then he let the teachers view the film and recorded them as they responded to it; finally, he repeated the action with the pupils. In this way, Lange was able to present a real situation alongside the protagonists' reactions to that situation. By using this method, which was influenced by the Brazilian pedagogue Paulo Freire's notion of emancipatory education, Lange wanted to use the students' and teachers' awareness of their situation to create an equal relationship during the recording, and for this knowledge to stay with both the protagonists and the people who viewed the film in retrospect.

At the same time, Lange wanted to look at the social situation surrounding the school classes he was working with. He, therefore, selected three different schools that reflected the different social classes in British society. For example, the Ladywood Comprehensive School was located in a working-class neighborhood with a number of immigrants, while the pupils at King Edward's School belonged to the upper middle classes, and the school prepared them for further study at England's most prestigious universities.

Lange described his aim for the work in a text from 1975:

1. To investigate teaching as work.
2. To illustrate the skills of the teacher through vocal and gestural communication with the class and also the class's response to this.
3. To illustrate the process of teaching and learning in the classroom.
4. To illustrate the social breakdown within each class.

(This point may reflect both the class room environment and the demographic/social situation)

5. I am particularly concerned to prevent what I make, whether it be photograph or video, from becoming an end in itself – not dissimilar to the loved art object.'

Lange's primary concern – in both *Studies of Three Birmingham Schools* and in his later work, in which he studied factory workers – was the participants' own experiences and contributions to the project, and he can be considered a pioneer within social and participatory artistic practices.

Darcy Lange (b. 1946 in Taranaki, New Zealand; d. 2005 in Auckland, New Zealand). Lange studied Sculpture at Elam School of Fine Arts in Auckland, New Zealand, and at the Royal College of Art in London, but over time he moved into film, video, and photography. He conducted a comprehensive study of the British working class in the period 1971–75 in Nottingham, Bradford, London, and Scotland, parallel to his studies of the British school system. In 1977, Lange returned to New Zealand and began a long-term collaboration with Maori activists on the *Maori Land Project* (1977–81). In his later works, Lange turned to the study of music and made a number of films with and about musicians and performers.



Darcy Lange
Studies of three Birmingham schools, 1977
Inkjet
© Darcy Lange Estate / Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth. Courtesy Camera Austria, Graz

Erik Løchen

Citizens of Tomorrow: A Film About Oslo's Public Schools, 1950
35mm film transferred to video, 15 min.

Citizens of Tomorrow (1950) was director Erik Løchen's first film, and one of many films commissioned by Oslo City Council in 1946. The objective behind these films was twofold: to act as sources of public information and documentation of how "life was lived in Oslo around 1950" and to become an archive for future generations. Oslo Cinematographers produced 180 such films between 1947 and 1982.

Citizens of Tomorrow shows how Norwegian children would be developed into future citizens through solid, creative and diverse schooling. The film is dynamically composed and opens with a shot of the sky before cutting to newborn children, whom we follow through kindergartens and playgrounds to school. We see the historical building that once housed Lakkegata skole and understand that this now belongs to the past. The next sequence shows a dreary classroom with strict rows of desks and an authoritarian teacher's desk, which then cuts to a shot of desks in clusters and horse-shoe formations. For, as the voice-over proclaims:

"For children, work and play should not be incompatible, but instead the two should exist in a close relationship, for in play we see the origin of all future activities."

The film takes us through different forms of teaching, which today may seem loose and experimental: the children plant trees and gather field samples, they construct and build. Even immediately after the war there was a broad consensus that rote learning was history. In fact, these broadminded pedagogical ideals were probably better established in the 1950s than in today's Oslo schools.

Citizens of Tomorrow is a convincing testament to the faith in the Norwegian comprehensive school that existed after the Second World War. The ambitions for poor Norwegian school children were impressive: in addition to meeting primary needs and promoting an all-round education, the school offered cultural and sports facilities, as well as social activities during the day and in the evenings. At the same time, there is something a tad disturbing about the bio-political totality promoted by the social-democratic system, in which not a single aspect of human life should be overlooked: the school offered food, hygiene, dentistry, swimming lessons and, not least of all, instruction in politics in which the children would practice voting and debating on behalf of a political party. At the end of the film, the camera pans out of the school, over the city and we see the world from above: the educated population is now ready to blossom into responsible members of society.

Erik Løchen (b. 1924 in Oslo; d. 1983 in Oslo) was a filmmaker, scriptwriter and jazz musician. He made around thirty short films and two feature films: *The Hunt* (1959) and *Objection* (1972). He founded ABC-film in 1930 and was the artistic director of Norwegian Film from 1981 to 1983. Løchen is one of the few proclaimed modernists in Norwegian cinematic history, and his feature films are characterized by the influence of French poetic realism.



Erik Løchen
Citizens of Tomorrow, 1950
Stills

Line Løkken

Sandaker VGS. Portrait of a Norwegian High School, 2009, eleven C-prints and book

The book *Sandaker VGS* (2009) contains more than 130 photographs, a small selection of which are on view in "Learning for Life." The book can be seen as a detailed mapping of this specific institution, located on Oslo's inner eastside. Sandaker School opened in 1959 and was, at the time, regarded as one of the largest and most expensive educational buildings in Norway. In the autumn of 2011, the high school was closed and the building is now used as a primary school.

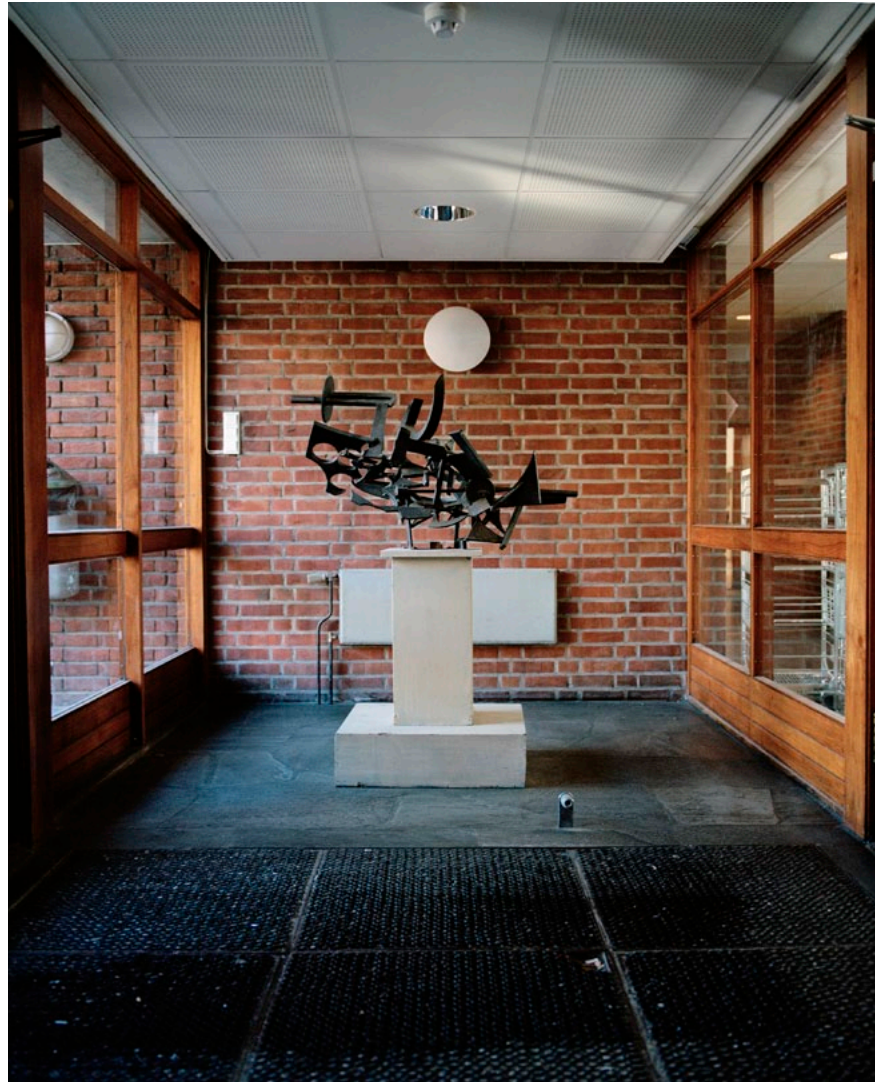
Løkken's photographic approach oscillates between stylized portraits and documentary images of teachers and students in activity, in addition to observations on the school's architecture, interior and different utility objects. We see the recognizable school banner that emerges from its glass case every May 17, the tatty lockers and the 1950s sculpture at the entrance. We have the typical brick corridor where the students hang around and leave their bags.

Løkken writes in a postscript to the book: "I have been concerned with the strong social engagement and enthusiasm that characterizes the school, and I hope that the book highlights this impression." When one portrays the architectural ruins of the social-democratic comprehensive school it is hard to avoid a certain sense of *tristesse*. The project's critical dimension lies in Løkken's humanism, verging on solidarity: she is primarily concerned with showing the strength and vitality present in the school, where an incredible amount of emotions and energy accumulates in a confined space. Oslo City Council's lack of maintenance, the tatty furniture and the somber atmosphere cannot quash the teachers' idealism or the pupils' vitality. The image of the culturally diverse school class from the east side on an excursion through a wet autumnal forest, dressed in hoodies and trainers, could be interpreted as mild Norwegianization at its most helpless. Fortunately, the teenagers keep their spirits up.

Line Bøhmer Løkken (b. 1970 in Vågå) lives and works in Oslo. Løkken has published the books *Pictures and Things* (2004), *Manual* (2006) and *Circular Exercises* (2011). Exhibitions of her photographic work have appeared at Fotogalleriet, Oslo (2009); Kristiansands kunstforening, Kristiansand (2010); and Galerie für Zeitgenössische Kunst Leipzig (2011). Her most recent photographic project *Tøyen Sentrum* investigates the Oslo borough of Tøyen through its architecture, identity, and inhabitants.



Line Løkken
Sandaker VGS #515, 2009
Inkjet



Line Løkken
Sandaker VGS, #550. 2009
Inkjet



Line Løkken
Sandaker VGS, #131. 2009
Inkjet

Carin Mannheimer

Learning for Life, 1977
Television series in six parts,
each episode approx. 30 min.

“Do you know what the most enduring bit of knowledge is that pupils take with them from school? It’s this: You have no say. And neither do your mates. You shall not get involved, but do as you’re told. And what’s the result? Well, a majority that doesn’t have even the faintest idea of the meaning of democracy and autonomy. During nine years of schooling a form of behaviour is instilled into them that is all about competing with their peers. That one should follow instructions without question. And that one should obey one’s superiors and listen to authority.”

Learning for Life (1977) is a Swedish drama series in six parts that followed a graduating college class in Gothenburg in the late 1970s. Written and directed by Carin Mannheimer, it became the focus of intense debate in Sweden at the time – many viewers recognized their own education, the politicians were provoked at how the social-democratic comprehensive school was portrayed. *Learning for Life* became the most popular series in Swedish television history with 3.5 million viewers tuned in to each episode.

The above quote is taken from the final episode. The two teachers, Jan and Katarina, are at a lecture where the speaker, an eager young woman, delivers this tirade. In the car on the way home, Jan is enthused: “What she said was really important.” Katarina responds tersely: “Fine words, indeed.”

There is little doubt that the speaker expresses an important point – she is, in a sense, Mannheimer’s mouthpiece. But Katarina’s lassitude over the politically correct lecture creates an interesting ambivalence and can serve to highlight the history of the education debate in Sweden. Criticism of the passifying, conveyor-belt school system had been on repeat since the 1930s, but remained powerless to effect change. One could claim that this critique, in its updated version, was coopted by rightwing politicians, who used it to create an alternative to the seemingly doomed social-democratic educational system: results-oriented, market-adapted primary education, increasingly removed from the comprehensive school’s ideals of equality.

Carin Mannheimer (b. 1934 in Skåne) lives and works in Gothenburg. Mannheimer is a director, scriptwriter and author. She has published the book *Report on Women* (1969) and has directed a number of TV series including *Nobody could be safer* (1984), *Swedish Hearts* (1987), *Mrs. Marianne* (2001) and *Saltön* (2003), as well as the theatre productions *The Last Dance* (2005) and *In the Final Moments* (2011). Mannheimer received an honorary doctorate from Sahlgrenska Academy at the University of Gothenburg.



Carin Mannheimer
Learning for Life, 1977
Stills

Edvard Munch

History, 1912
Oil on canvas, photographs
and photocopies

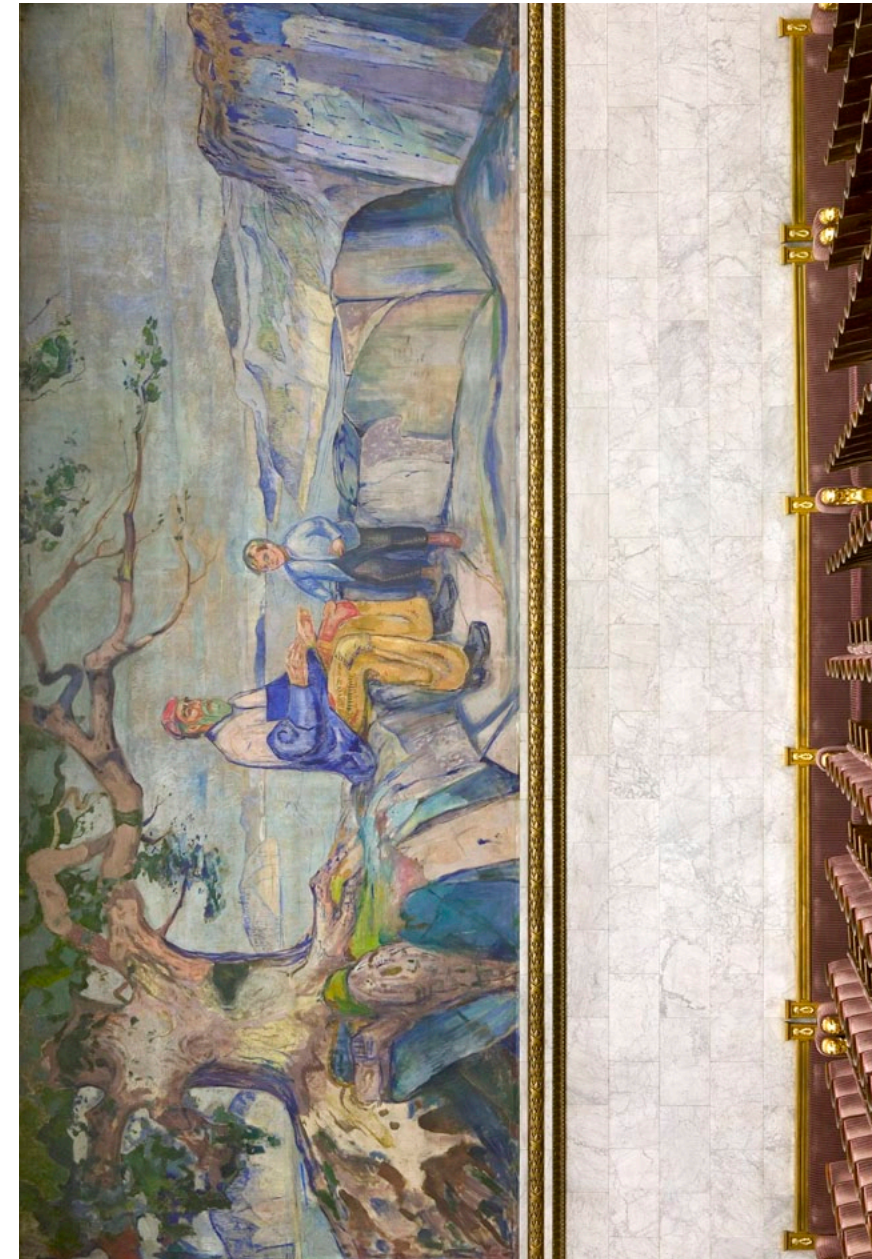
Edvard Munch (b. 1863 in Loten; d. 1944 in Oslo) was a Norwegian painter and printmaker. Munch was commissioned to create only two public art projects: for the auditorium of the University of Oslo (completed 1916) and the cafeteria of the Freia chocolate factory (completed 1922). Munch was at the center of much controversy prior to completing the auditorium commission, and the process was subject to several competitions and much public debate before the decision was finally taken. The motifs in the auditorium murals were reworked in a number of preliminary sketches and drawings, and he also made a number of changes after the works had been completed. During the German occupation, the works were removed and stored in the National Gallery before being moved to a storage unit in the silver mines at Kongsberg. They were returned to the university in 1946 and restored in 2011.

Edvard Munch completed his eleven-part commission for the auditorium at the University of Oslo in 1916. The university was founded in 1811 as the Royal King Fredrik's University, but its centenary could be celebrated in an independent Norway and the artistic commission was, therefore, an important national celebration. Munch worked on the paintings for more than a decade, and considered the works among his most important. His contribution to the auditorium consisted of three main murals, in addition to a number of smaller paintings: *The Sun* on the back wall; *Alma Mater* on the east wall; and *History* on the left wall. The image presented in "Learning for Life" is a sketch for the finished work, which toured Europe in 1911 as part of Munch's bid to get his plans approved.

History shows an old man and a boy beneath a large oak tree. The old man, who, according to Munch, is blind, is sitting on a rock, while the boy – aged about five – stands by his knee. They do not communicate directly with one another. Instead, we can interpret it as if they are both seeing something in their mind's eye: the old man has lifted his arms and is perhaps describing something he has experienced, while the boy is imagining what he is hearing. In other words, they have a kind of common, invisible object in front of them, which they are communicating through, and creating together.

In "Learning for Life" Munch's work represents the oldest and most basic form of teaching. One could argue that Munch depicts an educational model based on equality: the narrator and the listener are positioned as free individuals and they must mobilize their own experiences and imagination to produce knowledge. Christian Krogh – who, incidentally, was the founder of the first Norwegian art school – was highly critical of this choice of motif and argued that a regular fisherman hardly had the requisite historical knowledge to warrant "the proud and strict name of Science." In response, Munch wrote in a text from 1910:

The Sagas of Norway's History were passed down
By Word of Mouth
Legend is preserved in the Language of the People (...)
There is, therefore, nothing to stop a Fisherman or a
Working Man from telling a Boy
The Story of his Country.





Munch's model, Børre Eriksen from Kragerø.
Photo A.F. Johansen, appr. 1910



Edvard Munch
History, study, 1910
Oil (?) and charcoal on canvas

Palle Nielsen

The Model: A Model for a Qualitative Society, 1968

Three slide projections, sixteen photographs, eight vinyl records, three letters, catalogue, and map

The Model: A Model for a Qualitative Society (1968) was originally a collaborative project by several artists, including students, in Stockholm. In the summer of 1968, a number of public art projects were arranged within the artist initiated project "Action Dialogue," and *The Model* was the final project in the series. No single artists were mentioned as taking part in the exhibition and the introduction to the catalog was signed "the Working Group." In retrospect, however, the Danish architect Palle Nielsen has been credited as the main author of the project.

Nielsen had previously designed several playgrounds, including one for the high-rise housing estate Høje Gladsaxe outside of Copenhagen. For Stockholm, he proposed to create an extensive playground in Moderna Museet's large hall. The hall would contain a big climbing frame, carpentry and building tools, large piles of foam rubber, paint, brushes, theatre masques and stage sets. The space would be open to children, who could freely express themselves there. A surveillance camera would be installed in the space so that spectators on the outside could follow the action on monitors. The project included a report with the "findings" of a team of researchers from the Pedagogical Institute in Stockholm. The project catalogue stated:

There is no exhibition.

It is only an exhibition because the children are playing in an art museum.

It is only an exhibition for those who are not playing. That is why we call it 'a model'.

Perhaps it will be the model for the society children want. Perhaps children can tell us so much about their own world that this can also be a model for us.

We hope so.

Therefore, we are letting the children present their model to those who are working with or are responsible for the environment provided for children outside – in the adult world.

The Model is a complex project. It seems open and democratic: the children get to express themselves; they are allowed to play as they wish and "take over" the museum. At the same time, the project has an authoritarian and instrumental undertone so far as children's playtime is staged as a form of political resistance. Today, it might also look dubious that the children are subject to surveillance by the adults outside. We will never be able to experience this project as it was originally conceived. Nevertheless, the photographic material is a testament to the project's energy. In *The Model*, play, (i.e., sensible and sensory experience) is power; it is fundamental, all-encompassing and, at best, revolutionary.



Palle Nielsen
Model for a Qualitative Society, 1968
Slide



Øystein Wyller Odden

Untitled (Group Room), 2012
Sculpture, mixed media.

Øystein Wyller Odden has developed his contribution to the “Learning for Life” exhibition from studies of the Norwegian *baseskole*. Teaching in “base schools” does not take place in a traditional classroom, but at various “bases.” A base will usually consist of several smaller, enclosed spaces around an open learning environment with a varying number of students and teachers who collaborate on the teaching. While its supporters contend that the base school fosters adaptable teaching methods and creates new possibilities for education, its critics argue that this is a typical example of new public management, in which the economics of flexible working environments is more important than the teachers’ and students’ actual needs.

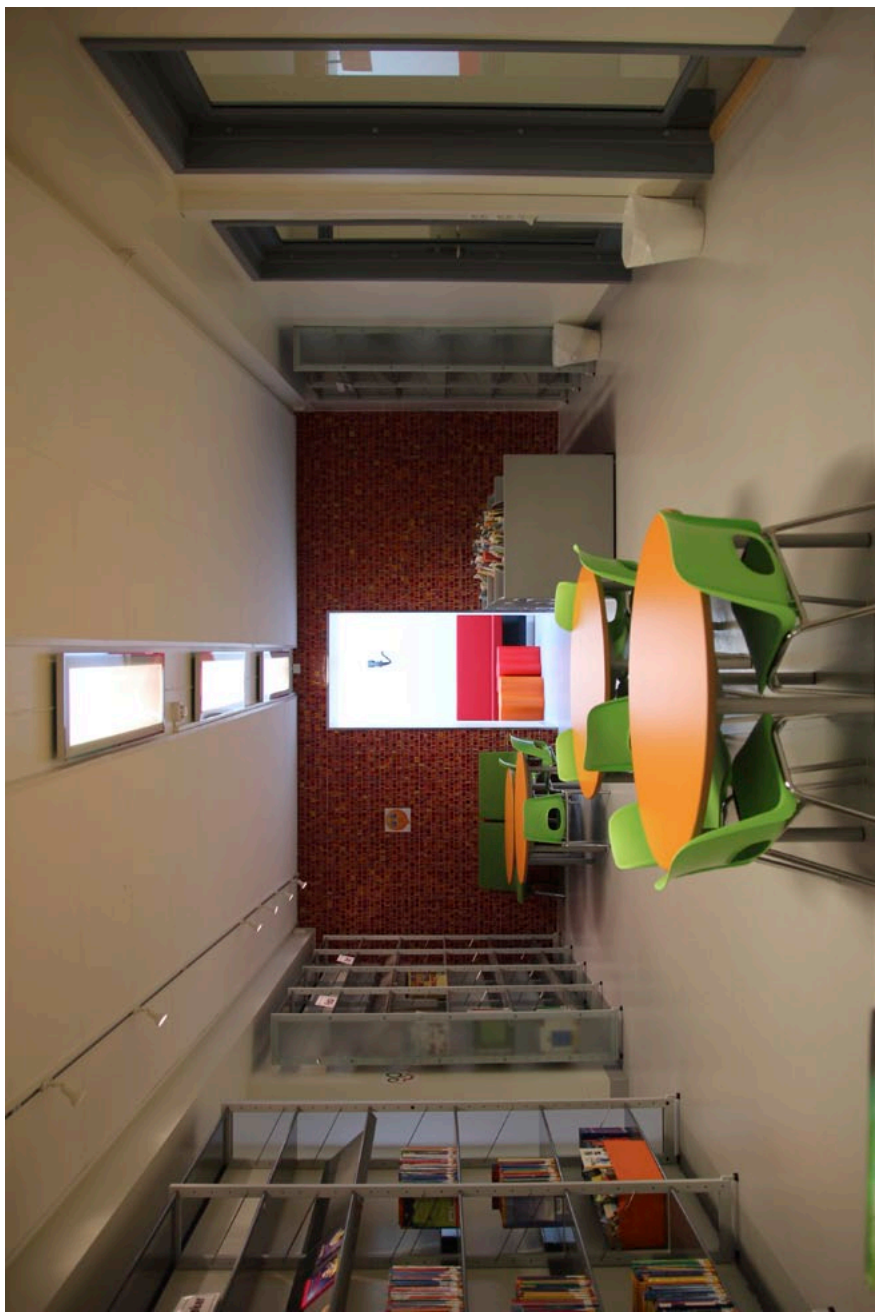
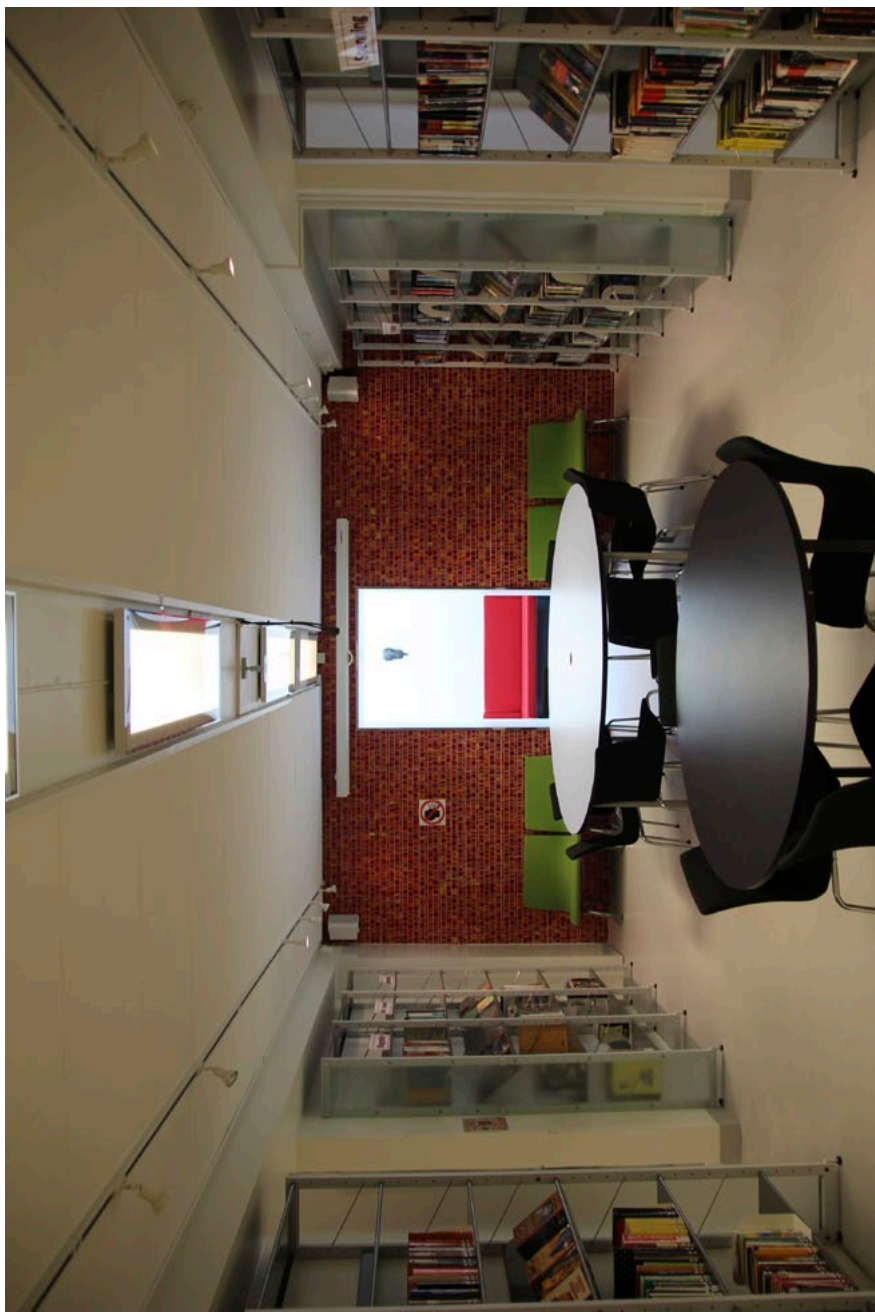
Odden has created a space of 3 × 18 m: corresponding to a flexible building system developed by Oslos Educational Building Agency (Undervisningsbygg). This system is called the Supercube, and is often adapted to new and older school buildings. The technical and spacial standards for group rooms within this system are lesser, since these rooms are not meant to be occupied on a full time basis. Thence, they have lower ceilings and less daylight. Within standardized formats and modules, Odden arranges the typical technological equipment of the projector, the smartboard and the computer speakers. In *Untitled (Group Room)* he displays how the openness conveyed through the use of for example glass walls and doors, is being blocked with plastic or paper to protect the teaching situation.

Odden has a subtle approach to these issues. Being aware of the inherent ideological meaning of architecture and technology, he orchestrates poetic and ambiguous spaces using light and sound from the technical equipment.

Øystein Wyller Odden (b. 1983 in Notodden, Norway) graduated from the Academy of Fine Art in Oslo in 2009. Recent projects and exhibitions include “Sketch for a Re-Enchantment of the World,” Fotogalleriet, Oslo (2011); “Progressive Entrapment,” Holodeck, Oslo (2012); “Sketch for a Re-Enchantment of the World (Tromsø),” Kurant Visningsrom, Tromsø (2012); and the group shows “Supermarket Art Fair,” Stockholm (2011); “Whun Eech Uhnd Evry-Whun Whun,” NoPlace, Oslo (2012); and “Murmur,” Akershus Kunstsenter, Lillestrøm (2012).



Øystein Wyller Odden
Group room.
Photographic study for *Untitled (Group Room)* 2012



Oslo School Museum

Students' work, handwriting, 1900, exercise books, cardboard and miscellaneous documentation

Students' work, needlework, 1920–80, approx. sixty-five works

The Oslo School Museum houses a comprehensive collection of school furniture, teaching aids, books, and students' work from about 1850 to the current day. "Learning for Life" includes two presentations from the museum's collection. The first shows a selection of around 200 exercise books with handwriting by 1–4th grade students from Sofienberg, Grønland, and Oslo (now Gamlebyen) schools. The final page of each book records the pupil's school, grade, name, and age, for example: "Sofienberg skole. 1 klasse. Herman Johannesen. 8 år."

This collection formed part of Christiania Public School's contribution to the World Exposition in Paris in 1900. The participation of the schools at the World Exposition was partly a celebration of the Public Schools Provision of 1889, which awarded all Norwegian citizens equal rights to a basic education, and partly a run-up to national independence in 1905. It was, therefore, a prestigious contribution, imbued with the desire to promote the nation, and the schools won the *Grand Prix* for its display.

The second display from the Oslo School Museum consists of textile works ranging from 1920 to 1980, ordered chronologically. In the *General Plan for the City Public Schools* of 1948, the section "Needlework – Girls" stated:

The aim of the instruction in needlework is...to foster the children's interest and to develop their abilities for practical work by teaching them to keep their clothes in good repair and to make simple garments...to teach them different crafts such as sewing, knitting and crocheting.

This objective remained more or less intact until 1974. Then, the new national curriculum (*Mønsterplanen*) signified a radical break with the existing utilitarian approach to needlework. The subject was now referred to as "giving shape" (*forming*) and the introduction to the curriculum stated:

Aim: the teaching should aim to stimulate the pupils' artistry, their aesthetic sensibility and their means of experiencing the joy of creativity, by developing their abilities to express their ideas and imagination in material form ...

In the "Learning for Life" exhibition, the textiles have been placed along an imaginary timeline, in which the year 1974 is marked by a space. In this way, it becomes easy to see how the redefinition of the subject affected the pupils' textile production.

Both collections are indicative of the remarkably close relationship between the varying political-ideological agendas

and each individual student's work, whether it is in the form of neurotic diligence or colorful creative expression. We can also observe how soon these political changes were taken up in the school, and manifested in the pupils' textile production. In the two displays from the Oslo School Museum we trace the social development down to each stitch or each meticulously copied out letter. Let us nevertheless insist that the many hours of labor and, hopefully, pleasure invested in each single work, radiate beyond political commissions.



Oslo School Museum
Students' work, handwriting. Appr. 1898

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Oslo School Museum
Students' works, needlework. Appr. 1920–1980

Allan Sekula

School is a Factory, 1978–80
Twenty-seven photographs/
text on placard

Allan Sekula (b. 1951 i, Erie, Pennsylvania) lives and works in Valencia, California. Sekula is one of the most prominent living American photographers, a prolific writer and a professor at the California Institute of the Arts. He has had a worldwide exhibition practice since the 1970s, and has had numerous solo exhibitions. He has also participated in many group shows including Documenta, São Paulo Biennial and the Venice Biennale. His works feature in a number of museum collection, including the Fotomuseum Winterthur, Switzerland; Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; and the Generali Foundation, Vienna.

School is a Factory (1978–80) was shown for the first time in the gallery attached to the college where Sekula taught an evening class in the History of Photography. In his text “On the Politics of Education and the Traffic in Photographs” (1982), Sekula describes the project:

I decided that the appropriate thing to do in such a space was a kind of internal critique – a questioning, fragmentary at best – moving outward from photographic education to community college education, to the larger political economy which motivated the educational system, and then moving back to the immediate environment in which the students were situated(...) My photographs were intended to work against the typical lyricism of college catalogue photography, with its celebration of joyful encounters between individuated students and the environment, objects, instruments and agents of knowledge: manicured and shaded lawns, dissected frogs, microscopes, and gesticulating professors.

Sekula’s work is a scarcely relentless criticism of the role of the artist and function of art education under late capitalism, in which the college is seen as a recruitment arena for “McJobs” and badly paid industrial labor. The school functions as a temporary facility for young people who would otherwise be unemployed, and art education, in particular, masques the fact that ninety percent of the students will never come near a creative practice. Regarding his education Sekula writes:

Their art historical education was icing on a cake made of nuts and bolts(...)

He continues:

If school is a factory, art departments are industrial parks in which the creative spirit, like cosmetic shrubbery or Muzak, still “lives.” Photographic education is largely directed at people who will become detail workers in one sense or another. Only the most elite art schools and university art departments regularly produce graduates who will compete for recognition as fine artists. Nonetheless, the ideology of auteurism dominates the teaching of the medium’s history at all levels of higher education, even in the community colleges(...) Very few teachers acknowledge the constraints placed on their would-be “auteurs” by a system of educational tracking based on class, race, and sex.

School is a factory is a classical work of institutional critique, never previously shown in Norway. In “Learning for Life” Sekula’s text *On the Politics of Education and the Traffic in Photographs* is presented alongside the work.



This photograph was taken at a community college in Southern California, as were all the following pictures of school situations. Three welding students pose for a portrait. They hope to graduate into Jobs with metal fabrication shops in the area. Their instructors act like bosses, supervising the action from a glassed-in office. This apprenticeship program, like public education generally, is supported by taxes that fall heavily on working people and only lightly on corporations. Spared the cost of on-the-job training, local industry profits from the arrangement. Social planners also like the idea that vocational courses keep unemployed young people off the streets and dampen discontent. A lot of Hispanic and black students are tracked into these courses. Despite such programs, unemployment continues to increase as industry cuts back production and moves its operations to the nonunionized labor markets of the South and to the Third World. These students may never find steady work as welders.

Alan Sekula
School is a factory, 1978–1980
Inkjet

Arvid Skauge

Nils Utsi

Ante, 1975
Television series, one of six episodes. Video, Approx. 25 min.

Arvid Skauge lives and works in Oslo. Skauge has directed and produced a number of commercials films. *Ante* was created as both a television series and a feature film, in collaboration with scriptwriter Tor Edvin Dahl and Nils Utsi.

Nils Utsi (b. 1943 i, Tana) lives in Kabelvåg. Utsi is an actor, playwright and instructor. He was one of the initiators of the Hålogaland Theatre in 1971, and has also been instrumental in the Beavvvás Sámi Teáhter. In addition to his theater work, Utsi has acted in a number of Norwegian feature films including *Svart Hav* (1980), *Night Voyage* (1986), *Pathfinder* (1987), *The Kautokeino Rebellion* (2008), and *The Storm in my Heart* (2009).

Around 1900 it was declared illegal to teach in the Sami language in Norway. In the book *Samene – igår, idag, imorgen* (The Sami – Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow) by the Norwegian author Tor Edvin Dahl, a teacher from Oslo describes his work in Finnmark, even as late as 1970, as follows:

“So we had to make sure the children never spoke Sami or Finnish. The school authorities had ruled that they should not be permitted to speak their mother tongue, not even in the school breaks or before and after school hours. It was to be Norwegian only, and that was the end of the matter.”

These interviews formed the starting point for the television series *Ante* from 1975. In six episodes, the series described the situation of a twelve-year-old Sami boy, Ante, and his life on the tundra and at school. In the first episode from this series, on view in Learning for Life, Ante travels from his rural home to a boarding school, where he comes into conflict with teachers and staff, and regularly tries to run away.

Ante had an immense impact in bringing the situation of the Sami in Northern Norway to the attention of a broader national audience. It was the first time a Sami language production, using Sami directors, consultants, and actors, had been broadcast on Norwegian national television. The series was an important contribution to the Sami campaign for ethnic rights during the 1970s, effectively illustrating how the policy of Norwegianization in the north was undermining Sami culture and producing conflict and alienation.

Ante's opposition to school ends in a rather tame way: he and his teacher “make up” when the teacher learns a few Sami words, and the problem is seemingly resolved. From an artistic and political point of view one may have wished for a less compromising attitude from the filmmakers, a probably difficult position vis-à-vis the national broadcasting corporation. Nevertheless, the series places a strong emphasis on the knowledge that can only be acquired outside the walls of the institution, and its highlighting of institutional suppression remains radical to this day.



Arvid Skauge / Nils Utsi
Ante, 1977
Stills

Kjartan Slettemark

Lessons in the Art of Falling, 1969
Seven C-prints

Lessons in the Art of Falling (1969) was a performance by Kjartan Slettemark in Stockholm's Vitaberg Park, documented by the Swedish photographer Brita Olsson.

The context for the work was Slettemark's battle against Swedish psychiatry. Having lost his teaching job on the Fine Art Foundation course in Stockholm, he turned to the social welfare office for financial aid. Instead of granting this request, the office sent Slettemark to a psychiatrist who diagnosed him with borderline personality disorder, recommended that he be institutionalized, and prescribed a drug referred to as "hibernal," due to its torporific side effects. Rather than take his medication, Slettemark used the shape and graphic design of the pill bottle in his artistic practice, and it features in a number of his anti-psychiatry works, notably in the 1968 project in which he moved all his belongings to Moderna Museet and requested "domestic political asylum from Swedish society, which persecutes deviant people."

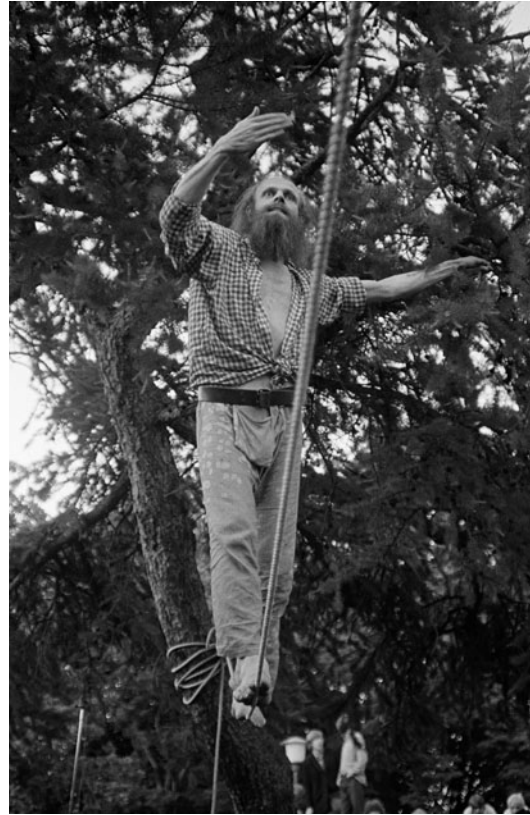
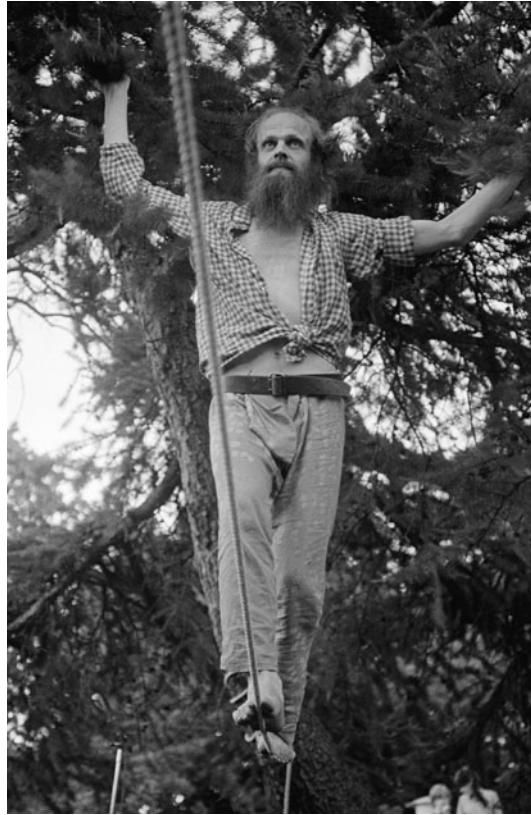
One of his most powerful projects from this period is *Lessons in the Art of Falling* in which Slettemark created a so-called "hibernal stic" composed of photographic reproductions of the pill bottle. He used the stick as balancing pole as he walked on a tightrope. The performance invoked his "borderline" diagnosis and the act of balancing between normality and deviance. The title and Slettemark's inevitable fall was indicative of his attitude towards psychiatry: learning to fall is as important as keeping your balance.

A number of links can be drawn between Slettemark's performance and other works in "Learning for Life," such as Palle Nielsen's *The Model*. Both examine the boundary between normality and deviance, between art and life; a fluid distinction subject to constant renegotiation. These two works seem to suggest that freedom can occur at this point of negotiation, in the moment you lose your balance or overstep the mark. As a pedagogical approach it is reminiscent of Ronia, the main protagonist in Astrid Lindgren's book "Ronja the Robber's Daughter" (1981), who practiced not falling in Hell's Waterfall by balancing on the rocks around it. Both Slettemark and Lindgren can be seen as interpreters and critics of a society labeling relatively normal facets of human life, such as danger, difference, and illness as aberrations to be abolished or hidden away in institutions. *Lessons in the Art of Falling* is, thus, an important contribution, not only to the debate about psychiatry, but also to the discussion on education.

Kjartan Slettemark (b. 1932 i, Naustdal, d. 2008 i Stockholm) was one of Norway's most important performance artists, but his artistic practice over half a century encompassed a range of different mediums. His most famous works include *From a report from Vietnam*, (1965); *Nixon visions*, (197–74); *King Poodl*, (197–75); and *Kjartanistan* (ca. 2000). Slettemark received the Stockholm City Honorary Prize in 1988; the Arts Council Norway's special award in 2001; and the Höcker Award from the Royal Swedish Academy of Fine Arts in 2003. A permanent exhibition of his works has been on display at Haugar Vestfold Art Museum, Tønsberg, since 2003.



Kjartan Slettemark
Lessons in the Art of Falling, 1969
C-print, appr. 30 x 40 cm
Photo: Brita Olsson. Courtesy of Preus Museum



Kjartan Slettemark
Lessons in the Art of Falling, 1969
C-print, appr. 30 x 40 cm
Photo: Bita Olsson. Courtesy of Preus Museum

Peter Tillberg

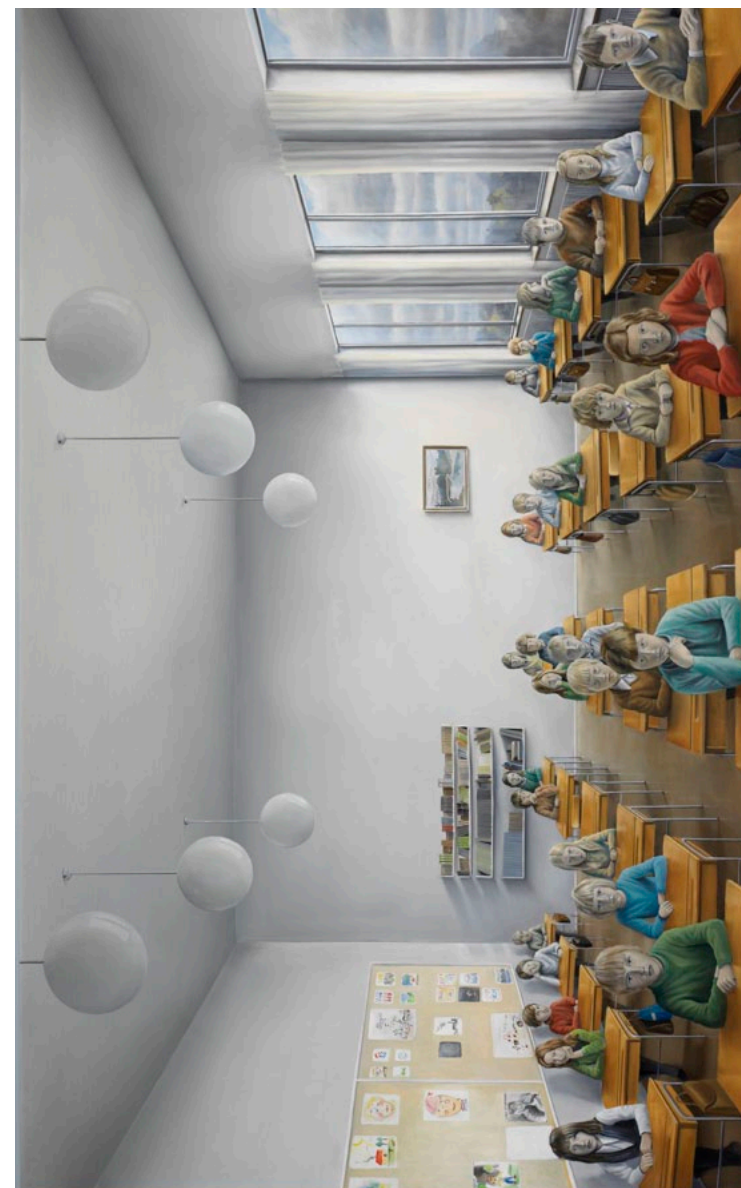
Will You Be Profitable, Little Friend?, 1972
Oil on canvas

The large-scale painting *Will You Be Profitable, Little Friend?* (1972) depicts a class of fourth graders in the style of 1970s school photography, in which the pupils were photographed slightly from above, from the teacher's desk, in their "natural environment." Tillberg's painting is based on a model of his own classroom from the 1950s as well as on documentation of the interior of a classroom at Korsavad School in Simrishamn. The scene includes images of his children and the artist's recollections of his younger brother. The title of the work is taken from a song by the progressive rock band Gläns över sjö och strand, about a society in which people of all ages ask themselves and each other: "Will You Be Profitable, Little Friend?"

In "Learning for Life" Tillberg's painting represents the primary entity of the school, namely the classroom. The physical organization of student, according to age and, through desks arranged in a classroom space has been an important disciplining tool for more than 400 years. Tillberg's critical take can be seen in his depiction of the interior of the classroom, its rows of pale faces with their blank stares, and the one pupil, who gazes out of the window, underlining the longing towards somewhere else.

Peter Tillberg is representative of a critical wave of artists and cultural workers influenced by French philosopher Michel Foucault's notions of surveillance and punishment. One object of such criticism was the classroom with its strict desk rows, detailed timetabling, and military connotations. The new knowledge economy has silenced such criticism; compared with Øystein Wyller Odde's twisted teaching technology, for example, one might think wistfully of the large, quiet spaces of the traditional schools, designed to promote the concentration and academic absorption, which are currently under threat.

Peter Tillberg (b. 1946 in Hammarby, Sweden) lives and works in Mas Blanc des Alpilles, France, as a painter, sculptor, and scenographer. Tillberg was an important proponent of photo-realism in Swedish art. He rose to fame with his first series of large-scale paintings, which examined aspects of Swedish society, such as *In The Middle Of Sweden* (1972–73), *The House Opposite* (1972–73) and *Jonas and the TV* (1972–75). Tillberg has also completed a number of public art commissions.



Peter Tillberg
Will You Be Profitable, Little Friend?, 1972
200 x 300 cm

HOK Lab and “Learning for Life”

In the 1968 project *The Model: A Model For A Qualitative Society*, Palle Nielsen and his collaborators raised radical questions about the relationship between children’s creative activity and political action. “Learning for Life” does not intend to repeat that project, which staged the exhibition hall at Moderna Museet in Stockholm as an enormous playground reserved for kids. Neither does it plan to present yet another exhibition where activities for children and adolescents take place in the basement, far from the context of the artworks on view. Such a localization would directly oppose one of main components in “Learning for Life,” namely that children can teach adults something about free thinking and expression. We therefore chose a displacement or reversal of activities, using HOK LAB as an exhibition space, while moving the workshop activities to the main floor.

Some significant questions are brought into the workshops. To begin: “What if school didn’t exist?” The title is taken from Nils Christie’s pamphlet from 1971, and it is a question that we think most children have considered, or at least imagined. When summer holiday is over, school starts again. But what if summer vacation never ended? What would we be doing? Children have thoughts like these. Knowledge production is today first and foremost associated with the everyday routine of the organized school. An essential point in “Learning for Life” is that all people, including children, continuously produce and acquire knowledge in a number of structured and unstructured ways.

One of the Sunday activities in “Learning for Life” invites children to participate in the making of a large wall painting titled *What if school didnt exist?* This painting will evolve through the course of the exhibition and new drawings and more color will be added every weekend. Children of all ages will be invited to contribute to the design and theme of this painting. As a result, when the exhibition is finished, we hope to have an expansive impression of the world without school.

Henie Onstad Kunstsenter, in collaboration with the public evening school of Bærum, has also developed two basic courses; one in visual art and one in digital photography. For the duration of “Learning for Life,” the art class focuses on text posters obtained from different schools in Oslo documenting guidelines, rules of thumb, advice and other

instructive information displayed in Norwegian classrooms.

Participants will discuss, recycle, and re-imagine these texts in a collage workshop in the center of the exhibition, which is also open to the general audience.

The photography students are assigned to document life in their own schools, classrooms, and schoolyards, as well as their classmates and teachers. As the American writer Susan Sontag writes in her famous book *On Photography*:

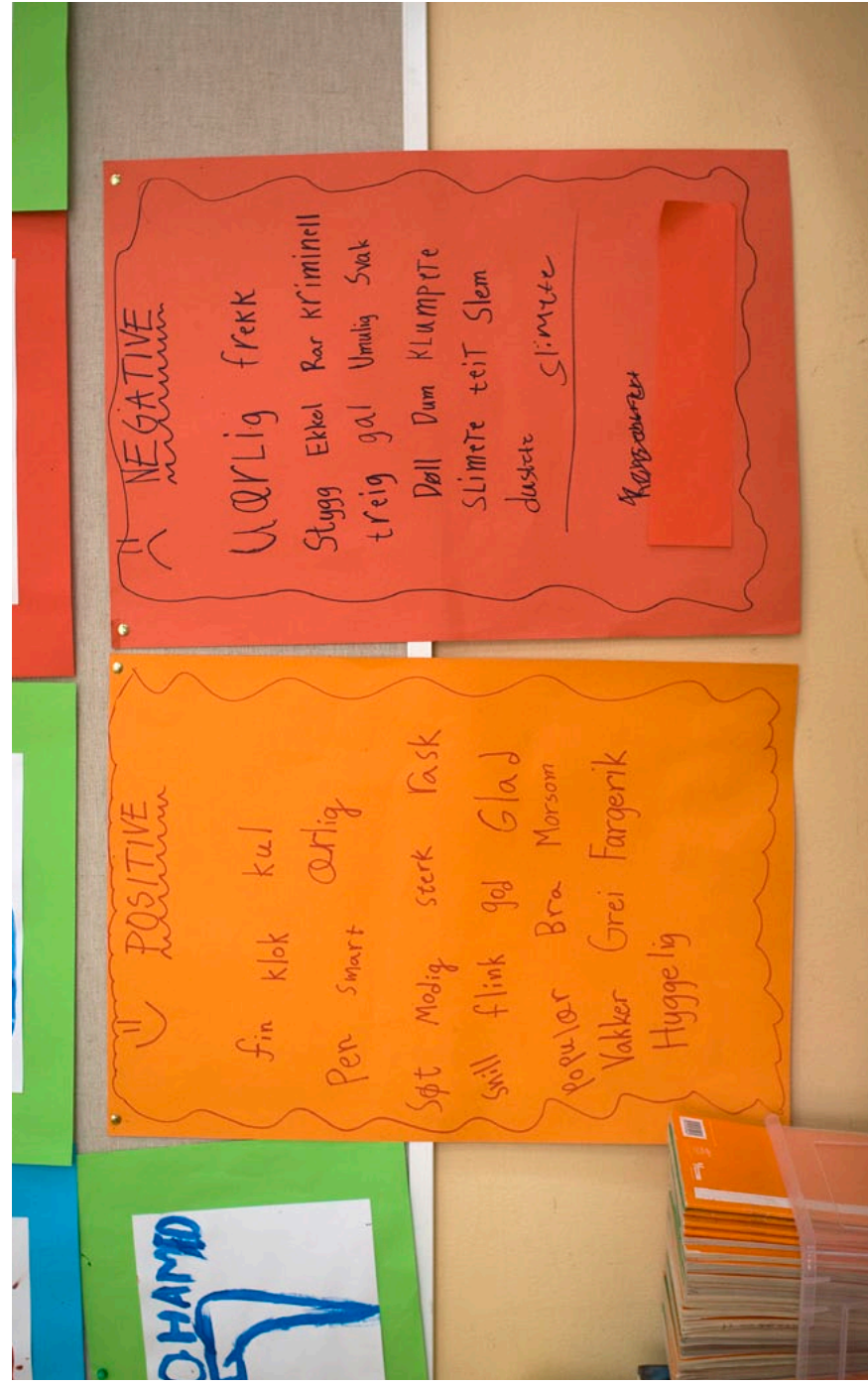
To photograph is to appropriate the thing photographed. It means putting one's self into a certain relation to the world that feels like knowledge – and, therefore, like power.

As they acquire this power, the student photographers will give us the opportunity to see school through their eyes.

Finally, through the public program *Den kulturelle skolesekken* (the cultural rucksack), all tenth graders in Bærum will visit HOK and "Learning for Life." Responding to the exhibition, their main activity will be a discussion and perhaps debate – of education, power, freedom, and action.



Text posters from schools in Oslo
Photo: Ragna Bley, 2012



Learning for Life

Exhibition catalogue

November 11th – February 24th, 2013

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A project by Ane Hjort Guttu and Tone Hansen

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