

## “How is your School?”

March 16 – April 13 2013

Learning environment designed and constructed by LaVern Homan, Kathleen Rashid and Elizabeth Sutton,

With contributions of different forms by David Clements, LaVern Homan, Little Lake Learning Community, Iain Maitland, Ken Morris, Jonathan Rajewski, Kathleen Rashid, Elizabeth Sutton, Andrew Thompson, Peter Werbe/The Fifth Estate and others.

### Background

“Since an ideal of universal education was endorsed within the democratic movement that built nation states, education has been promoted and experienced as both emancipatory and regulatory.”

*Felicity Allen*

“How is your School?” is a gallery-based discussion on the philosophies and implementations of and the obstacles to education as an emancipatory project. It will consider the fundamental viewpoints of active educators and projects in the city alongside historical precedents such as the Detroit Modern School (1914-18), free schools such as the Detroit Children’s School (1971-79) and the origins of Afro-centric schooling in Detroit.

For the duration of the show, 2739 Edwin has been modified by LaVern Homan, Kathleen Rashid and Elizabeth Sutton to re-invent the gallery as a space that encourages encounters, communication and relationships. Over the period of the show, material will be collected to document the discussions that take place and their pedagogical underpinnings.

### Events

#### Saturday March 16 Showing of the film “Free to Learn”

For over thirty years in perhaps the most radical experiment in American education, this small inner-city alternative school has offered its students complete freedom over their learning. There are no mandatory classes, no grades, tests, or homework, and rules are generally avoided. As a last resort, rules are created democratically by students and teachers, often at the prompting of a student. At a time when our educators are mandated to march forward with no child left behind, the students of the Free School, many of whom would have fallen through the cracks of today’s failing public school system, have managed to slip out of education’s back door and have run away free. (70 mins)

#### Saturday March 23 “The Meaning in Making”

As the potential for *making* has largely been reduced in standardized education, for example through the removal of shop, art and domestic science classes, a variety of alternative spaces and projects in the city have opened that have prioritized such activities.

But what are the fundamental relationships between making and learning? When does it perpetuate cultural norms and when is it actively counter-cultural? What is its relationship to consumerism and market economies? How does it situate itself in an increasingly information based economy?

In this event, LaVern Homan, Kathleen Rashid and Elizabeth Sutton facilitate a simple bookmaking project and a discussion based on the potential for multi-dimensional learning involved in the act of making things.

#### Friday March 30: Showing of the film “Paideia, Escuela Libre”

*“The Paideia School is an idea that arose out of the transition between Franco’s dictatorship and democracy, in 1978 at Merida, Badajoz. At its origin was an experience of freedom in education, conceived at Fregnal de la Sierra, Badajoz between 1975-6, and cut short by the local administration. The pursuit of a new education which makes a new different kind of person, and a different society in turn. This was the primary motivation that led a small group of three women, all of them born in the post civil war years, 1943-45, to embark on an ideological, political and pedagogic fight. .... “ sub-titled version of opening*

comments by the anonymous narrator of *Paideia, Escuela Libre*, (1994, 50 mins). This screening will be combined with a release event for the current, education themed, edition of the Fifth Estate.

Saturday April 6: "A temporary community of inquiry with Alyson Jones"

Philosopher, educator and lifelong Detroiter Alyson Jones' remarkable project "Searching for Telos" aims to equip children in the city with the mental habits that will allow them to acquire knowledge, listen deeply and form sound judgments through engagement in temporary "communities of inquiry". Founded on a belief that children of all ages can learn through philosophy, and leaning heavily on the work of Matthew Lipman and the Institute for Advancement of Philosophy for Children, Jones' project aims to increase reasonableness and thoughtful decision-making while appealing to all "Wonderers, Thinkers and New World-Makers."

In Saturday's event, Alyson invites people to use similar techniques, and join a temporary community of inquiry to assess head-on some of the questions raised in Jonathan Rajewski's piece "*The always-already and the future of education*", which challenges gallery goers philosophically as to the real possibility of change in, or through, education.

Saturday April 13: Closing Reception and artist's talks by Ken Morris and Ralph Rinaldi

At 8pm there will be two very special short artist's presentations: *Ken Morris* will talk about the research involved in his project "*timeline of black education in Detroit / community quotes*" and *Ralph Rinaldi* will present an ~11 minute audio-visual work based around a 1973 tape of Jonathan Kozol speaking to a radical education conference in Detroit, and including Ralph's contemporary slides of the conference and the Detroit Children's school.