

ARTIST PROJECT

SUMMERHILL, REVISED

BY HELEN REED AND HANNAH JICKLING

SUMMERHILL, REVISED: LEARNING IN/AS MARGINALIA

BY STEPHANIE SPRINGGAY

Increasingly, education is a key subject for contemporary art and curatorial practice. Recent exhibitions like *Documenta 12* and *united-nationsplaza*, and events such as *Transpedagogy: Contemporary Art and the Vehicles of Education* at the Museum of Modern Art in New York; *De-schooling Society* convened by the Serpentine and Hayward galleries in London; and *Extra-Curricular* hosted by the Justina M. Barnicke Gallery at Hart House in Toronto, might all be defined as “art turning educational.” In addition, there have been numerous artist residencies such as *Reverse Pedagogy* (2008/2009), *Vehicle* (2008–2009) and *DORM* (2010), and academics like Irit Rogoff and Carmen Mörsch have written extensively on the “educational turn” as a model for institutional critique and knowledge production. However, little research has been done into how pedagogy is inhabited, materialized and understood by artists and audience participants

within such contexts, and how such a pedagogical shift might inform teachers’ and students’ understandings of learning.

With this in mind, Portland-based artists Hannah Jickling and Helen Reed were invited to do a residency with the teacher education program at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver in the fall of 2010. Both are graduates of the MFA in Social Practice program at Portland State University and their individual and collaborative practices are embedded in questions of pedagogy. During the three-week artist-in-residency, Jickling and Reed worked with teacher education students enrolled in the secondary art education program¹ and also with art education researchers² as part of a larger Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council–funded study. The experiment in pedagogy was intended to provide students with an immersive experience in contemporary art—as opposed to a top-down model

of learning whereby students learn about contemporary art, theories and practices in art education, and models of teaching through isolated units. Rather, by asking the question "What types of pedagogical understandings could be produced in art education if it was conceived of as a form of social collaboration?" the residency engaged the teacher candidates in a series of interventions and collaborations that enabled them to move slowly across "fields of learning."

Re-positioning art education as a field moves it away from the production of an object as the basis for learning and towards what Guattari calls transversality—"a dimension that strives to overcome two impasses... [and] tends to be realized when maximum communication is brought about between different levels and above all in terms of different directions."³ In transversality particular knowledge may not be at the forefront of the actions and events taking place at this moment even though they are occurring, emerging from a middle or in-between.

One such field of learning, *Summerhill, Revised*, included the use of A.S. Neill's text *Summerhill: A Radical Approach to Child Rearing* (1960), which documents Scottish educator Alexander Sutherland Neill's approach to education. Copies of the book were handed out to each of the teacher education students and it subsequently served as a catalyst for various fields of learning, including in-class discussions, field trips to the Rasmussen book bindery and the Summerhill Retirement Residence, and for the conversations and relations that developed between participants as they moved together through the various and divergent experiences. The original copies of the Summerhill text contained existing marginalia, which became one of the many fields that Jickling and Reed, in collaboration with the students, expanded upon over the course of the three weeks.

The history of marginalia, or writing in the documentary space surrounding a text, yields rich and complex paths. Early scholarly texts, for instance, were directly revised, edited, amended and expanded upon by scholars and students writing in the space of the margins so that there was no real expository distinction between text and margin, only the accident of space. Previous students' notes thus became a way for a student

to physically engage with a text, and students were even instructed in the "scholarly etiquette" of writing in the margins.⁴ Today, it has become common practice for teachers to provide "clean" texts to students, and students usually respond by writing in separate books.

Annotation is often viewed as supplemental to an original text; something that detracts from the text, as opposed to a continuation or a transversal. In fact, many libraries remove damaged books from circulation in order to remove the marginalia, releasing them back into circulation only once the texts have been "cleaned." Vancouver-based artist Kyla Mallett photographs such marginalia found in decommissioned books at the Vancouver Public Library prior to their correction and re-circulation. Her work explores forms of literacy that Marnina Gonick argues are part of "subject formation"—the ways that individuals construct identity and knowledge. This subject formation, she writes, is a co-created encounter between reading and writing, self and other.

Students develop stylized techniques and preferred technologies: repeated motifs, signature doodles, favorite pencils, highlighters, pens, sticky notes, whose use, mis-use or absence may be read as expressions of the everyday practices of shaping and producing oneself as "student." These sometimes obtuse markings are the transitional contact points between one context and another, one person and another.⁵

When learners recompose texts, the relations between registers engender a speculativeness that underlines experimentation. For instance, in Anna Gray and Ryan Wilson Paulsen's *A Limited Anthology of Edits* (2010), which Jickling and Reed identify as inspiration for their own work, a variety of texts on the subject of editing are brought together in order to set the stage for further encounters and engagements. In the *Summerhill, Revised* residency, Jickling and Reed encouraged students to investigate each book's existing marginalia alongside the original text and to respond to it through their own annotations and interventions. In addition, Jickling and Reed edited and re-arranged the texts, composing alternative fields in the process.

The play of reading, re-reading, reflecting and editing enables the potential for different readings to emerge and for each person to take



A. S. NEILL

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HART

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A RADICAL APPROACH
TO CHILD REARING

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With a Foreword by
ERICH FROMM
BUY MOSTLY BY THE
MARGARET MANNING COLLECTIVE

KEED AND HANNAH JICKLING,
LANG, HEIDI MAY, VALERIE TRIGGS, HELEN
ADRIENNE BOUTON, FINNKE, NATALIE LEB,
DONAL O DONOGHUE, STEPHANIE SPRINGAY,
SHIRLEY CHAN, ZAD PINETTE, RITA IRWIN,
GAGNON, SAFI ARNOLD, SHANAZ MACKAY,
MEHRAN MODARRES, PETER SHIN, ROXANNE
SONG, LYNDSY GANTERT, MARK MITCHELL,
ZYDEK, LANDON SHANTZ, LINDA CHEN, LINNA
LORNE, JUDY LEUNG, JULIA LIM, KAY PHAM, KT
LYAN, JOANNA JEDRZEJCZYK, JONATHAN
HEATHER TOOMER, JAMIE SMITH, JESSICA MIL
WILLIAMS, ESTHER SHOOP, GILLIAN SMITH,
ANNA RYOO, STANNA CERMAKOVA, CLAIRE
BY A.S. NEILL,

A RADICAL APPROACH
TO CHILD REARING
TEACHER
SUMMERHILL,
REVISED

Social Sciences and Humanities
Research Council of Canada



Heidi Reed and Hannah Jickling, January 2011

In the spirit of Summerhill School's disregard for convention, private property and academic standards, we took margins as a form for rethinking its content. Each student was given a copy of Summerhill: A Radical Approach to Child Rearing, and encouraged to write in the margins, draw on the pages and create any kind of handmade revision to detect. It is the assembly of these modified pages that form Summerhill, Revised.

Our collective efforts are represented in this book, Summerhill, Revised. We were invited to edit and re-write the original book to create various modes of learning, including unexpected forms of inquiry. It became our conversation starter, scholarly manual, ready-made workshop of inquiry. It became our conversation starter, scholarly manual, ready-made workshop of inquiry. It became our conversation starter, scholarly manual, ready-made workshop of inquiry.

This reassembly could perhaps be seen as another manifestation of an educational turn in contemporary art making. While pedagogical practices move into artistic and curatorial practices, this collaborative experiment shifted our artwork back into the space of an actual classroom. The project is another example of those blending roles of artist and teacher, and sought to redefine the pedagogical potential inherent in art practices.

ideas of self-directed art education.

regulation might parallel perceptions of the contemporary artist figure and emerging to consider the ways that Summerhill's doctrine of individualism, free will and self-pupils choose their own research topics and modes of expression. The text encouraged many art education programs today, where self-directed and generally motivated A.S. Neill's Summerhill School (founded in 1921, and still running) operates similarly to still, despite its striking value, the text maintains its status as a classic of education theory. This, evidenced by the numerous copies available through Amazon for less than 99 cents topics ranging from need-based to middle. The one benefit is that it is readily available in print.

to edit the manuscript of Scottish educator Alexander Sutherland Neill on
Bill A Radical Approach to Child Rearing, which
We chose to reassemble A.S. Neill's controversial Summerhill,
could model an art practice as pedagogical experiment.



Summerhill, Revised

Stealing
Do not expect altruism

Two kinds of stealing should be distinguished: stealing by a normal child and stealing by a neurotic child.

A natural, normal child will steal. He simply wants to satisfy his acquisitive urge; or with his friends, he wants the adventure. He has not yet made the distinction between *mine* and *thine*. Many Summerhill children engage in this kind of stealing up to a certain age. They are free to live out this stage. *goodness*

Speaking to a number of schoolmasters about their orchards, I have had them tell me that their pupils take most of the fruit. Now we have a large garden at Summerhill filled with fruit trees and bushes, but our children rarely steal the fruit. Some time ago, two boys were charged at a General School Meeting with pinching fruit. They were new boys. When their consciences were abolished, they had no further interest in fruit stealing.

School thieving is for the most part a communal affair. The communal theft would suggest that adventure plays an important part in stealing; not only adventure, but showing off, enterprise, leadership.

Only occasionally does one see the lone crook—always a sly boy with an angelic innocence all over his face, who gets away with much because at Summerhill there is no gang rat to betray him. No, you can never tell a young thief by his face. Indeed, I have a boy with such an innocent smile and such clear, blue, guileless eyes that I have a good suspicion that he is not entirely ignorant of the whereabouts of a certain can of fruit that disappeared from the school larder last night. *sincerity*

However, I have seen many a child who would steal at the age

of thirteen grow up to be an honest citizen. The truth seems to be that children take a much longer time to grow up than we have been accustomed to think. By growing up, I mean becoming a social being. *independence*

The child is primarily an egoist—generally until the commencement of puberty, and until then, he generally hasn't the art of identifying himself with others. The concept of *mine* and *thine* is adult; the youngster will develop this sense when he becomes mature. *Yeah, when you're 80!*

If children are loved and free, *in time* they will become good and honest. This sounds like a simple dictum, but I am aware of the many snags that crop up in practice.

In Summerhill, I cannot leave the icebox or the money box unlocked. At Summerhill School Meetings, children accuse others of breaking open their trunks. Even one thief can make a community lock-and-key-conscious; and there are few communities of youth that are completely honest. Fifty-five years ago, I dared not leave a book in my overcoat pocket in the students' room of the university; and I have heard rumors that some members of Parliament hesitate to leave valuables in coats and briefcases. *sincerity*

Honesty would appear to be an acquired characteristic that appeared late in man's development with the advent of private property. Possibly the fact which makes most for honesty is fear. It is not abstract honesty that prevents me from cheating on my income tax; it is fear that the game isn't worth the candle, that the disgrace following detection would ruin reputation and work and home.

When there is a law against anything, it must be taken for granted that the law has been made because of a tendency to transgress. In a country with total prohibition, there would be no law against driving a car when under the influence of alcohol. The many laws in all countries against stealing, robbery, swin-

socially condemned activities



SUMMERHILL

A Radical Approach to Child Rearing

By A. S. NEILL

SUMMERHILL is perhaps the most unusual school in the world. Here's a place where children are not compelled to go to class—they can stay away from lessons for years, if they want to. Yet, strangely enough, the boys and girls in this school LEARN! In fact, being deprived of lessons turns out to be a severe punishment.

Summerhill has been run by A. S. Neill for almost forty years. This is the world's greatest experiment in bestowing unstinted love and approval on children. This is the place where one courageous man, backed by courageous parents, has had the fortitude to actually apply—without reservation—the principles of freedom and nonrepression.

The school runs under a true children's government where the "bosses" are the children themselves. Despite the common belief that such an atmosphere would create a gang of unbridled brats, visitors to Summerhill are struck by the self-imposed discipline of the pupils, by their joyousness, and good manners. These kids exhibit a warmth and lack of suspicion toward adults which is the wonder and delight of even official British school investigators.

In this book, A. S. Neill candidly expresses his unique—and radical—opinions on the important aspects of parenthood and child rearing. These strong commendations of authors and educators set forth on the inside covers of this volume attest that every parent who reads this book will find in it many examples of how Neill's philosophy may be applied to daily-life situations. Educators will find Neill's refreshing viewpoints practical and inspiring.

Reading this book is an exceptionally gratifying experience, for it puts into words the deepest feelings of all who care about children, and wish to help them lead happy, fruitful lives.

SUMMERHILL

A RADICAL APPROACH TO CHILD REARING

BY A. S. NEILL

With a Foreword by
ERICH FROMM

"In twenty-five years of reading and reviewing books on education, I have yet to find one as stimulating, exciting and challenging as the story of SUMMERHILL. I commend this book to all educators and laymen who are interested in children."

DR. BENJAMIN FINE

Distinguished Editor, Author, and Educator (Education Editor, North American Newspaper Alliance, Education Editor, New York Times—1941, 1954)

ding, and so on, are based on the belief that people will steal when they can. This is true.

After all, most adults are more or less dishonest. There are few people who will not smuggle something through customs, still fewer who will not cheat on their income tax return. Yet almost anyone is genuinely upset if his son steals a penny.

On the other hand, in their dealings with each other, most people are pretty honest. It would be easy to slip one of your hoaxes' silver spoons into your pocket if you thought of doing so. You don't think of doing so, but you might think of using a return ticket that the collector forgot to punch and collect.

Adults make a distinction between the individual and the organization, whether it be a state organization or a private one. It's all right to cheat the insurance company, but reprehensible to cheat the grocer. Children make no such distinction. They will indiscriminately pinch things from roommates, teachers, shops. Not all children will act in this way, but many will agree to share the stolen product. This means that you find in middle-class children who are free and happy, the same sort of dishonesty that appears among poorer children.

I find that many children will steal when opportunity offers. As a boy I did not steal because I was so thoroughly conditioned. Stealing meant a good walloping when found out, and hell fire for eternity. But children not so thoroughly cowed as I was, will naturally steal. Yet, I insist, that in time and if a child is brought up in love, he will grow out of his stealing stage and mature into an honest man.

The second kind of stealing—habitual, compulsive stealing—is an evidence of neurosis in the child. Stealing by a neurotic child is generally a sign of lack of love. The motive is unconscious. In almost every case of confirmed juvenile stealing, the child feels unloved. His thieving is a symbolic attempt to get something of great value. Whether the theft is one of money or

get what you want

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jewelry or what not, the unconscious wish is to steal love. This kind of stealing can be treated only by giving out love to the child. Hence, when I give a boy money for stealing my tobacco, I am aiming at his unconscious feelings, not his conscious thought. He may think that I am a fool, but what he thinks does not matter much; it's what he feels that matters. And he feels that I am his friend, his approver, one who gives him love instead of hate. Sooner or later the stealing ceases, for the love that was symbolically stolen in the form of money or goods is now given freely and therefore need not be stolen.

In this context I mention the case of a boy who was always riding other children's bicycles. Brought up before a General School Meeting, he was charged with "constantly breaking the private property rule by using other kids' bikes." Verdict: "Guilty!" Punishment: "The community is asked to subscribe to buy him a bicycle." The Community subscribed.

However I must qualify the giving of rewards to a thief. If he is of low mentality, or, worse still, if he is emotionally arrested, the reward will not have the desired effect. Or if he has a swelled head, he will not benefit from the symbolic gift. In my work with problem children, I have found that nearly every young thief reacted well to my rewards for stealing. The only failures were the very few who were what one might call conscious crooks, untraceable by therapy or by the disguised therapy of rewards.

The situation becomes complicated, however, when the stealing denotes both a lack of parental love and excessive prohibition about sex. In this category comes kleptomaniacs, the uncontrollable reaching out of the hand for something forbidden—

masturbation.

Love is being in the side of the other person. Love is approval.

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individual
responsibility

→ punish five

separation of
child and
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TO CHILD REARING

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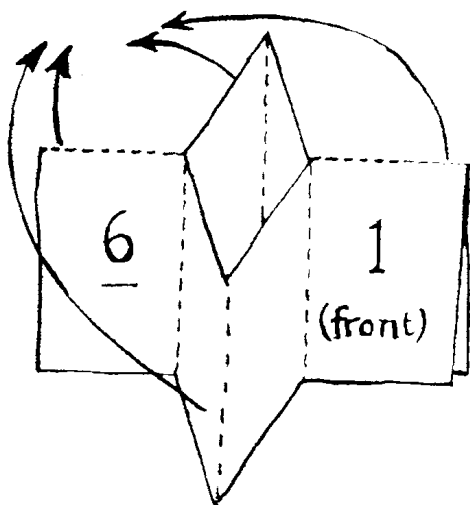
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these divergent readings in a number of different directions. As a result, marginalia becomes an illogical or haphazard form of relating to others—a process of indirect communication and knowledge production. It also shifts from something damaged, supplemental and tangential to a process of knowledge production—“learning in/as marginalia.” *Summerhill, Revised* presents in material form the different points of entry that are brought into resonance with each other and opens up new registers that incite a creative movement shaping our everyday experiences. Finally, if we regard marginalia as transversality—tangible and intangible—there emerges the potential of relations that, at least temporarily, intervene in surprising and inventive ways. ♦

remove
staple



• *Stephanie Springgay is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Curriculum, Teaching, and Learning at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. Her research focuses on embodiment and the senses in contemporary art and educational spaces, bringing together curriculum theory, aesthetics and feminist pedagogy. She is currently co-editing the book *Mothering a Bodied Curriculum: Theories and Practices of Relational Teaching* (University of Toronto Press) with Debra Freedman; was the co-editor of *Curriculum and the Cultural Body* (Peter Lang, 2007) with Debra Freedman; and is the author of *Body Knowledge and Curriculum: Pedagogies of Touch in Youth and Visual Culture* (Peter Lang, 2008).*

remove
staple

• *Helen Reed and Hannah Jickling have been collaborating for the past 4 years. Helen Reed's artistic practice is primarily concerned with collaborative ways of engaging specific invested communities such as Twin Peaks fans, lesbian separatists and, most recently, high school art teacher candidates. She holds a BFA from the Emily Carr University of Art and Design (Vancouver) and an MFA in Art and Social Practice from Portland State University, and has exhibited her work at Prefix Institute for Contemporary Art (Toronto), apexart (New York), Smack Mellon (New York), Portland Art Museum, Seattle Art Museum and La Centrale Galerie Powerhouse (Montréal). Hannah Jickling currently lives in Portland, Oregon where she is head of MFA in Paper Maché, a handmade, accredited degree program. She has shown/presented at: Locust Projects (Miami), the Klondike Institute of Art and Culture (Yukon), Dalhousie University Art Gallery (Halifax), XYZ Artists Outlet (Toronto), Dare-Dare (Montreal), the Or Gallery, VIVO, Access Gallery, the 2010 Cultural Olympiad (Vancouver), apexart (New York), Portland Art Museum and the SFMOMA (San Francisco).*

ENDNOTES

- 1 Anna Ryoo, Stanna Cermakova, Claire Williams, Esther Shoop, Gilina Smith, Heather Toomer, Jamie Smith, Jessica Millikan, Joanna Jedrzejczk, Jonathan Lorne, Jundy Leung, Julia Lim, Kay Pham, Kt zydek, Landon Shantz, Linda Chen, Linna Song, Lyndsey Gantert, Mark Mitchell, Mehran Modarres, Peter Shin, Roxanne Gagnon, Safi Arnold, Shanaaz Mackay, Shirley Chan, and Zac Pinette.
- 2 Stephanie Springgay, Rita Irwin, Donal O'Donoghue, Adrienne Boulton-Funke, Natalie LeBlanc, Heidi May, Valerie Triggs.
- 3 Félix Guattari, *Psychanalyse et transversalité* (Paris: Maspero/La Découverte, 1972/2003), 80.
- 4 H.L. Jackson, *Marginalia: Readers Writing in Books* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002).
- 5 Marnina Gonick, "Notes on Notes: Literacy in the Margins" in *JCT* (forthcoming), www.jctonline.org.