

THERE ARE FLOWERS
THAT ONLY GROWERS
IN A CERTAIN CLIMATE

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TWO ROOMS

Hello,

I would like to welcome you into two rooms,
Inside the classroom and Outside the classroom.

One has walls and corners, an emulsion takes
place within it: learning how to live together.
Let's take a look at the other room now.

It is similar but way bigger, outside those
walls. Both rooms are a reflection of one
another. I am going to take you on a journey
where school is the mirror of society, and
where the opposite is also true. Authority
will be the sand that polishes the mirror.

It will be our main condition for the clearness
of its reflections.

bell hooks,

Teaching
to Transgress,

1994.

"DURING COLLEGE, THE PRIMARY LESSON WAS
REINFORCED: WE WERE TO LEARN OBEDIENCE
TO AUTHORITY."²

BACK FROM SUMMER

During my graphic design bachelor's in Paris, I felt an urgent need for something else.

It seemed like people were not at all invested in the life of the school. As if they were tourists, but very bored ones. Tourists who think they've already seen everything, when they've only seen a tiny part. This public school I was in was very selective, teachers liked to remind us of the numbers: for 4000 applications, only 100 students were accepted.

That is why I also saw those tourists as very spoiled ones, not noticing their luck doing what they liked, compared to the 3900 other applicants who wanted to be in their position. And I am not even counting the ones who couldn't apply, because of the lack of accessibility which characterizes "higher educated" spheres. I am extremely privileged, being able to study in two different art schools, and even leaving my country to study abroad.

In September 2018, I started a second bachelor's degree in graphic design. Same degree but opposite pedagogies. I was astonished by everything. Student life was very important: people actually cared about their education and were very implicated in shaping it.

We would meet outside of school, and there was so many events in a week (pasta making, the flea market, hair cutting, conferences...) that I couldn't go to all of them. We would have drinks and barbecues with the teachers, I could say "tu" to the French ones. An atmosphere of calm and mutual respect reigned. I remember asking one of the teachers about her boyfriend who quit smoking: "is it because of you?". The answer was quite striking: "I ~~don't~~ think one should not, for any reason, force somebody to do something they don't want to." This freedom towards ~~each other's~~ others' choices echoes very much in this sentence:

PROFESSOR
GAYATRI
CHAKRAVORTY
SPIVAK,

Terror, A Speech
after 9.11,

2004.

"THE TASK OF A HUMANITIES TEACHER IS TO
PROVIDE A REARRANGEMENT OF DESIRE IN
THE CLASSROOM."²

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That sums up pretty this new school's state of mind pretty well, in contrast with what I was used to. I remember one of my previous teacher, when asked about his holidays, answered: "I will tell you about it when you're not my student anymore." Such distance between the teacher and the student can only lead to miscommunication.

I feel like, because of the authoritarian grown-ups I have been confronted with until now, I have always felt that the adult is superior to me. In practice, this means being anxious when I spoke to them. I am not in my full capacities, and unable to express how I really feel, even though nowadays I am in a much friendlier environment. But I am an adult now! When did that happen? The transition is blurrier than we think. I am always surprised when children call me "monsieur".

Sometimes, I meet old acquaintances from the north of Paris who I used to play football with, we all went to the same middle school. Sekouba is a delivery guy for the sushi place in front of

my art school, on the other side of town. He's replacing a friend who is in jail. We talk about having lunch together some time, but in the end we never do. Another day, I run into Yanis with a friend of his, near my place. I tell him that I am going to move to Amsterdam, to keep studying graphic design, and that I feel really passionate about it. He answers that he is currently repairing cars in a garage, and that it is an okay job. He seems quite happy to see me, then his friend pops into the conversation.

He tells me how lucky I am to do what I like, that otherwise I would be like him, selling heroin on street corners. A little struck, I answer that I am aware of that, and we say "so long" after wishing each other the best. Now, Yanis is making it in the rap business, and it is going quite well for him.

ALPHA 5.20

The Tears of
the Sun,

2006.

"THEY BUILD PRISONS BUT FORGET ABOUT SCHOOLS
(NATIONAL EDUCATION, PRIOR EDUCATION ZONE 93)."

I remember this conversation almost every day. There are grains of sand that slip through the fingers of the education system, because of a lack of care, of a loose grip. When my dad would walk me to school on his day to work, we would hold hands. He would always get a bit annoyed that I didn't hold on to him tight enough.

Education is giving up on some people. School is not catering to everyone. A home is a small space, it can more easily fall apart. A school is a big space. That is where a responsibility lies, in remaining stable and caring when there are lacks elsewhere. We, who are so lucky to have access to the marvellous reservoir of possibilities that are schools and education, should talk about it more, do our best to improve it, shape it into something usable and useful for everyone.

1ST DAY OF SCHOOL

This text is a critique of authority in pedagogy. Some case studies of historical learning experiences, intertwined with learning experiences from people I met, echo with my own learning experiences, and will take you from one room to another. It aims at displaying an approach to a contextual education, by discussing existing methods, while developing new tools and constantly adapting contents.

Currently, what's wrong in the world is more and more spoken out about. I am also very interested in looking into proposals for solutions to those problems, and I would like to navigate through them.

In this process, we forget too often that solutions are to be found in the way pedagogy is approached. Today, we need to re-question how we learn from others

and how we teach each others, in order to build well-grounded foundations for tomorrow.

ADRIANA
LASHERAS
MABANTA,

- what do you
want to be when
you grow up?
- a polar bear,
2020.

"ADULTS SHOULD BE TEACHING CHILDREN TO THINK FOR THEMSELVES RATHER THAN TO THINK LIKE THEM, TO IMAGINE FUTURES THAT ARE LESS AND LESS AN IMITATION OF THE PRESENT AND PAST."⁴

Within our walls, learning stimulates people, by sharing knowledge reciprocally and continuously. Communicating is obviously of a major use in learning, so we really need to reconsider the terms of it, and one's role within it.

MARSHALL
ROSENBERG,

c. 1995.

"WORDS ARE WINDOWS (OR THEY'RE WALLS)"⁵

It is our choice. We need to be able to pass each other things through those windows. Deliberately forget a warm generous cake on the balcony, so that some kids from the neighbourhood will smell it, come, dare to take a slice, enjoy it, and learn how to make it themselves. There is enough knowledge for everyone.

SPACES AND SURROUNDINGS WITHIN LEARNING

We want to be in a place where every participant feels comfortable. We need to build this specific and subtle setting that lets what's inside of people flow out. Let's look into alternative teachings which are aimed at installing such spaces.

A really weird coincidence brought me to the Freinet pedagogy. I first discovered its principles through a text from Paul⁶, one of my teachers, and then found a lot of information about it at my grandma Aline's place.

FIGURE 1

Élise and Célestin Freinet's school was founded in 1935, in Vence, in the south of France. It is still open today, and there are also a few others around the country. I quickly noticed that the village where the first Freinet school was created was actually only one hour away from my grandma Aline. I went there last year,



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Figure 1: Cover of the Natural Method of Drawing, Célestin Freinet, 1951. (On the top-right corner, we can see the initials of my great-grandmother: G.P. For Gilberte Poret, also called Gigi).

but the school was closed at the time. It felt great though, being able to be there, where it all started. I could almost see the pupils running around the courtyard on top of the hill.

There, the children's interests were the starting point for the learning process, and pupils were encouraged to learn by making. They would write a text everyday and print it with a letterpress. Group-based trial and error work was stimulated by using the real experiences of children. Kids learned to take responsibility for their own work and for the whole community, by putting in place a democratic self-government. All of those elements created a certain setting: a refuge from discipline, rigidity and boredom.



CÉLESTIN
FREINET,
Natural Method
of Drawing,
1951.

"THERE ARE FLOWERS THAT ONLY GROW IN A CERTAIN CLIMATE, IN AN ATMOSPHERE WHICH IS SPECIFIC TO THEM, IN AN ALTITUDE WHICH IS ESSENTIAL TO THEM..."⁷

THE SCIENCE OF TAKING WALKS

The start of living and learning comes from our relationship to our surroundings, not only as a static landscape but as an active part of the process. A difficult separation grounds our lives. On the one hand, us humans, and on the other, our environment. We have been taught to see nature as something exterior to us, something that we contemplate: a landscape. Contemplation is often a passive position, where one is distant physically and mentally from what is being observed. The lack of care for environmental issues definitely has to do with ~~that~~ that distance.

The site-specificity of learning should always be ~~acknowledged~~ acknowledged. In this case study, I will stay close to what I know, which is my home. I feel like it is where the lack of connection to one's surroundings is the greatest.

LEANNE
BETASAMOSAKE
SIMPSON,
Land as pedagogy,
2014.

"THEORY IN A WESTERN CONTEXT (...) IS
DECONTEXTUALIZED KNOWLEDGE."⁸

I will be talking from the position of someone who grew up in the western world, and I say does not address everyone, it only reflects my point of view within this research.

Firstly, during the 1980's, Lucius Burckhardt¹⁰ developed the idea of promenadology; the science of taking walks. By awakening people's awareness of their surroundings, it brought more attention to details, which have become superfluous, no longer appreciated within our societies.

My teacher Elisabeth¹¹ took us on a tour of Amsterdam's periphery, during our introduction week. We spent the whole day under the rain, walking under highway bridges, encountering transitional places. I would never go back there, besides passing by on a subway or by bike. Only then would I be able to recognize and acknowledge those spaces which are usually hidden, because I have been close to them.

Sharing responsibility for the learning space is also a way to get closer to the environment.

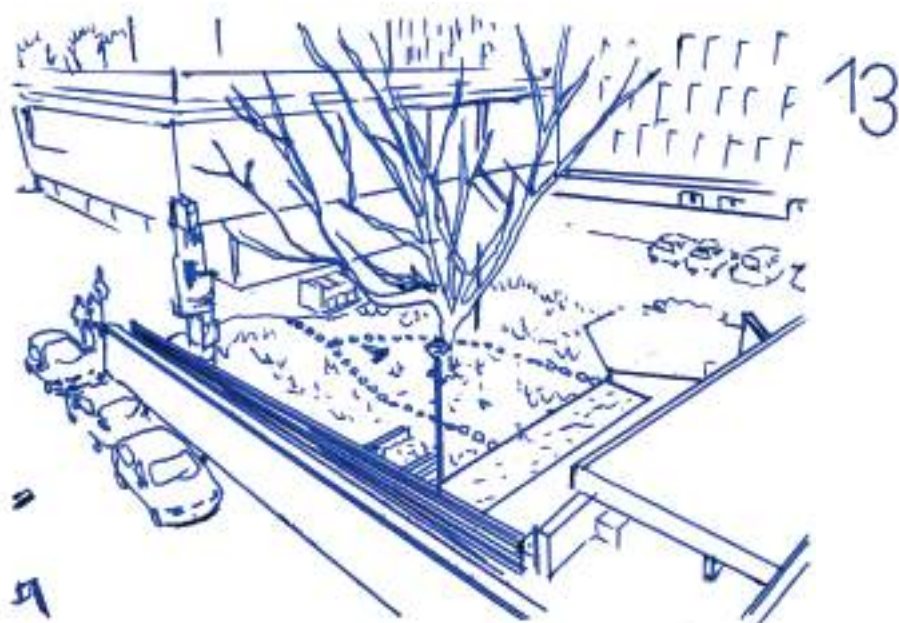


FIGURE 2

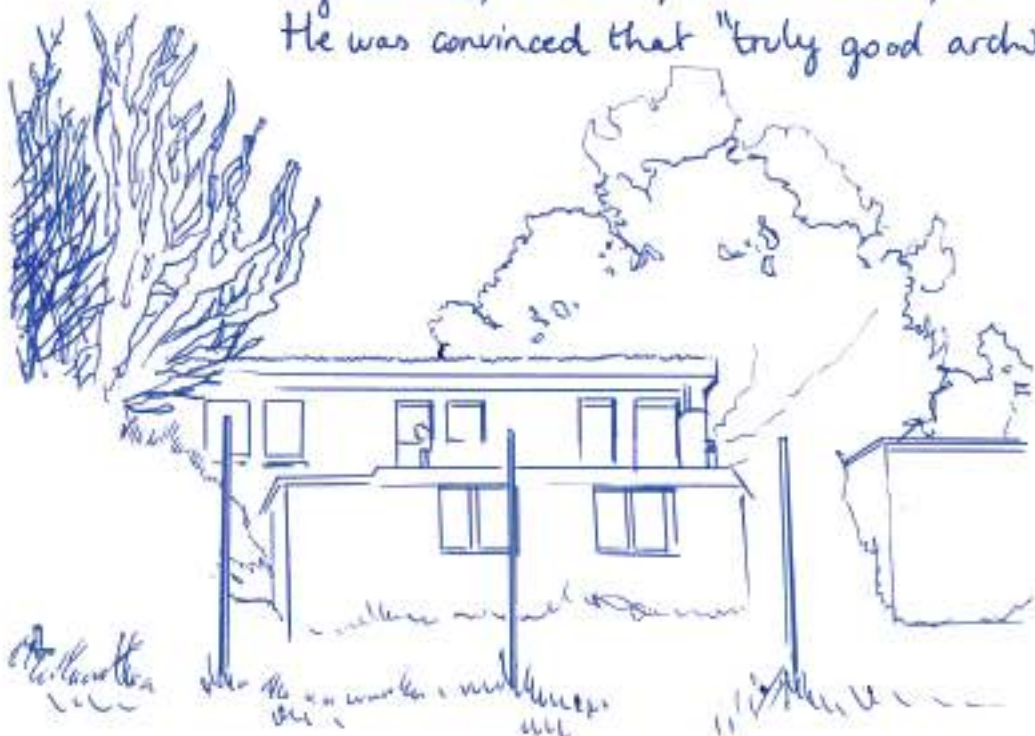
Some students are currently busy creating "The Garden Department" in the courtyard of the Gerrit Rietveld Academie. The last few weeks, they brought soil from fields outside of the city, built a compost, started growing vegetables and prepared natural-coloured inks. The initiative is open to everyone, and really fills a gap by offering a place for people to take care of and feel responsible for something.

WALLS & CORNERS

In Freinet's schools, it was important to constitute a space in which one would feel at home. The buildings were made in a pretty simple way and looked like cute ordinary houses, painted in white with blue windows.

FIGURE 3 & 4

In the early twentieth century, Rudolf Steiner's philosophy of "anthroposophy"¹¹, proposed a holistic education, which was inseparable from fields such as medicine, agriculture, nutrition, social renewal, environment. He was convinced that "truly good architecture



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can have a healing effect as far as into the moral constitution of the human being.
The other day, I met Kiran Hinde. He was in Steiner schools in ~~the~~ Eindhoven from primary through to high school, and is now graduating from the Rietveld. He told me that in his school, the spaces were softly coloured, with materials which have a warm feeling, such as wood or clay. There were no 90° angles at all in the architecture, as if something too straight or rigid could have hurt the children.



FIGURE 5

Figure 8: Extract of a round table jumping animation by Eden Van Hille, 2020.

I think round shapes are more fair than angular ones. An angle is sharp, it might hurt. A famous punishment in primary schools is to send the punished one to the corner of the classroom. No corners, no punishment! What I like about a round table for instance, is that people sit ~~are~~ at an equal distance from the centre. The most famous one is King Arthur's, around which he and his knights congregated. But let's push away his mythology of chivalry, and only keep the clever furniture ~~for~~ for our classroom.

FIGURE 6



FIGURE 7 & 8



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Figure 7: Drawings / made on two of sheet, 2019.

In an academic classroom, the attention is focused towards the teacher, whereas the shape of our round table allows a circular exchange. The role of a teacher within this movement of thought shifts.

CESARE
PIETROVSTI;

Art education,
towards a new
conception of time,

2018.

"CIRCULAR THINKING RESTS ON THE LOGIC OF HOSPITALITY, IN THAT THE IDEAS OF ONE PERSON FIND A PLACE IN THE MIND OF THE OTHER. (...) THE TEACHER'S FUNCTION THUS CHANGES FROM A GUIDE TO A HOST WHO WELCOMES THE OTHER'S IDEAS."¹²

In decentralised space, attention is scattered towards every person in the class, just as the round table gives an equal position where every protagonist can be emancipated in the learning.



Figure 5. A part of the Gurthannum (headquarters of Steiner schools), near Basel, Switzerland, built in 1925.

~~DINAM~~ DYNAMICS OF THE LEARNING MOMENT

In pedagogy, the dynamics are less binary than we might think: a teacher / a student
an emitter / a receiver
active / passive ...NO!

First of all, what is the "/"? The "in-between"?
"/" represents the act of transmission and its content.

PASSIVITY/ACTIVITY

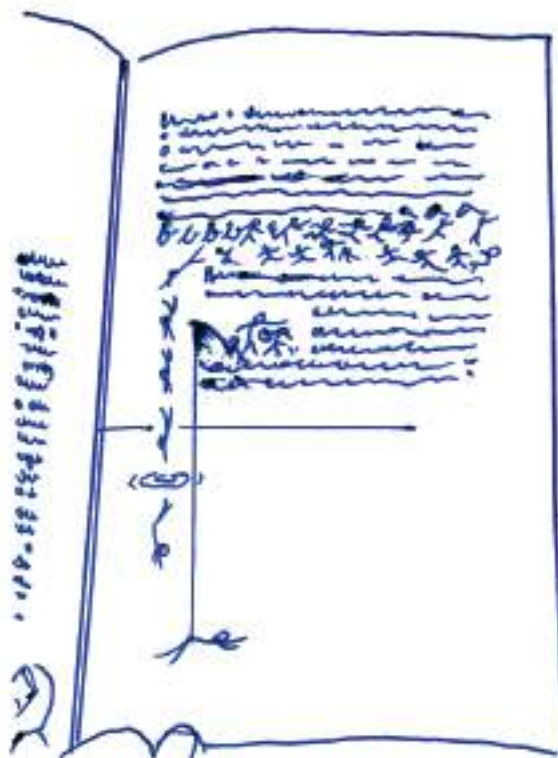
In an academic classroom, the passiveness of students is forced into immobility by the institution's authority. They must remain seated. The only movements allowed are the following: (almost) not speaking, (sometimes) going to the blackboard, (perhaps) going to the toilets, (maybe) distributing papers to the other students, raising your hand... We want no more of these (adverbs)! We want the ability to move around, to learn by doing.



In opposition to the student's passivity of movement, what defines the motions of a teacher in a classroom is its activity. In order to overtake this contrast, the student has to find their way out: by carving signs on the table or throwing paper balls to their friend. The sheet of paper becomes a whole world, and drawing in the margins is liberating. It is the free space where children can practice imagination, when a text is uninteresting. However, annotating is also a way to better understand a text.

FIGURE 9

Any kind of expression outside of the frame set by the institution is seen as a fault. The forbidden but legitimate writings, if noticed by an adult, are responded to by an insincere written punishment, creating a textual phobia. How will a student not see hours of copying in front of a blackboard as a bore?



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Figure 9: Extract from Daniel Pennac's 'School Sorrow', in his notes as a student, where the letters always became lively small characters, 2007.¹³

QUESTIONING THE RELATIONSHIP

In order to transmit something, do we have to know it like the back of our hands? Giulia Bierens de Haan¹³ moved to the Netherlands, leaving her job as a teacher in Switzerland, to go back to school herself. She just graduated from graphic design in the year above me. In her essay, she speaks about generating knowledge while teaching.

GIULIA
BIERENS DE HAAN,
And I Finally
Understood
Hyperion,
2020.

"WHAT I NOTICED, AND WHAT I FOUND INTRIGUING, WAS THAT THE MOMENT I STARTED TEACHING SOMETHING — A CERTAIN COMPLEX GRAMMATICAL TOPIC, FOR EXAMPLE — BECAME THE MOMENT THAT I WOULD BE ABLE TO GRASP IT FULLY. (...) IF TEACHING IS SUCH A GOOD METHOD FOR LEARNING, WHY DO THE TEACHERS TEACH, AND NOT THE STUDENTS? AS THEY ARE SUPPOSED TO LEARN."

What I am interested in here is the reciprocity of the roles in the learning process. In the

movie Pain and Glory by Pedro Almodóvar¹⁴ (2019), we can see a surprising but promising learning relationship. Salvador, a seven year old kid, teaches Eduardo, a twenty five year old illiterate painter, how to write. "Relax your hand, I'll guide it.", Salvador answers, after Eduardo moans "There are too many letters". He is a quite demanding young teacher, which makes the scene even more touching. "Stop complaining. It is what it is." In front of this obstacle, Salvador stills finds a way to make it easier and more relevant to the painter:

- " - DO YOU LIKE TO DRAW?
- A LOT.
- THEN YOU'LL LEARN HOW TO WRITE VERY QUICKLY. BECAUSE WRITING IS LIKE DRAWING BUT WITH LETTERS."

We can learn from this example, by creating spaces where such things can happen, where children can teach adults.



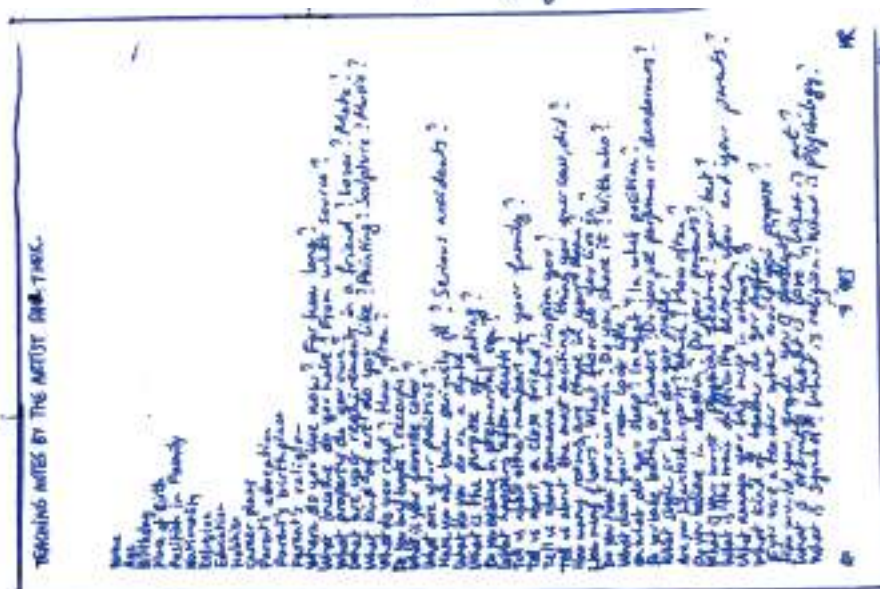
Figure 10: Screenshots from the movie 'Pain and Glory', Pedro Almodóvar, 2019

Olivier Lebrun¹⁵ has been teaching in the MA of graphic design in Lyon for a while. In 2019, he wanted to meet the curriculum in another way, like his students, so he enrolled in the program. That kind of action shows that a teacher can be a constant learner, and also participates in desacralizing the diploma. The graduation should be a beginning, not an end.

"THERE'S A PARTY TONIGHT, WHERE YOU ALL RECEIVE YOUR DIPLOMA. THEN TOMORROW WE BEGIN TO STUDY."

With ~~this~~ these words on the first day of school, Lucius Burckhardt¹⁶ welcomed his students to their program at the faculty of architecture, urban and landscape planning in Kassel, Germany. Between 1978 and 1981, while he was teaching at Cooper Union, the American artist Paul Thek¹⁷ gave a questionnaire to his students. Very engaging and time consuming, this form is an attempt to make the pedagogical relationship

FIGURE 11



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Figure 11: Paul Thek questionnaire (1978, 1981); Manuel Roeder's contribution to 'Eigengrau', a publication edited by Olivier Lebrun, Alexander Balgus, Thierry Claessens and Blaise Henry for the 29th International Poster Festival of Chaux-de-Fonds.

more sincere. A relationship with more proximity, doesn't mean one with less authority. Perhaps They could also have answered all the questions he gave to his students? Otherwise, he knows a lot about them, but what do they know about him?

TO UNDERSTAND/ TO ABOVESTAND

understand (verb)

To stand under (something or someone).

Reading into the structure of this word teaches us that maybe one shouldn't try to dominate (in the sense of being above) their content. Maybe one should let themselves be dominated by the material. "Under" comes from the Sanskrit word antar "among" which gave the Greek word entera "intestines". We need to watch our materials from below and in this way, get to the insides of it. "To understand" also comes from the word Upanishad, in Sanskrit, at the very foundation of Hinduism, between

FIGURE 12

-800 and -500. To "stand under" someone is to learn from a guru (teacher), who sits above the shishya (student). This relation is then very ancient.



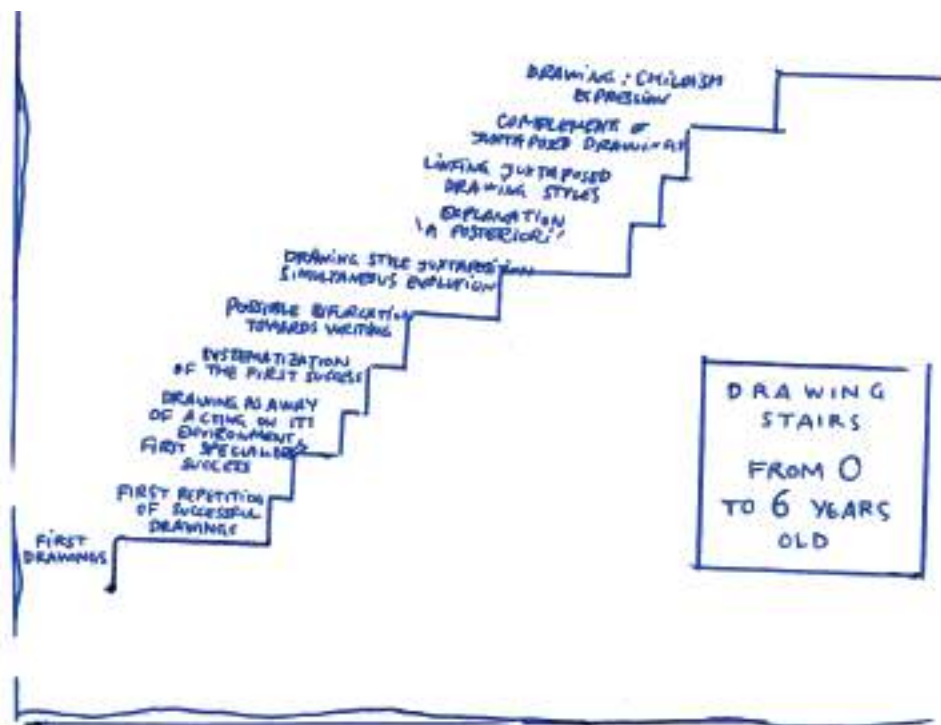
The way that learning processes have often been depicted is through vertical progression. The master has to hand-over knowledge to the learners, aiming at gradually bringing them to its own level of expertise. This vision is also to be found in Freinet's view on education: knowledge is something to be slowly accumulated. The more one learns, the more

FIGURE 13 & 14

one climbs the ~~stairs~~ steps of the stairs of learning, and gets intellectually "elevated". The more, the higher up, the better. "Aiming for the stars", "sky is ~~the~~ the limit"...

We need a more quality-based view. We need to learn how to move towards different directions, not only upwards.

FIGURE 15



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Figure 13 & 14: Drawing Stairs, Extract from the 'Natural Method of Drawing', Célestin Freinet, 1957. Re-drawing and translation by me, 2019.

IT DOES NOT MATTER
HOW MUCH WE KNOW,
BUT WHAT WE KNOW.



I would like to see curiosity as an emancipating tool which can emphasize the individuality of each student.

GIULIA
BIERENS DE HAAN,

"YOU ARE THE TOOL FOR YOUR CONSTANT LEARNING?"

And I Finally
Understood
Hyperion,

2020.

I would like to push forward the idea that students can see themselves as "sites of productive ambiguity", instead of acknowledging things in static, definitive or binary ways. There are infinite possibilities lying within them.

FIGURE 16

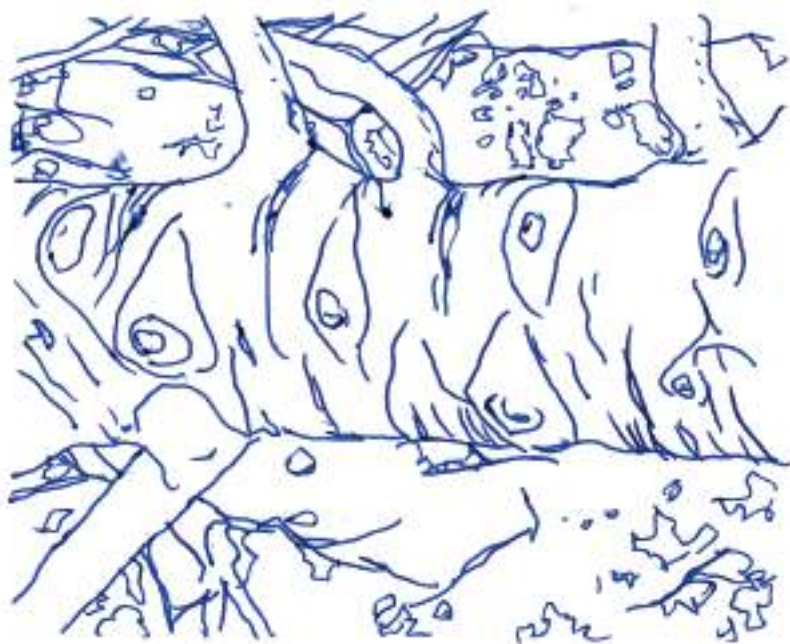
AMELIA GROOM,

What might
this be?

c. 2018.

"...HOW CAN ACTIVE MISRECOGNITION BE DEPLOYED AS A DELIBERATELY DISOBEDIENT MODE OF LOOKING, WHERE WE NURTURE OUR CAPACITY TO SEE BEYOND WHAT IT IS THAT WE ARE SUPPOSED TO SEE?"¹⁸

By educating the curiosity of every student, exercising it like a muscle, we will be able



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Figure 15: Drawing inspired from the quote "Everyone is a genius. It's just you judge a lot by its ability to climb a tree, it will use its whole life believing that it is stupid, unknown or that."
Figure 16: Elizabeth Blomhoff's "Intelligence post", "wally how does and find have you?" (2018), September 2020.

to set a tolerant environment of questioning and listening. The content ~~being~~ being taught could then be approached by critical thinkers. To illustrate this approach as a whole, I would like to propose that we look into a specific case: the way colonisation is taught at school, specifically in France. It is a very complex topic, defined by the variety of opinions on it. This is only my view on it.

I think it is surprising that with the current state of governments, public schools remain governmental. Meaning that school programs are decided by governments. Therefore, the contents feel static, irrelevant and unprogressive, just as their manners of governing. The way that both colonialism and post colonialism are talked about needs a big change, society being more than ever shaped by the loud echoes of its colonial history.

LEANNE
BETASAMSAKE
SIMPSON,
Land as Pedagogy,
2014.

"THIS REQUIRES A RADICAL BREAK FROM STATE EDUCATION SYSTEMS — THAT ARE PRIMARILY DESIGNED TO PRODUCE COMMUNITIES OF INDIVIDUALS WILLING TO UPHOLD SETTLER COLONIALISM."

Schools programs contain damaging gaps, which crystallize the points of tension within the public discourse. There are deliberate political acts made by governments which perpetuate colonization, whereas there should be more room for individual and collective truths to be told. School needs to be a space for exploring those truths and discussing them.

The presence of colonist countries, and especially France, in former colonies, is still very strong. The currency (Franc CFA) established by colonial agreements in 1945 is still in place, military forces in Mali remain active, French companies are still extracting resources from African grounds with the complicity of local presidents, while not giving back to the people, and even street names are still public French figures from the occupation. France still possesses a lot of overseas territories (Neo-colonies), which are heavily neglected compared to the mainland.

None of those facts are taught in schools, or

spoken about in a critical way. All of those actions reflect a general attitude of arrogance, found in the way colonial history is taught in school. Our respectful approach towards the individuality of each student also happens through respecting their history. Also, in school, colonization is always talked about from the moment the colonist arrives in the colonized country. This approach depicts the colonized as servile, enduring an occupation.

IRIT ROGOFF,
Education
Actualized,
2020.

"THERE IS A DECISIVE 'GEOPOLITICAL' DRIVE TO EUROPE'S EDUCATION POLICY THAT FUSES THE FORMER EAST AND THE FORMER WEST INTO ONE KNOWLEDGE TRADITION, THEREBY ERASING DECADES OF OTHER MODELS OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE EAST."

We are also interested in what happened before that colonial presence. For instance, the huge emulsion of cultures happening in Africa before French presence is negated. This approach could teach pupils that they can't be defined only by the colonial act, and that their identity

is not only the result of their relation to France. They have a history which is not only negative, and shouldn't be dispossessed of it.

Booba,
92i Veillon,
2015.

"THE WINNERS WRITE IT, THE BEATEN TELLS
THE HISTORY" ²⁰

The importance of who is speaking matters a lot. Otherwise, the truth is at stake: one person's history should not be generated by somebody else.

MAI ABU ELDAHAB,
How to fall
with grace,
2006.

"ALL INSTITUTIONS REPRESENT AN IDEOLOGY,
WHETHER EXPLICITLY OR BY DEFAULT." ²¹

It is a matter of subjectivity to make clear what is right or wrong, and also what is a mistake and what is not. Authority defines the truth, as well as what belongs to perfection and what goes into "a failure".
Black/white: no grey zone.

PERFECT FAILURES

THE RED PEN

Grades can be rewards as much as punishments. A text and its correction are only two absurd monologues following each other. We need them to be dialogues. Using a different colour pen on the small squares of the sheet of paper. Red is then the colour of power, which coldly underlines, judges what is correct or incorrect. Moments later, after the copy is written, the student will never have a chance to respond.

How is the student's level situated in relation to the others? Are they better or worse? What are they worth? All of those questions makes children feel insecure, sad, or over-competitive. From there, we should have noticed the irrelevance of grades. Punishment is repetitive, time consuming, stupid. It generates shame and guilt for the one who has failed, and anxiety for upcoming failures.

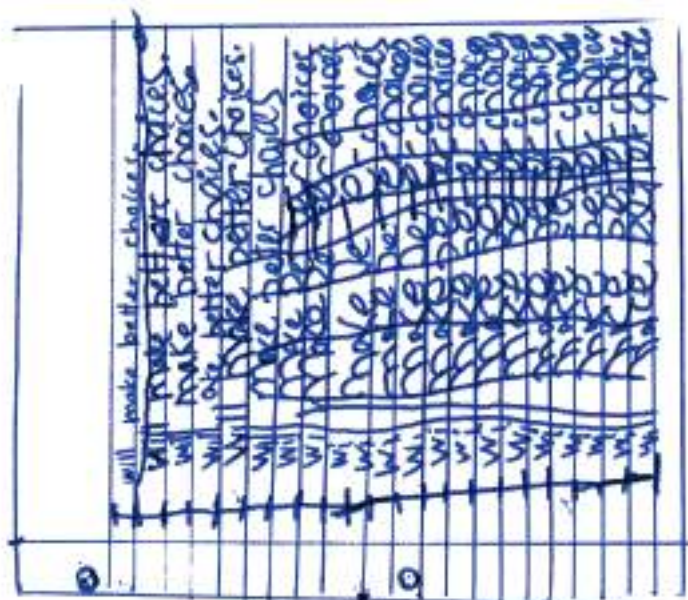
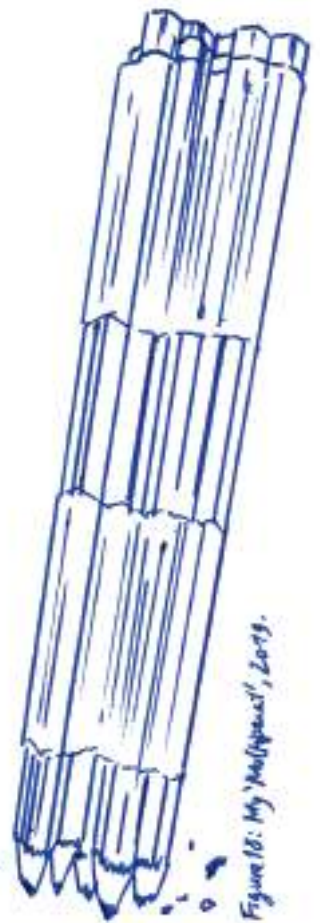


Figure 17: The clever way out of kabete to make her punishment quicker.

AUTHORITY OF ADULTS TOWARDS MISTAKES

At school, when I did something wrong, it was written down in my contact book by the teacher. Then my parents would sign it, meaning that they would probably add a punishment to the teacher's one. So I would mimic their signatures. After a while, I became a real forger, and when my mom would ask for the contact book, I'd say that I just lost it.

SARA AHMED,
Living a
feminist life,
2017.

"PERHAPS WE NEED TO DEVELOP A DIFFERENT ORIENTATION TO BREAKING. ~~THE~~ (...) BREAKING NEED NOT TO BE UNDERSTOOD ONLY AS THE LOSS OF THE INTEGRITY OF SOMETHING, BUT AS THE ACQUISITION OF SOMETHING ELSE, WHATEVER THAT ELSE MIGHT BE." ²²

In Ahmed's proposal, failure is a new beginning, not an end. My parents used to yell at me because I would ruin or lose a piece of clothing, when it was just living its life. A hole in a t-shirt is an amazing event I would like to go to.

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A mistake is a generator of history and of future stories. Maybe a break is a nice fissure in the ground which contains and swallows a lot, but is also continuously spitting out like a geyser.

TO SHIFT PERCEPTIONS OF PERFECTION

At the finissage of her Res(ε)idency at Kunstverein Amsterdam,²⁹ my roommate Matilda told me: "my work is about doing it, even though it is doing it bad". This struck me because I have been attached to "the perfect gesture", the gesture which contains the sweat of the hard worker, the humidity and the humility of the hand in front of the craft it tries to master. There is not too much space for failure. It has to seem easy. And, by habit, it actually does: my hand has integrated a legacy of movements. The line is beautiful, effortless, almost automatic. Now I have to learn some of this perfection, add some punk to my practice. Does it feel more sincere when it is raw?



31

Figure 19: Page extract from *Vicious Circles and Infinity: An Anthology of Branding* by P. Hughes and G. Brecht, Penguin (1977). It reminded me of the circular motion of departing installed in Jan's class.

A vertical work presents itself to the viewer as a direct link to reality: a typical example would be a realistic painting. The viewer then knows and recognizes what is shown. A horizontal work on the other hand, is more of a material and symbolic network, installing depth in the interaction between the work and the viewer. A horizontal drawing explores how meaning is formed in and through drawing, it is really "a play with signs". I think this the one Jan was into. I truly started to see my work as a playground thanks to his class.

THE AUTHORITY OF TIME TOWARDS MISTAKES

DANIEL PENNAC,
School Sorrow,
2007.

"WE SHOULD INVENT A PARTICULAR TIME FOR LEARNING. THE PRESENT TENSE OF EMBODIMENT, FOR INSTANCE. I AM HERE, IN THIS CLASS, AND I UNDERSTAND, FINALLY! (...) ONLY, FOR KNOWLEDGE TO HAVE A CHANCE TO BE EMBODIED IN THE PRESENT OF A CLASS, WE NEED TO CEASE BRANDISHING THE PAST AS A SHAME AND THE FUTURE AS A PUNISHMENT."

The student learns a lesson, gets evaluated, then it is assumed that the content is integrated. As if you could just frenetically stack pieces of knowledge on top of each other, in the body of students, without any action on their part. This sadly reminds me of the way geese are stuffed with grain to make foie-gras. At some point, it will burst!

CESARE
PIETROJUSTI,

Art education,
towards a new
conception of time,

2018.

"ART EDUCATION REQUIRES FIRST OF ALL A NEW IDEA,
AND A NEW EXPERIENCE, OF TIME, ONE THAT
CHALLENGES THE SLAVERY OF LACK-OF-TIME
— A DEBT THAT IS NO LESS PERVASIVE AND
FEROCIOUS THAN THE FINANCIAL ONE."

We need more time to make mistakes, that is how we learn. We need to be able to try a first path, notice that it doesn't work midway, and go back to start a new one. Taking short-cuts will not make us arrive first.

In theory class, I was very frustrated. Being seated and listening to a teacher didn't suit me. I walked around in the classroom, hoping not to

annoy my classmates and the teacher, Zachary.²⁵ What also bothered me was the complexity of the text we had to study. I couldn't take anything from it. I thought: "Does this teacher think he's smarter than us?" I felt stupid for not understanding. As the year passed, I slowly started to notice the reasons for my frenetic movements in class, and where my frustrations came from.

I was unable to focus, because the way I have been taught to understand something is by grasping every part of it, to get the meaning as a whole. By giving us really complex texts, Zachary wanted us to develop our own understanding of them, not a linear one. To get what we can, to doubt, to let it go. It was fine not to "understand" everything. This experience gave me a new desire to read. I also noticed how the learning process happens in the long term. What one learns and the way it is learned will shape its future. Also, something might seem pointless on Monday, but very relevant on Sunday. What happens during the week, then travels around the mind of the student.

AMBITIONS OF EDUCATION/ REALITY OF SOCIETY

THREATS ON THE FREINET SCHOOL

Alternative pedagogies are not very well integrated in society. There are fundamental differences between them, so I would like to look into a few examples. It might seem easy or simplistic to point out the bad things in existing systems and to aim at making them better, but thinking about it, I share Nils Norman's ¹²⁶ view on the idea of utopia:

NILS NORMAN,
Edible Park,
2012.

"SOME SEE UTOPIA AS A DREAM SPACE, A FANTASY FUTURE SOCIETY. THAT'S ONE PART OF IT. OTHERS SEE IT AS A CRITICAL TOOL WITH WHICH TO CRITIQUE SOCIETY AND THE CONDITIONS WE LIVE IN, WHICH IS HOW I USE IT. USING THE IDEA OF UTOPIA AS A WAY OF GETTING TO ANOTHER PLACE, WHICH DOESN'T NEED TO BE A PERFECT PLACE; (...) IT'S A PROCESS RATHER THAN A GOAL."

The initiators of the Freinet pedagogy, Élise and Célestin, were confronted with violence from government ~~media~~ and media authorities. In 1933, a campaign against Freinet divided the village of Vence for several months and drew the attention of the national press. The mayor and deputy-mayor put pressure on the parents to withdraw their children from the school. Nevertheless, 14 out of 28 children kept going to class, meaning that half of the parents supported the teacher. The conditions in that school were quite precarious, since they received no help from the government:

"THE CLASS IS HELD IN A DARK ROOM, WITHOUT SUN DURING WINTER, THE WOOD-FLOOR IS COMING APART, BUMPY, SO THE BENCHES ARE UNSTABLE. THE TOILETS POUR IN A PIT WHICH IS NEVER FULLY EMPTIED. SEVERAL TIMES A YEAR, IT OVERFLOWS. THE FIRST WATERING PLACE IS 100 m. AWAY, THE CHILDREN HAVE TO GO THERE BY THEMSELVES. FOR THE HEAT, THE TEACHER HAS TO CUT THE WOOD HIMSELF AND TO TEND TO IT, OTHERWISE THERE WOULD

NEVER BE A FIRE. A SECOND CLASS IS NOW OPEN,
IT IS ONLY LIT BY ONE WINDOW AND IS NEVER
CLEANED, THE CHILDREN HAVE TO SWEEP IT
THEMSELVES. NO CREDIT FOR THE TEACHING;
ONLY 50 fr. (FRENCH CURRENCY BEFORE EURO) PER
YEAR FOR TWO CLASSES, FOR THE INK AND
THE CHALK."

Some posters were hung, denouncing Freinet as a
"Bolshevik schoolteacher". There were demonstrations
(windows broken, withdrawn shutters, insults) from
the local far-right. All of this finally pushed
Célestin Freinet to take a break, officially for
health reasons. This raises awareness about how
hard it was in the 1930's to come up with new
ideas about education and applying them. This
school has been through a lot, but is still standing
today, and even expanded throughout the whole
country and internationally.

FIGURE 22

NEVER BE A FIRE. A SECOND CLASS IS NOW OPEN,
IT IS ONLY LIT BY ONE WINDOW

THE GAP

When speaking with Kiran about the Steiner school, we discussed the gap between student and society. "Normal" schools really educate students to fit in, because they are shaped by governments, just as society are. Filling this gap by accompanying students is necessary. My initial aim was to talk about this gap as a limit of alternative education, but I noticed that it might actually be a positive. If these students don't fit into the current society, they will try not to perpetuate it. They will change it to fit in. And if they fit in, perhaps everyone will, since alternative schools aim at adapting to every human being. They would be proposing education principles according to which society could be reshaped, and where the two would constantly re-adapt to each other, as a mirroring virtuous circle.



Figure 22: Bilderdijk school (Freinet pedagogy), Antendon West, 1937-1938.

THE (UN)NECESSARY EXPLICATION AND THE (UN)NECESSARY TEACHER

PAULO FREIRE,
Pedagogy of
the Oppressed,
1971.

"THE TEACHER PRESENTS HIMSELF TO HIS STUDENTS AS THEIR NECESSARY OPPOSITE; BY CONSIDERING THEIR IGNORANCE ABSOLUTE, HE JUSTIFIES HIS OWN EXISTENCE."²⁷

The explanation process really sets the hierarchy of learning. It also takes over the voice of the material, and stops it from speaking for itself. It fills a void with the wrong content. We should listen carefully to it, like the sound of the ocean in a shell. When one puts their ear to the ground, and slowly the soil starts shivering, announcing the heavy arrival of a flock shaking the silence. Our content is coming from the void in the same way, and it is a very unthought and tyrannic move when the teacher fills it with explanations before the material has a chance to speak. As Rancière says:

"THE MASTER'S SECRET IS TO KNOW HOW TO

JACQUES RANCIÈRE,
The Ignorant
Schoolmaster,
1991.

RECOGNIZE THE DISTANCE BETWEEN THE TAUGHT MATERIAL AND THE PERSON BEING INSTRUCTED, THE DISTANCE ALSO BETWEEN LEARNING AND UNDERSTANDING. THE EXPLICATOR SETS UP AND ABOLISHES THIS DISTANCE — DEPLOYS IT AND REABSORBS IT IN THE FULLNESS OF HIS SPEECH."

THE LAST DAY BEFORE THE HOLIDAYS

I see this text as a work in progress, as a base onto which I can add some things at any time. For instance, to talk about another example of pedagogy or to implement the experience of someone I just talked to. That is why it doesn't have a definite structure, and why I decided to have no focus besides the problem of hierarchy in pedagogy. In the end, each part is independent from the others, they are tiny essays in themselves.

I liked finding my examples in every kind of education. "Normal" schools or "alternative" school,

art school, and within a wide range of age (from pre-school to higher education). I think, indeed, that there are good ideas to be found everywhere. I needed to explore in every direction, in order to propose a collection of possibilities, and to think about the ones which could be most relevant for each of us.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 bell hooks was born in 1952. She is an African American writer, philosopher and teacher. She focuses on disabling systems of oppression within education. bell hooks' name is spelled without capitals, which I see as a non-hierarchical way of writing: all the letters are on the same level: "AH, TERRIBLE GUARDS, THE CAPITALS! (...) EVERY WORD HIT BY A CAPITAL WAS MEANT TO BE FORGOTTEN INSTANTANEOUSLY: CITIES, RIVERS, BATTLES, HEROES, PACTS, POETS, GALAXIES, THEOREMS, FORBIDDEN OF MEMORY BECAUSE OF THEIR PETRIFYING CAPITALS. STOP HERE, WOULD EXCLAIM THE CAPITAL, YOU CAN'T CROSS THE DOOR OF THAT NAME, IT IS TOO PROPER, YOU ARE NOT HONORABLE ENOUGH, YOU'RE AN IDIOT!" Daniel Pennac, School Sorrow (c.f. p.19).
- 2 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak was born in 1942. She is an Indian theorist and professor in New York. She is considered as one of the most influential postcolonial intellectual, especially for Can the subaltern speak?.
- 3 This essay, published in ~~1945~~ 1985 by the Columbia University Press, had an important impact on the cultural politics ⁱⁿ of the world.

- 3 Ousmane Badara Diallo was born in 1977 in Dakar, Senegal. He is a french rapper, highly influential for being one of the pioneers of the independent rap movement, with his label and group Ghetto Fabulous Gang.
- 4 Adriana Lahera Mabanta is currently graduating from VAV at the Rietveld Academie. We noticed that we had a lot of overlaps between our essays. Her thesis focuses more on seeing children as a state of mind, and as a new way to see the world, reconsidering the relationship between adult and child within education. We met several times to discuss and read each other's work, which was truly helpful.
- 5 Marshall Rosenberg was an American psychologist, mediator, author and teacher. Starting in the early 1960's he developed Non-violent communication, a process for supporting partnership and resolving conflict in relationships and in society. I heard of him during a phonecall with Noham and Soulaymane, my partner Elise's cousins. They are both studying in a Freinet school in France, in a suburb of Nantes, and they told me about their experience (c.f. p.10).

Their words to characterize the Freinet pedagogy: "well-being" and "solidarity". The Non-violent communication is also used in this school. Students are getting used to having contact with each other, through playful massages, drawing on each other's back for instance. After this, they noticed that violence in the courtyard almost entirely stopped, because kids wouldn't hit each other right after massaging one another.

6

Paul Gangloff is a graphic design practitioner focusing on the history of graphic design. He tries to "challenge linear and normative narratives by taking time to look, listen and read about people, techniques, materials that remain a bit obscure."

In 1st year, he gave us the "local hero" assignment. Each student had to tell the class about their own "hero": a person from our hometown who was important to us or to our practice. In contrast to that, in my previous school, we would only have art history lectures, where we would learn chronological facts every week.

To me, that is a more distant, linear and boring approach. What I found incredible in Paul's class was that we collected and produced texts that shaped our own history of graphic design. We were the ones generating our own content, towards our own interests. We also had a big

diversity of people from all around the world in class, which led to a diverse history, not like most of the art history which only talks about Europe, from an European point of view.

7

During the last christmas holidays, I was at my grandma Aline's, in the south of France. I was searching through drawers, hoping to find some treasures. Sometimes, objects talk more than people. Then I found this book belonging to my great-grandma Gigi (Aline's mother), who was a preschool teacher. It was the Natural Method of Drawing. Very dusty, with yellow pages, beautifully laid-out with children's drawings. Among others, this beautiful sentence popped out: "RULES, AS MAJESTIC AS THEY CAN BE, SHOULDN'T EVER BE A STARTING POINT: THEY ARE THE END AND THE OUTCOME."

8

Leanne Betasamosake Simpson is a musician, poet, writer and teacher Michi Saagig Nishnaabeg (indigenous population of Canada). She is a notable author of several books on Indigenous issues in Canada, as well as important postcolonial writings.

9

Louis Burckhardt (1925-2003) was a sociologist, economist, theorist of architecture and design, and

the founder of strolology (promenadology), as well as a teacher. Olivier Lebrun talked to me about his approach to teaching (c. f. p. 21).

10

Elisabeth Klement is an Estonian graphic designer working in Amsterdam. She runs the art and design bookshop San Seriffe with Pieter Verbeke, as well as the Asterisk Summer School in Estonia with Laura Pappa. One of the favourite book I made was for one of her assignments: Playground (a circle formal research).

11

It is important to note that some Steiner schools are controversial. Their pedagogy takes sources in Rudolf Steiner's philosophy from the 1900's. It contained racist views, and even acquaintances to Nazi commanders, as well as a deep anchoring in Christianity, sometimes qualified of sectarianism.

Currently, most of Steiner schools dissociate themselves from such ~~views~~ positions, and claim to focus on the emancipatory education and the development of children.

The amount of people at Rietveld who are former Steiner school students is impressive. It could be explained by the early presence of arts and crafts in children's upbringings at Steiner schools.

- 12 Cesare Pietroiusti was born 1956, in Italy. He chose to devote his early works to social psychology of relations in art. I recently saw one of his exhibitions in the West Museum in the Hague, where he displayed a reproduction of an engraved door, as well as a lot of free-to-take drawings, and this small text about time in art education.
- 13 Daniel Pennac is a French writer born in 1944. I think I read some of his books when I was a kid, but completely forgot about it. He was a bad student who became a linguistics teacher and a famous writer specialized in grammar. My partner Elise sent me this book from France, she annotated it with the parts that could help me for my thesis.
- 14 We had a very nice dinner at Giulia's place, where we discussed a lot about education among other things. She bakes delicious bread and leek pie.
- 15 Pedro Almodóvar is a Spanish film director born in 1949. We watched Pain and Glory with my roommates, laying on the couch with a cup of tea, and it was a very nice moment even though I don't like tea.
- 16 I sent an Instagram message to Olivier Lebrun, and told

him that I loved a text he published. From then on, we started calling each other and discussing our work. He made me discover a lot of things in relation to pedagogy.

17 C.f. note 9.

18 Paul Thek (1933-1988) was an American painter and, later, sculptor and installation artist. Thek was active in both the U.S. and Europe during his life, staging a number of ambitious installations and sculptural works throughout his lifetime. Olivier Lebrun (c.f. note 16) sent me this precious document.

19 Amelia Groom is a writer and researcher based in Berlin, and ~~she~~ also a teacher at both the Sandberg Institut and the Rietveld academie, as well as the very helpful mentor of this thesis.

20 Irit Rogoff is a writer, theorist, teacher and curator. Her research interests include contemporary art and critical theory, postcolonialism, cultures of education and gender.

21 Booba is a highly influential ~~rapper~~ French rapper born in 1976, currently living in Miami, active ~~se~~ since 1994. I think his song Ma Definition from his first album Temps Mort remains one of my favourite song ever.

- 22 Mai Abu ElDahab is an Egyptian curator, part of Manifesta 6 (the "European nomadic biennial").
- 23 ~~Sara~~ Sara Ahmed was born in 1969. She is a British-Australian scholar whose area of study includes the intersection of feminist theory, lesbian feminism, queer theory, critical race theory and postcolonialism. Last year, I wrote a text about a hole in a t-shirt, in Phil Baber's class. Afterwards, Phil emailed me about Ahmed, saying he saw a nice link between the two texts.
- 24 Kunstverein calls itself a "domestic franchise" and "curatorial office" based in Amsterdam, New York, Toronto and Milan. It displays presentations, lectures, screenings and independent publishing. Matilda just started to work in their new bookshop, and there is a 50% discount on their books if you get the one-year subscription to the gallery.
- 25 Walter Benjamin (1892-1940) is a German philosopher and art historian. Very interesting though very hard to read for me (art students know him very well since he is taught a lot in art schools).
- 26 Zachary Formwalt is an artist and filmmaker based

in Amsterdam, also teaching Theory in graphic design at the Rietveld. During his class last year, we had to pick a site (a place) and research it during the whole semester. My site was the Freinet school. That is how the material research for this thesis started to be accumulated.

27

Nils Norman was born in 1966 and is a British artist, architect and teacher. His work focuses on economic and ecological alternatives, taking shape of perma-culture gardens or playgrounds for instance. He also teaches fine arts at the Rietveld, and we could meet with Adriana in the canteen to chit-chat, which was a cool moment.

28

Paulo Freire (1921-1997) inspired bell hooks a lot. He was a ~~born~~ Brazilian pedagogue working with militant alphabetization as a way of fighting oppression, and wrote the book Education as the practice of freedom.

I wanted to read Pedagogy of the Oppressed for this thesis, but it was already borrowed from the library. I noticed later on that it was Adriana who had it, haha.

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LEXICON

AUTHORITY (NOUN)

"The ability of affecting others, the ability of having an effect on others." At which point did we make this effect on others turn into an oppressive one?

"POTESTAS IN POPULA, AUCTORITAS IN SENATU"

... Cicero said, which means "Power in people, authority in Senate." Etymologically, "authority" comes from the Latin word "auctoritas". At the premises of Roman era, the senate didn't have any decision-making or executive power. The auctoritas was then the quality and the legitimacy of the Ancients, who obtained it themselves, by legacy and transmission.

It is already interesting to note that authority then ~~was~~ was not a synonym of power. Authority could exist without strength and even embodied a symbolic counter-power (from the senate against the people). That means that the original meaning of the word has been brutally mixed and associated with power to transform it into the nowadays well-known definition of authority: "the power to give orders, make decisions, enforce obedience". The verb "aucto", where "auctoritas"

comes from, means giving birth, increasing, producing into existence. Augere consists first of all in setting a creator act, founder, which makes things appear for the first time. Hence, authority is inseparable from transmission, and also from foundations of learning. But it is definitely separable from power.

FAILURE (NOUN)

The lack of success. This definition is in itself a failure, since it defines the word as the opposite of the other. It doesn't own its meaning: it only means "not achieving", it is a denial definition. The second meaning of failure is the neglect of expected action. Neglect as in lack of care, lack of control above the action: also very guilt-inducing. But at least, this definition gives a wider room for the failure to take shape, in this un-expected and un-required space.

DUNCE (NOUN)

"IT IS THE EXPLICATOR WHO NEEDS THE INCAPABLE AND NOT THE OTHER WAY AROUND; IT IS HE WHO CONSTITUTES THE INCAPABLE AS SUCH!"

A person considered incapable of learning. In the same way as there are no bad tools, only bad craft persons; there is no bad student, only bad teachers. Dunces are

JACQUES
RANCIÈRE,
The Ignorant
Schoolmaster,
1991.

the ones oppressed by the hierarchical connotation of knowledge. And, when some teachers invented the word "dunce", in order to qualify the ones they have a hard time teaching to, ~~the~~ they didn't see that dunces symbolized their own failures. Failure of understanding someone, lack of giving attention, care and time. Those teachers are the real dunces: people incapable of teaching.

DYNAMICS (NOUN)

The forces or properties which stimulates change within a system or process. From Greek dynamikos (powerful), from dynamis (power), from dynasthai (to be able, to have power, to be strong enough).

The interactions between teachers and students in the classroom are dominated by the teachers.

We would like to look into suppressing the notion of power from the word "dynamics". By thinking of other ways of being in the classroom (with teachers less in the center, more space for students, a total re-shuffling of roles, c. f. pp. 17-19), we can set an equal redistribution of power.

KNOWLEDGE (NOUN)

Early 12th century, *knowlece* "acknowledgment of a superior, honor, worship". Here the hierarchy was set, and helps us see a bit better why one has to stand-under some piece of knowledge (~~see~~ c. f. definition of "understand", p. 22), in order to get the whole of it.

I'm wearing dark glasses today,
because I'm seeing the future...

César ROGERS

BA THESIS

Graphic Design Department

Gerrit Rietveld Academie

Guidance by Amelia Groom

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THERE ARE FLOWERS
THAT ONLY GROWERS
IN A CERTAIN CLIMATE

/100

...and the future is looking very bright.