

# The Aesthetics of Learning

January 17–March 1, 2019  
Mishkin Gallery

What does learning look like? What does learning sound like? How are aesthetics a conduit for rethinking the ways in which knowledge and power are formed?

The Mishkin Gallery is part of a public university formed out of the Free Academy of New York, an educational experiment founded in 1847 and the first of its kind in the United States. It was established to provide children of immigrants and the working-class access to free higher education based on academic merit alone. Building off this legacy, *The Aesthetics of Learning* asks how learning may become an emancipatory and democratic event. If the university is a pedagogic institution that builds and shapes our understanding of the world, then perhaps the university art gallery is a forum for evaluating this function.

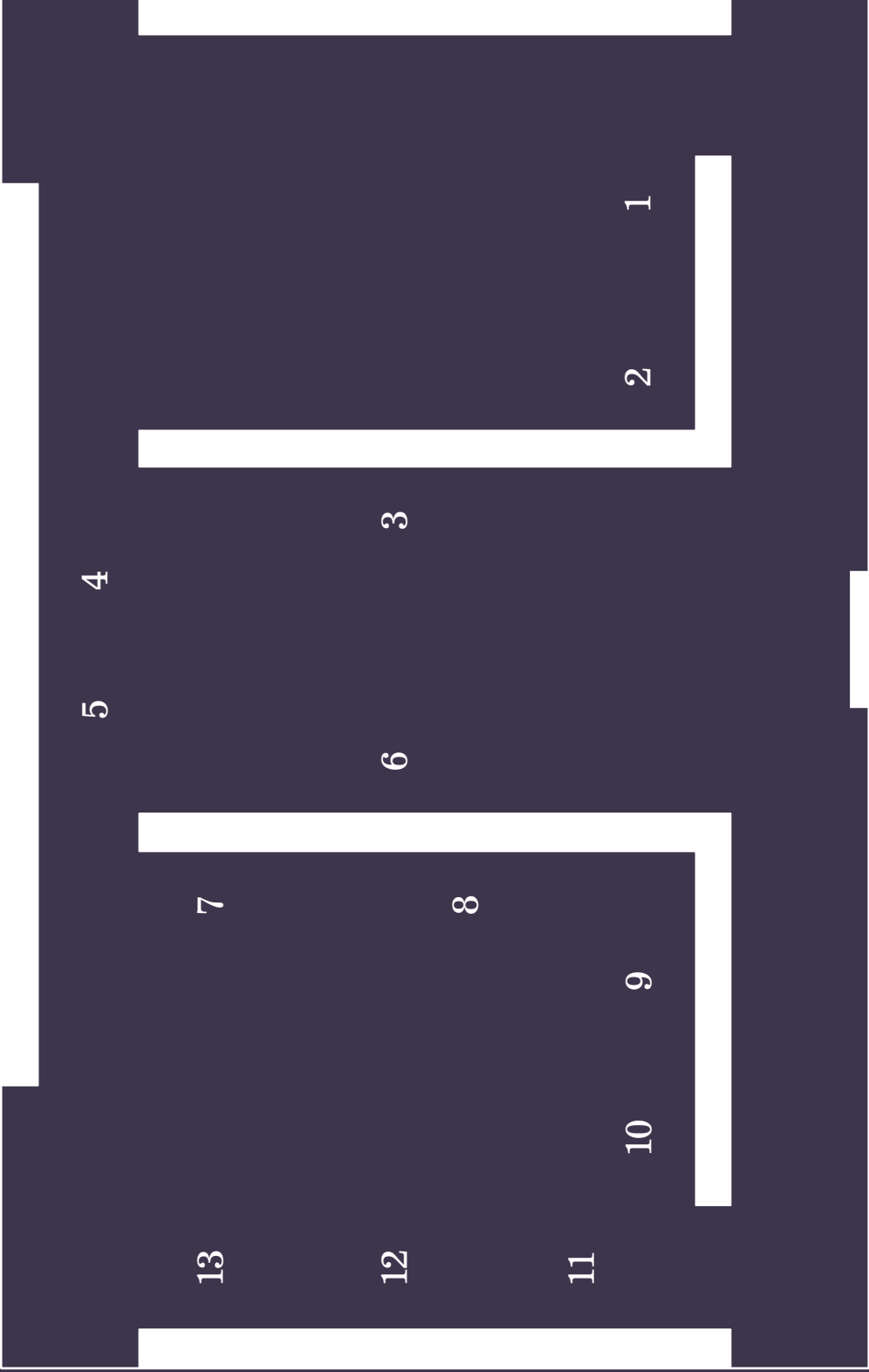
This exhibition brings together works from the Baruch College Collection that target the infrastructure of knowledge itself. Each from a different decade and by artists who have taught, these artworks examine the creation of institutional frameworks

through three distinct approaches: listening, looking, and communicating. A performance by Joseph Beuys and Henning Christiansen, four photographs by Catherine Wagner, and seven etchings by Juan Downey—do-it-yourself instructions—require action and suggest the possibility of alternate, unrestricted solutions.

What we uncover in these works are distinct ways of challenging the passive reproduction of knowledge and thereby power. An accompanying series of public programs will focus on how we might unlearn, offering space for contemplation and collaboration.

*The Aesthetics of Learning* is curated by Alaina Claire Feldman, Director of the Mishkin Gallery.

Support for this exhibition is generously provided by Baruch College and the Weissman School of Arts and Sciences.



1. *Schottische Symphonie / Requiem of Art*  
Phonograph record with colored graphic inserts by Henning Christiansen  
12.375 × 12.375 × 0.375", digital recording, 23:20 min, edition of 800  
Published by Galerie Bernd Klueser, Edition Schellmann

Richard Demarco

2. Performance documentation, 1970  
Five facsimiles (four 35mm negatives digitized and reprinted,  
one letter digitized and reprinted)

Catherine Wagner

3. *Naval Postgraduate School, Metallurgical Classroom, Monterey, California, 1983*  
Gelatin silver print, 17.5 × 21.125"
4. *Emerson College, Southwick Hall, Boston, MA, 1985*  
Gelatin silver print, 17.5 × 21.125"
5. *Chinese American International School, 5th Grade Classroom, Abacus Lesson, San Francisco, California, 1982*  
Gelatin silver print, 17.5 × 21.125"
6. *Moss Landing Elementary School, Seventh and Eighth Grade Science Room, Moss Landing, California, 1984*  
Gelatin silver print, 17.5 × 21.125"

Juan Downey

7. *Do It Yourself: Mass Produced Machine, 1967*  
Etching, 10 × 12", edition 7 of 25
8. *Do It Yourself: Sound Operated Relay, 1967*  
Etching, 10 × 12", edition 7 of 25
9. *Do It Yourself: Capacitance Relay, 1967*  
Etching, 10 × 12", edition 7 of 25
10. *Do It Yourself: Invisible Communication, 1967*  
Etching, 12 × 17", edition 7 of 25
11. *Do It Yourself: Nostalgic Item, 1967*  
Etching, 11 × 17", edition 7 of 25
12. *Do It Yourself: The Pink Box, 1967*  
Etching, 10 × 12", edition 7 of 25
13. *Do It Yourself: The Human Voice, 1967*  
Etching, 11 × 17", edition 7 of 25

On August 21, 1970, Henning Christiansen (Danish, 1932–2008) and Joseph Beuys (German, 1921–1986) collaborated on the happening *Celtic Kinloch Rannoch: A Scottish Symphony* at the Edinburgh College of Art for the “Strategy: Get Arts” exhibition, the documentation of which is presented here. At the time, Beuys was a professor at the Art Academy in Düsseldorf and Christiansen at the Art Academy in Hamburg, where they were both known for their unconventional teaching styles. Driven by the Fluxus ethos of experimental art performances and scores, *A Scottish Symphony* consisted of the tuning of a piano. Here, the exercise itself is the artwork rather than a prelude to a polished composition. The emphasis is on the apparatus of the piano and the process of achieving a “correct” sound rather than a formal composition dependent on a structure that controls it for the sake of productivity, reproduction and convention. *Schottische Symphonie / Requiem of Art* points to the framework and anatomy of a traditional artwork while negating to participate in such expected forms.

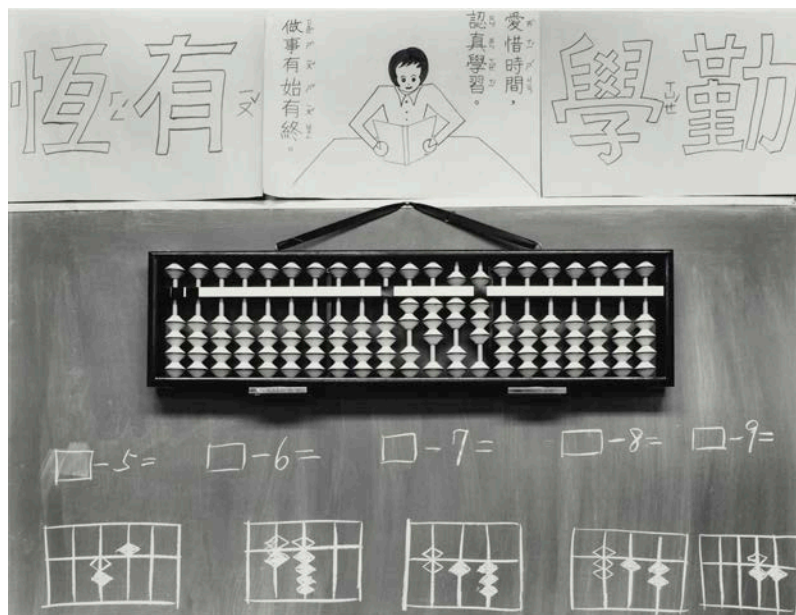


*Schottische Symphonie / Requiem of Art*

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Catherine Wagner (*American*, 1953) is a photographer and the Nancy Cook Chair and Professor of Art at Mills College in California. Her *American Classroom* series investigates educational institutions from primary schools and colleges (seen here), but also include a dog grooming school and police academy. This body of black and white prints presents a broad range of teaching objects, systems and places that produce the daily transference of knowledge. With her photographs of classrooms emptied of people, Wagner highlights the architecture that constructs knowledge and the systems that fortify them.





*Chinese American International School, 5th Grade Classroom,  
Abacus Lesson, San Francisco, California, 1982  
Gelatin silver print, 17.5×21.125"*

When systems break down or when governing bodies lapse in guiding us, do-it-yourself solutions to everyday problems can become an act of survival. Juan Downey's (Chilean, 1940–1993) cybernetic interests explore this alternative arena, presenting different ways in which reality is constructed through common local knowledge and readily available materials. Downey believed people have the means to build new systems of communication, which can decenter the metanarratives of communication given to us. The seven etchings here are sketches for how Downey imagined such sculptures to be assembled and experienced. They encourage us to think about an active production of knowledge in opposition to passive reception. A later version of these instructions were shown at the Brooklyn Museum and Judson Church in 1968, and later built as sculptures for the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. in 1969. Downey was a teacher at Pratt and Hunter College which, like Baruch, is part of the City University of New York.



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Opening hours:  
Monday to Friday 11-6  
Thursday 11-7