

**THE SUBURBAN
THE POOR FARM
POOR FARM PRESS**



THE SUBURBAN: TEN YEARS ON

The Suburban offers very little in real estate, but it looms large as a site that believes in artists and their ideas. Ideally we hope The Suburban is comparable to the proverbial sketchbook. We frame projects at The Suburban as a logical extension of artist's studio practices—a site where artists negotiate every raw and refined aspect of an idea. No curator, no preparator, no dealer, no money. The Suburban hosts an audience of intelligent and articulate viewers. It also comes with safety features such as its proximity to our home, complete with kids and a yard. And of course it is located in the unfashionable suburb, a site not conducive to avant-garde activities.

Most simply, The Suburban is an argument that favors artists and their thinking, not their careers.

The two of us—Michelle Grabner and Brad Killam—founded The Suburban in 1999 because we wanted to host contemporary art and its orbiting conversations from our domestic Oak Park location. The Suburban is certainly a child of institutional critique. Unlike many of today's alternative or independent spaces that are cloaked in careering pursuits, the Suburban is old-school and old (literally, as we were art schooled in the 1980s and early '90s). Yet pragmatics also plays a large part in The Suburban operation. It is built into the economics and daily life of a working household. Begin-

ning our tenth year, we have initiated over 125 projects.



TEN YEARS LATER: THE POOR FARM AND POOR FARM PRESS

As 2009 marks The Suburban's tenth year, it also marks the beginnings of a new project for us. The Poor Farm and Poor Farm Press. Located among the farmlands, wetlands and small rivers of Waupaca County in central Wisconsin, it will take on the role of The Suburban's much larger rural cousin. Here we will mount yearlong exhibitions in its 8,000+ square feet of varied spaces and originate catalogs and other printed matter not commonly contracted by established publishing firms. The Poor Farm property also hosts a massive dormitory building where artists and writers can be in residence for extended lengths of time.

A product of the nineteenth-century American Poor Farm System (a social establishment modeled after the English almshouses) the Waupaca County Home (Poor Farm in local vernacular) was erected in 1876. Historically these were county government-supported institutions. As an alternative to indentured labor, these working farms were populated with the region's destitute until approximately 1935 when the Social Security Act was established, marking the decline and ultimate dissolutions of the American Poor Farm system. During its time, poor farm residents were assigned inmate status and required to work under strict conditions for minimal living accommodations. The Poor Farm has a jail in the basement and a cemetery in the

back cornfield, underscoring the social and economic complex encompassing the poor farm system.

Like The Suburban, The Poor Farm will be dedicated to artists. In a recent interview we stated that, "we believe in artists and we believe in the imagination." We also happen to delight in and value our mid western, middle class, middle-age life with a mortgage and three kids. Voila: The Suburban, The Poor Farm and Poor Farm Press. Now, we can further negotiate our beliefs, share resources, and widen a space for artists and other curious minds.



**THE POOR FARM AND POOR FARM PRESS
FACT SHEET**

ADDRESS:

E6325 County Highway BB
Manawa, WI 54949

BUILDING SIZE:

5,500 square feet of exhibition space
2,500 square feet of residency space
2.7 acres

MISSION:

The Poor Farm and Poor Farm Press are dedicated to the advancement of contemporary art and the international avant garde. We accomplish this through exhibition, residency and publication programs.

EXHIBITING ARTIST RESIDENCY:

Artists exhibiting at The Poor Farm will be in residence during fabrication and installation of their respective solo exhibitions.

ART WRITING RESIDENCY:

A program for practitioners who want to develop work that addresses art as writing, writing as art, and writing about art – with the aim of encouraging and debating diverse ideas in the field of contemporary art writing.

EDUCATION:

K-12 outreach includes group tours, lectures and opportunities to interface with artists and writers in residence. These are offered in a variety of formats.

General public outreach welcomes the newly initiated viewer and the seasoned visitor alike. Tours and lectures are available to groups at all times.

Higher Education outreach includes tour groups, lectures and seminars with artists and writers in residency, as well as with a variety of college and university professors. These offerings are designed to supplement advanced undergraduate and graduate level programs seeking additional opportunities for substantial discourse.



EXHIBITIONS:

2009-2010

Under Construction Projects
Opening August 7, 8, 9, 2009

Shane Selzer (New York)
Milwaukee International (Milwaukee)
Pedro Velez (Chicago)
Phil Vanderhyden (New York)
Zach Cahill (Chicago)
Amy Park (New York)
Cindy Loehr (New York)
Aaron Van Dyke (Saint Paul)
Chris Walla (Moorehead)
Cip Contreras (Nashville))
Aris Georgiades (Madison)
Matthew Girson (Chicago)

Stephanie Barber (Milwaukee)

GRAND OPENING AUGUST 2010:

David Robbins (Milwaukee)
Leslie Vance (Los Angeles)
Brad Kahlhammer (New York)
Patrick Hill (Los Angeles)
Jay Heikes (Minneapolis)
(more TBA)

AUGUST 2011:

Guillaume Leblon (Paris)
(more TBA)

