

# **Joshua Siegal**

## *Educational Development*

MFA Candidate  
Interdisciplinary Arts & Media  
Columbia College Chicago  
Spring 2007

Thesis Advisor: Stuart Keeler



# **Joshua Siegal**

## *Educational Development*

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**Title of Installation:** *Educational Development*

**Name of Artist:** Joshua Siegal

**Artist Statement:**

Joshua Siegal is a writer, musician, and interdisciplinary artist based in Chicago. His installation work aims to fight the pandemic of media conditioning by amplifying the mediated experiences that permeate existence in modern American culture.

*Educational Development* is the synthesis of research into American educational history and exploration of personal experience. For some reading on how industry has shaped our schools, a good place to start is *An Underground History of American Education*, by John Taylor Gotto, former New York State Teacher of the Year.

**The artist is grateful for the assistance and support of:**

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Gretchen Werner

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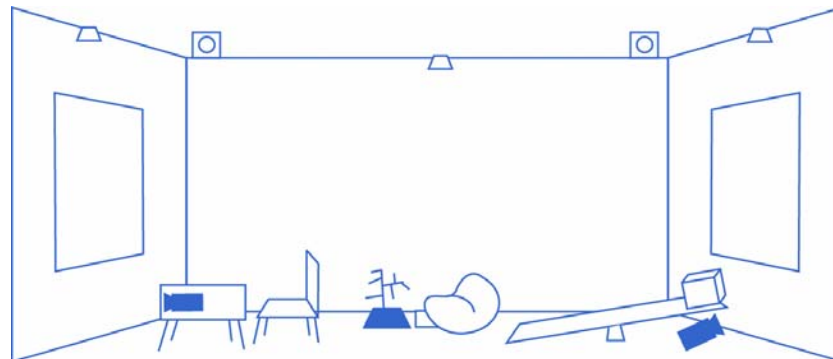
Eric Weiss

# Joshua Siegal

## Installation: *Educational Development*

### Project Description

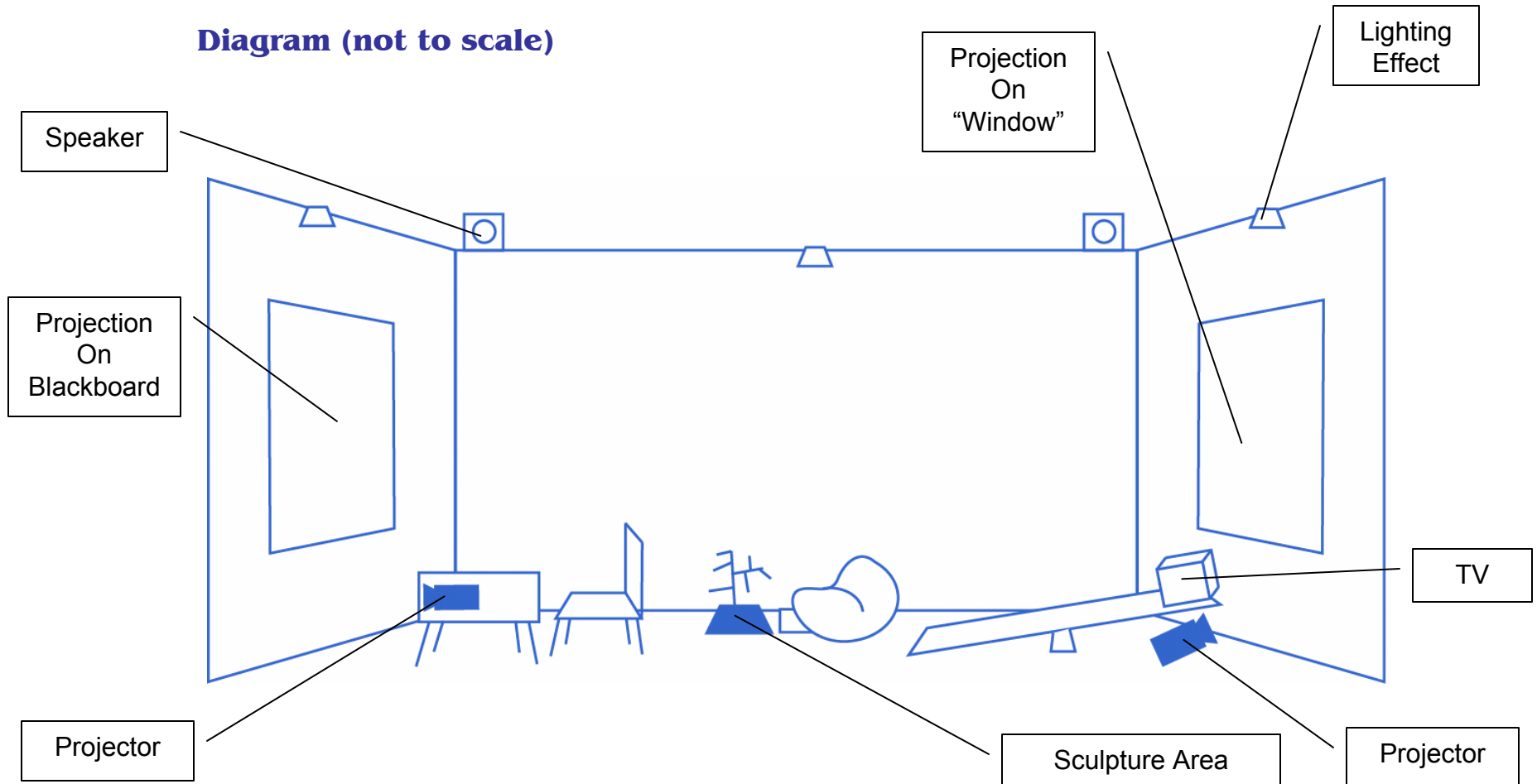
*Educational Development* is a multi-part installation wherein sculpture, sound, lighting, and media elements combine to create an elementary school classroom. The lesson: a history of the modern American public school system, with an emphasis on the subtext of this environment, namely the sacrifice of education for the goal of creating a docile population of future workers.



# Joshua Siegal

## Installation: *Educational Development*

Diagram (not to scale)

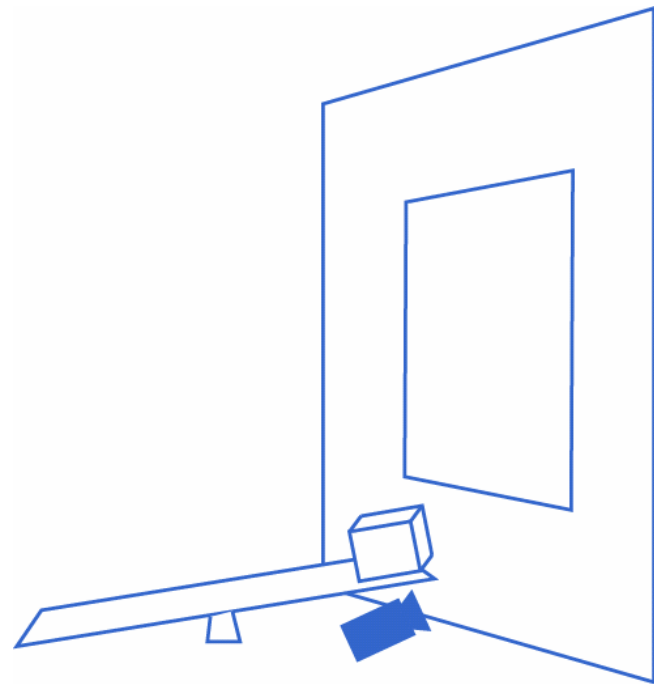


# Joshua Siegal

## Installation: *Educational Development*

### Part I: "SEE SAW"

- Equipment: TV, See Saw, Projector, Minimac Computer (2), EZIO circuit board, Sensor, Seat (not pictured), Window mockup
- Segments on TV segued by "up-down" graphics in window (projection) depicting highs and lows of commercial culture
- TV segments are five Text / Image presentations narrating position of "education" as economic siphon and emotional blackmail



# Joshua Siegal

## Installation: *Educational Development*

### Part II: "POP YOULATION"

- Equipment: Sculpture platforms, Sculpture (dolls and sticks), Bucket of parts (more dolls and sticks), Bean bag chair
- Will contain one artist-created sculpture (fixed), and several bases and a chest of parts so that visitors can experience the visceral thrill of shoving sticks into doll bodies and arranging them as willed
- This process is a physical analog of the corporal control that the educational system legally exercises over students
- Dolls will be stamped in red, green, and blue (RGB) with letters of the alphabet

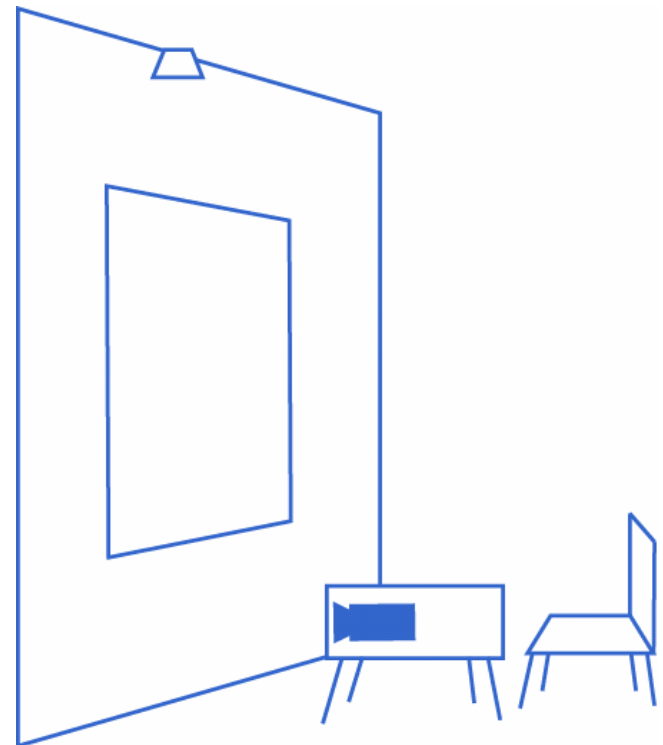


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## Installation: *Educational Development*

### Part III: "WRITTEN ANSWERS"

- Equipment: Desk, Projector, Minimac computer, Chair, Blackboard, Book of Tests, Pens, Lights, EZIO circuit board, Sensor.
- Top of desk will have a TRUE/FALSE test that the audience can fill out, on the subject of media.
- Test will have opportunity for "extra credit".
- Pressure on desk from writing will activate lights and blackboard "lecture" on educational history in America.



# Joshua Siegal

## Installation: *Educational Development*

### Part IV: AMBIENT EFFECTS

#### *Sound*

Audio for the installation space will consist of a sound piece that makes use of typical sounds of our schools and voices of children in groups shouting out phrases commonly spoken by teachers. Sound to be recorded by artist at Crown Academy in Chicago's Lawndale community, as part of a visiting artist presentation on Installation Art; will help inform school installation project on AIDS called the "Algebra of Awareness".

# Joshua Siegal

## Installation: *Educational Development*

### Part IV: AMBIENT EFFECTS

#### *Lighting*

Lighting for the installation will consist of overhead lights with different throws and foci, emphasizing the seating areas of the various part of the installation.

# Joshua Siegal

## Installation: *Educational Development*

### Aesthetic Statement

*Art in the era of Media must be focused on entertaining its audience by engaging the mind, body, and spirit by any combination. Think of the role of the image before the advent of television. How many man-made images was one likely to see in a year? The modern television viewer sees 108,000 discrete images in an hour of watching television, to say nothing of the messages imparted.*

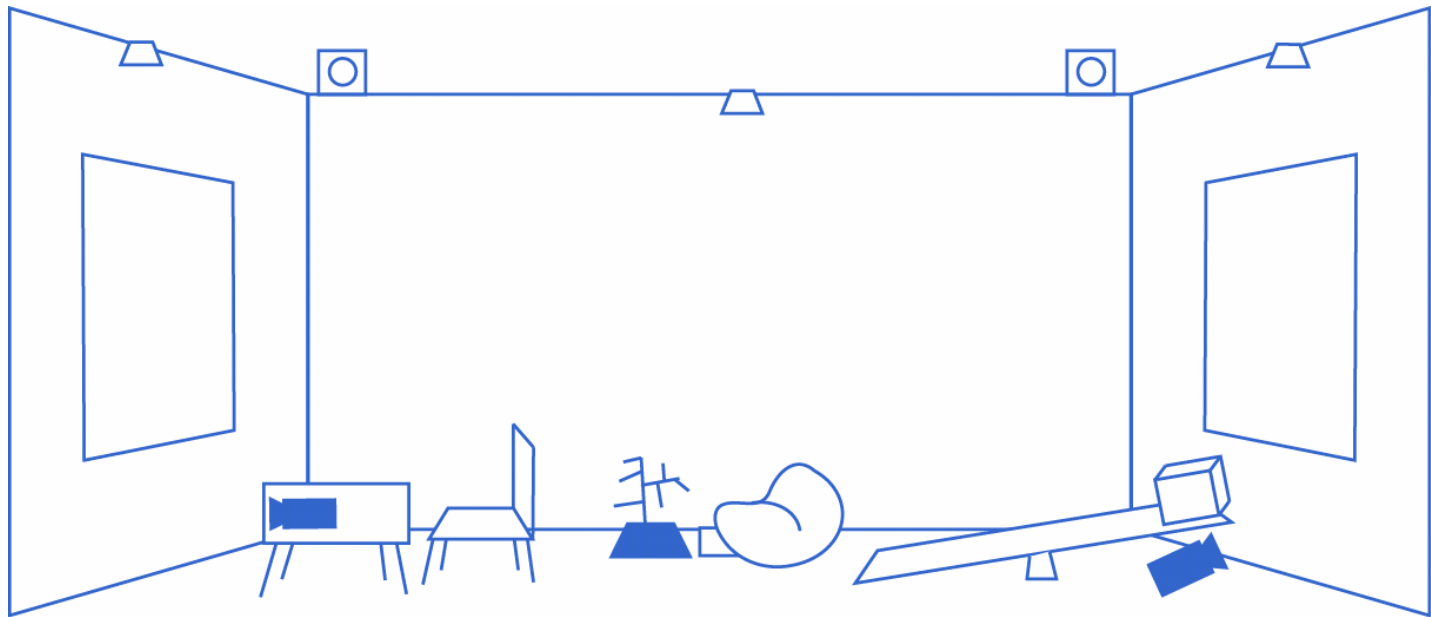
*In this environment, anyone is an amateur aesthete.*

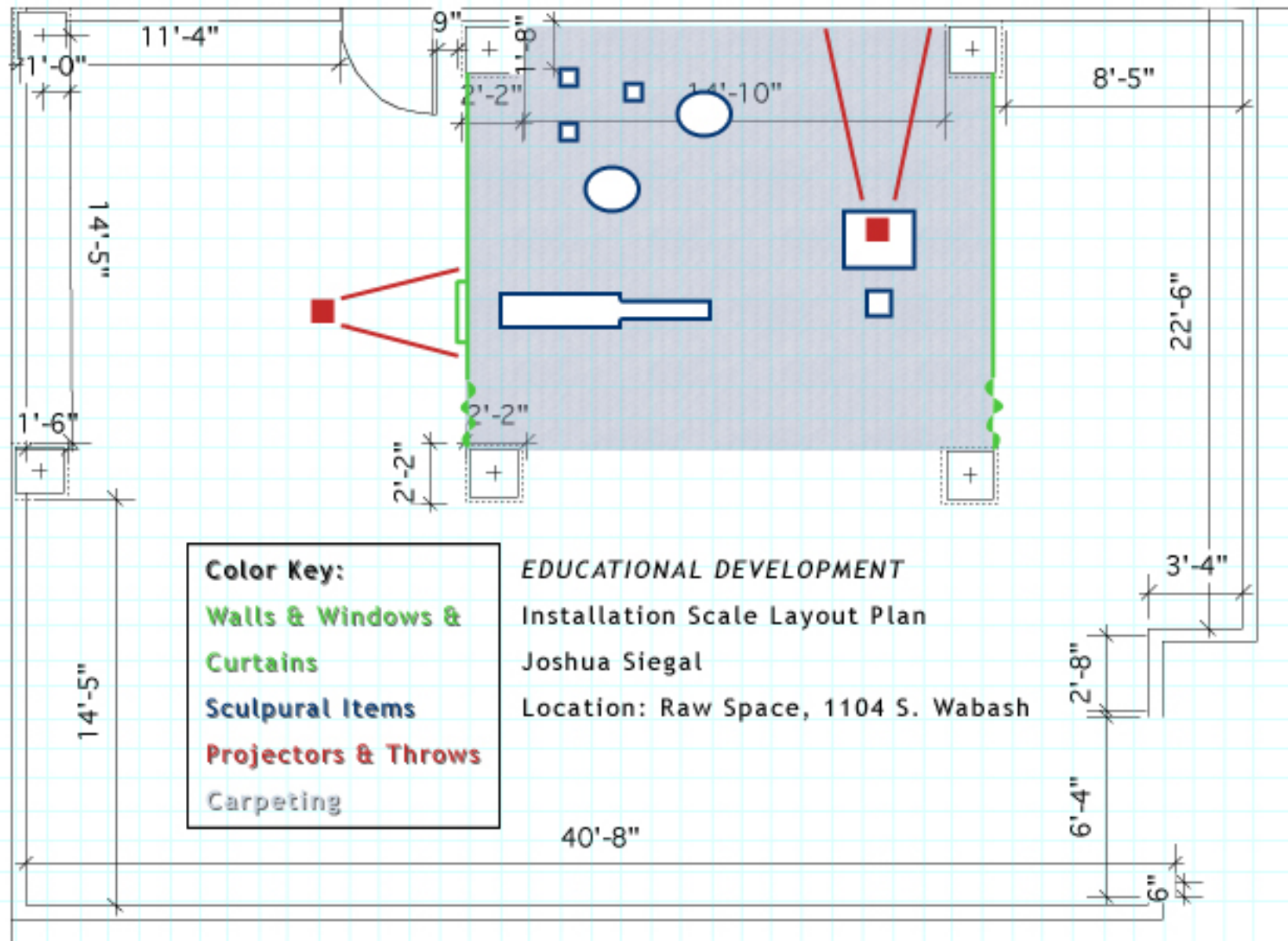
*Art then, must extend its hand and perform the jiu-jitsu of the salesman. It must seek still to delight the senses, stimulate the mind, rouse the spirit. But it must do so aggressively, for it can no longer afford the languor of its own presumed pre-eminence.*

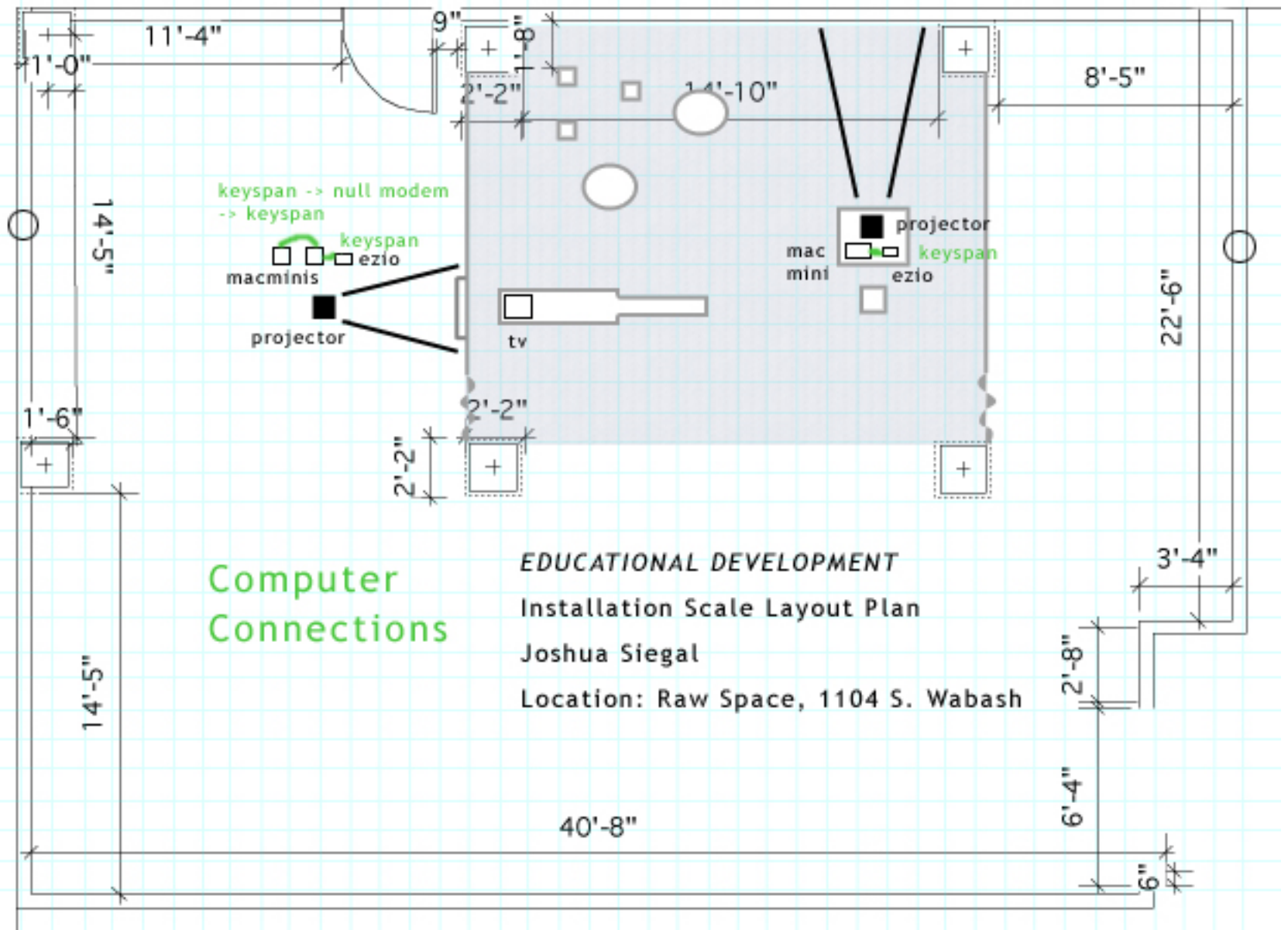
*Like all else, it must change, or die. If art dies yet again, it assigns itself forever to mummification in the halls of museums.*

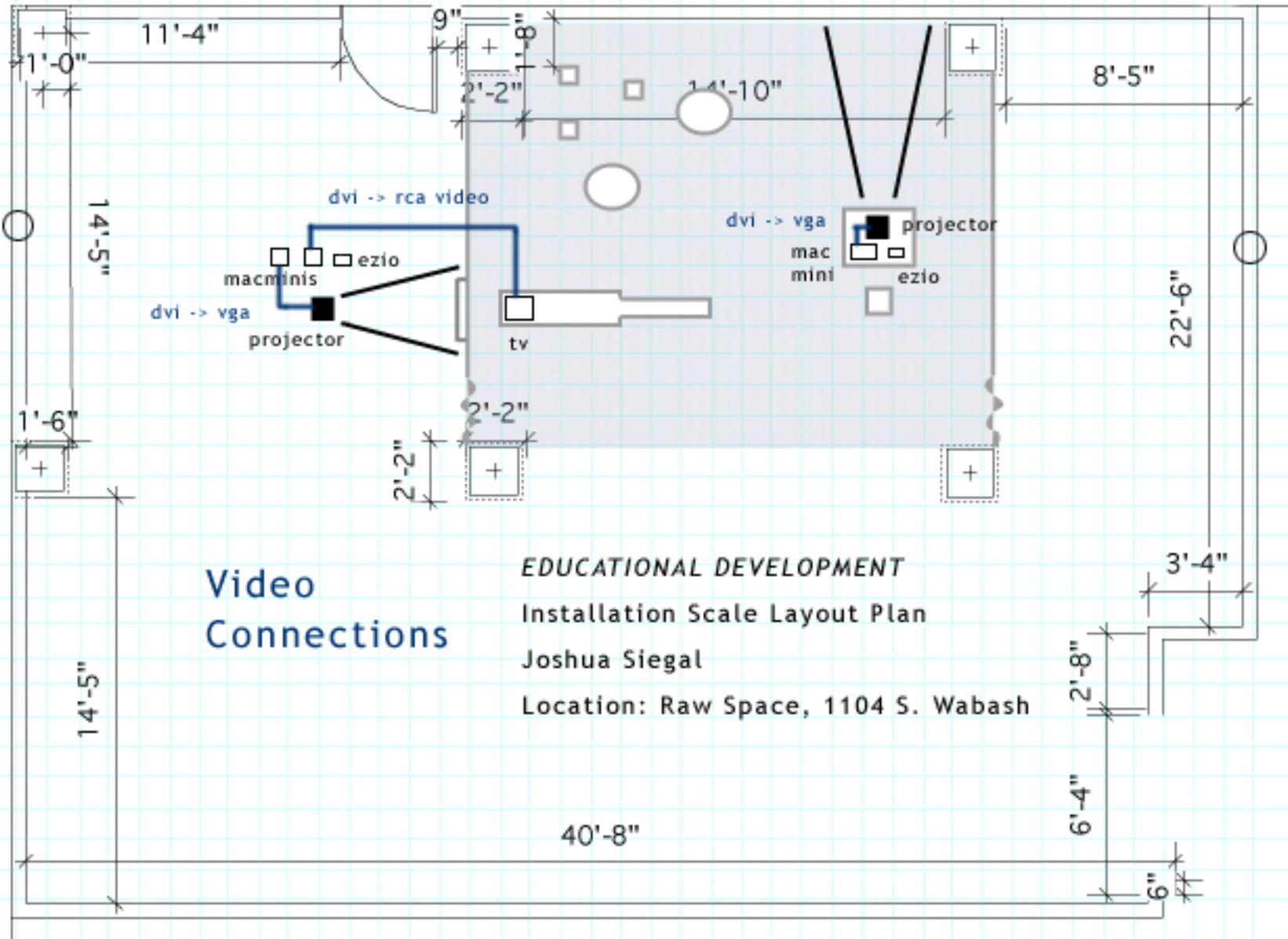
# Joshua Siegal

## Installation: *Educational Development*



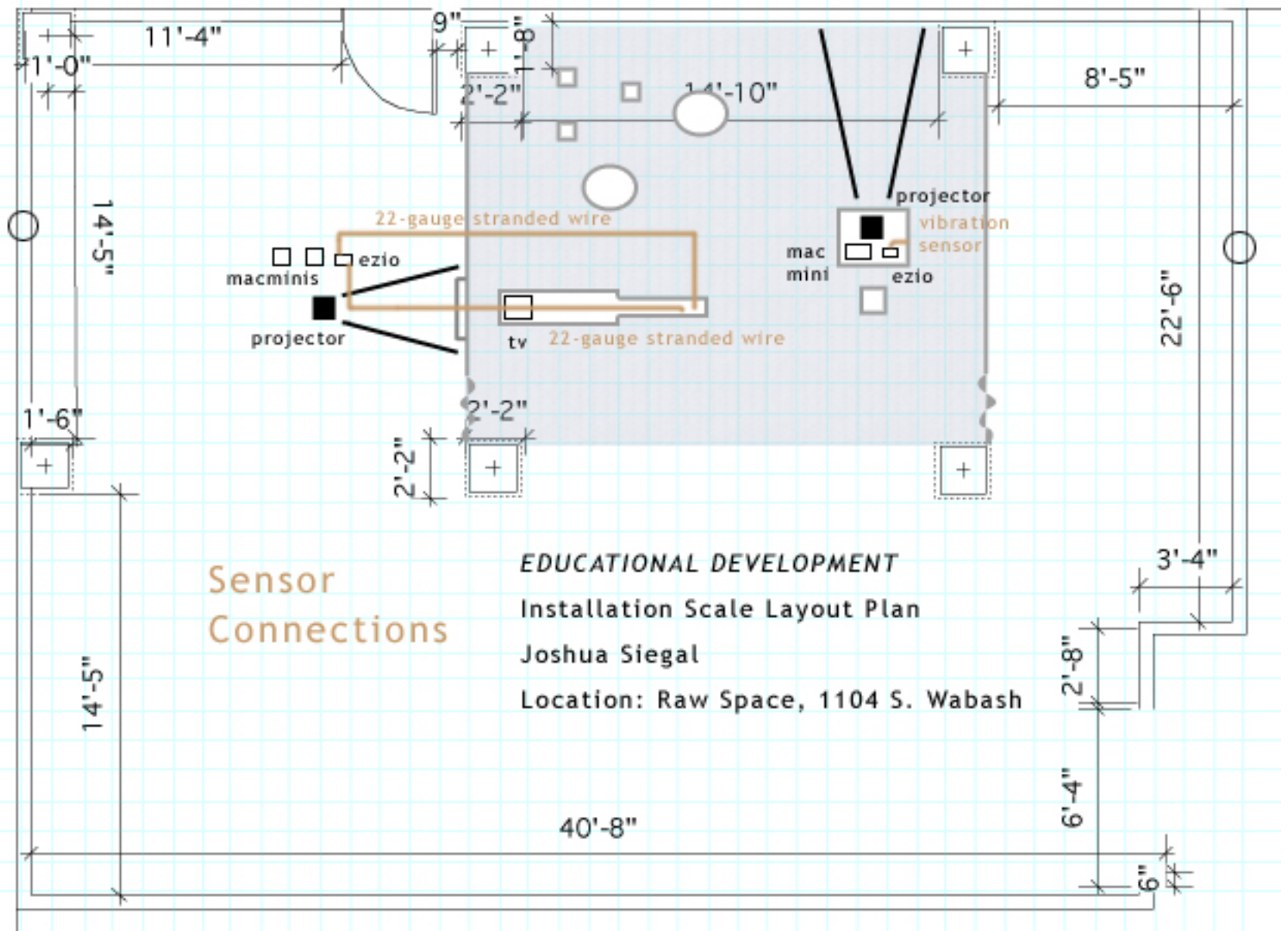


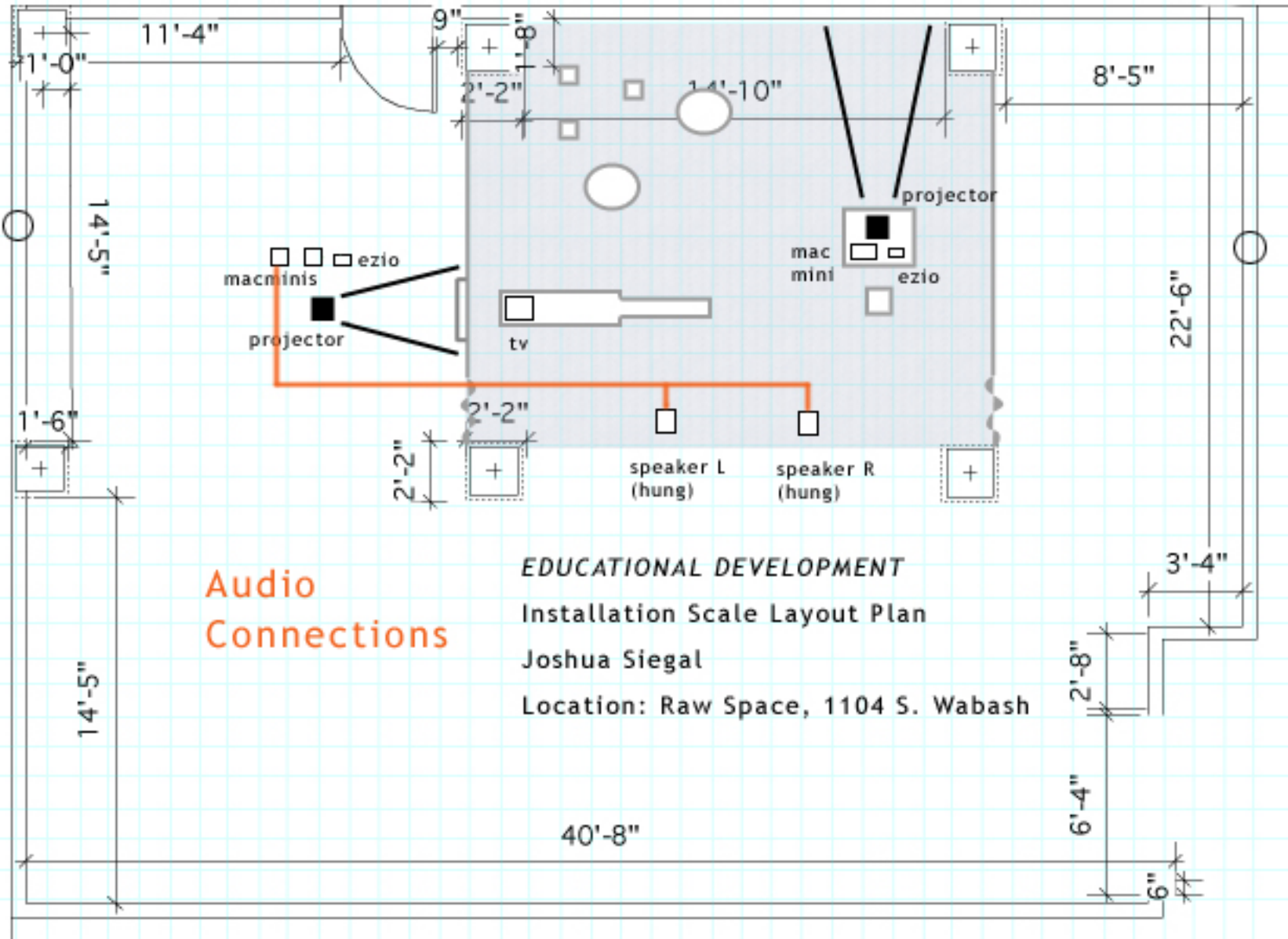




# Video Connections

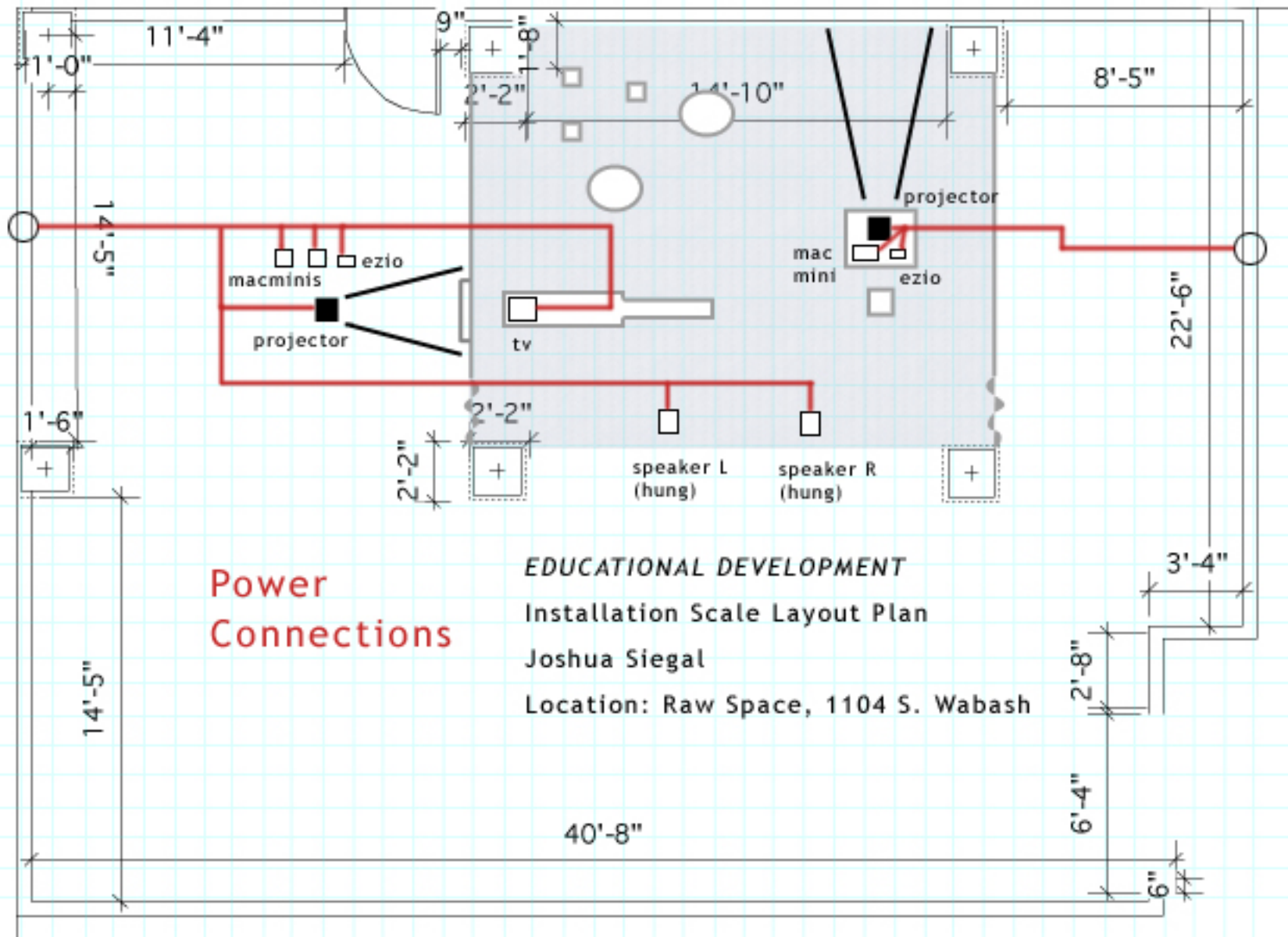
EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT  
 Installation Scale Layout Plan  
 Joshua Siegal  
 Location: Raw Space, 1104 S. Wabash





**Audio  
Connections**

*EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT*  
 Installation Scale Layout Plan  
 Joshua Siegal  
 Location: Raw Space, 1104 S. Wabash



**Power Connections**

*EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT*  
 Installation Scale Layout Plan  
 Joshua Siegal  
 Location: Raw Space, 1104 S. Wabash

## Construction Parts List:

8 ea. - 3/8" drywall - 4' x 8' sheets [ FLATS ]

14 ea. - 2x4 - 4' long [ FLATS ]

14 ea. - 2x4 - 7'5" long [ FLATS ]

7 ea. - 2x4 - 3'5" long [ FLATS ]

Drywall tape [ FLATS ]

Drywall mud [ FLATS ]

White paint (? Gallons)  
(Pittsburgh 520-1) [ FLATS ]

42 Corner brackets [ FLATS ]

2 ea. - 1x4 - 3'10.5" long [ WINDOW ]

1 ea. - 1x4 - 2' long [ WINDOW ]

1 ea. - 1x8 - 2' long [ WINDOW ]

1 ea. - molding - 2' long [ WINDOW ]

1.25" #6 drywall screws[  
FLATS/WINDOW/BRACES ]

Carpet - 18'10.5" x 16'0.5"

1/4" Padding to match above

100' 22-gauge stranded wire

10' flat-cable black grounded extension cord

16' flat-cable black grounded extension cord

40' black grounded extension cord

16-foot RCA video cable

1/4" ply - 2' x 6' [ SEESAW ]

Flange screws [ SEESAW ]

Black Paint [ SEESAW ]

80' Carpet tape

36 Corner Brackets [ BRACES ]

36 ea. - 2x4 - 3' long [ BRACES ]

3" screws [ BRACES ]

2 ea. - 6-outlet surge protectors (12' cord)

Anchors and dowell [ CURTAINS ]

Eyelets and hooks [ CURTAINS ]

Carpenter's Square

## **Educational Development**

*A Review of Compulsory Education in America  
(With Artistic Response)*

by

Joshua Siegal

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May 2007

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## Historical Background

Here is a neat little test: see if you can figure out who, among the following Americans, had the equivalent of a modern public school education (*eg*, graduated something like a high school after following through eight years of grammar school). Our candidates are: Herman Melville, Thomas Edison, Abraham Lincoln, Susan B. Anthony, Andrew Carnegie, George Washington, Nelson Rockefeller, Thomas Jefferson, Mark Twain, Jack London, and Benjamin Franklin. Have you guessed? The answer: *none*. None of these great thinkers, writers, captains of industry, inventors, or founders of the nation had the type of regular education that has been expected of young Americans since roughly the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century (Gatto, *Against*).

The purpose of this little game is not to raise the notion that compulsory public schooling of the modern sort is unnecessary to produce great things; everyone is aware that prodigies and exceptional people exist in the world. In fact, prior to the late 1800s, a person who had received formal education as we think of it today *was the exception* in the United States, and not the rule (Cubberly). So the little quiz above should serve to raise one's curiosity: what was the learning environment shared by these "unschooled" people – and by most of their peers – before the advent of compulsory education in the United States?

The roots of public education in the United States go back to a 1647 Massachusetts Colony law which mandated that every town establish a school with a regularly paid schoolmaster (Jernegan). While this situation might sound familiar to modern ears, these schools differed greatly from our public education system in that they were established with a basis in religious study and were funded directly and completely by the towns in which they were established.

Another type of schooling in the colonies was the "dame", or kitchen school, a form of home schooling in which a local kitchen belonging to a person of letters was used to prepare students for further education, often until later ages, *eg*, 8 or 9 years. In the Southern colonies, plantation life and indentured servitude meant that children of wealthy families bought private educations for their children; anyone else would be educated with those of their social and economic class in charity (or "pauper") schools. Though some of these schools were created by acts of government and were occasionally mandated in certain territories, it is important to note that these laws *only established schools* and did not compel students to attend them.

With the Enlightenment of the middle 18<sup>th</sup> Century, there came a greater distancing of the Church from its role in town government, including the administration of schools (Cubberly). This development saw the rise of secular education focused on literacy for other than Biblical reasons, the focus on the "three Rs" (reading, 'riting, and 'rithmetic), and the publication and wide use of secular primers for literacy and math. This period also saw a trend toward the disintegration of the town, as an agrarian population spread out into parishes, and, finally, into school "districts".

The geographical expansion of the population and its affect on education continued from the 18<sup>th</sup> through the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century, with a brief and serious derailment caused by the Revolutionary War. As new areas were settled during this period, land was set aside by federal and state governments for the purpose of education. Some states, including Ohio, Indiana, and others, even went so far as to enshrine free college education for state citizens into early versions of their state constitutions (ibid). However, the new states in the Midwest had populations drawn from both the New England township schooling tradition and the Southern charity school tradition. These two types of schooling competed with one another in the new territories, as did other colonial disparities, such as attitudes toward slavery.

At the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, new territories with rather liberal education policies were expanding on the traditions of the colonies from which their settlers had come. Public lands and institutions were set aside for education, and publicly funded or granted schools were either provided for or mandated in much of the country. However, it was still rare that education as we now know it was compulsory or even completed to the age of 18. Consider this: in 1860, there were only 321 high schools in the entire United States; over half of these were in Massachusetts. Illinois, for example, had only 10 high schools at that time, according to the *Report of the United States Commissioner of Education* in 1904 (ibid). All this sets the stage for what is to come next.

## **The “Need” for Compulsory Education**

What comes next is the Industrial Revolution in America. This paper will not attempt to address its causes or to debate its worth; there is ample reading on both subjects to be found elsewhere. That the Industrial Revolution happened, however, is of vast importance to the history of compulsory education in America.

The widespread adoption of assembly line practices and modern factory technology enabled the production of goods on a mass scale never seen before. The epitome of this was perhaps Henry Ford and his famously mass-produced Model T car, which provided affordable automobile transportation and made his company famous throughout the world. Much is made of Ford’s generosity to his workers. He paid them five dollars per day, a lot of money in 1914, with the explanation that on that salary, they could then afford to buy his cars. Then, in 1926, he reduced the six-day work week to five days *without lowering pay*, and gave a similar reason for this as for his support of the new eight-hour work day (Crowther):

“The industry of this country could not long exist if factories generally went back to the ten hour day, because the people would not have the time to consume the goods produced. For instance, a workman would have little use for an automobile if he had to be in the shops from dawn until dusk. And that would react in countless directions, for the automobile, by enabling people to get about quickly and easily, gives them a chance to find out what is going on in the world-which

leads them to a larger life that requires more food, more and better goods, more books, more music -- more of everything.”

But there appears to be more to Ford-the-manager’s generosity to his employees than simply a shrewd and far-sighted economic plan favoring ample time and wages for laborers to consume goods and services. In 1913, when Ford first introduced the assembly line to his factory in Highland Park, Michigan, he initially hired skilled mechanical craftsmen to work the line. This was not a choice; before the widespread use of mass production, tradesmen gained skills through a system of apprenticeships, wherein they acquired the *set* of skills necessary to produce their crafts and products. When these skilled mechanics were put to work on Ford’s assembly line, most of them simply walked off. The attrition rate was atrocious: to retain 100 assembly line workers, Ford had to hire 963 men (Crawford)! Eventually, the day rate was doubled, and Ford found that he could further increase production by literally speeding up the assembly line. Initially, Ford described this pay increase, with its lower attrition rate and accompanying productivity boost, as “one of the finest cost-cutting moves we ever made” (ibid).

Whether the cause for the higher rate was Ford’s genius as a labor economist or his need to keep his assembly line workers from quitting, it was clear from the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century that the locally based, traditional school system of the United States was not going to serve the needs of the burgeoning Industrial age. The theory of “scientific management”, first applied directly to labor practices in industry, was advanced by the likes of Frederick Taylor, who said: “What I demand of the worker, is not to produce any longer by his own initiative, but to execute punctiliously the orders given down to their minutest details” (Gatto, *History*). Unsurprisingly, the need for workers who could be scientifically managed and who would not simply walk off the line was anticipated by captains of industry, and Taylor’s principles began to affect thinking on what kind of education the modern population of workers should have (Rees).

This interpretation of the purpose of education was not a fringe idea among business leaders. By the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the ideas of Frederick Taylor had become gospel in the Industrial world. Men no less powerful than John D. Rockefeller, through his General Education Board, gave money to educational institutions all over the country; though philanthropic, these donations of millions of dollars helped to advance the cause of putting the education of American children under the sway of business interests (Fleming). This was both understood and debated at the time, and was the subject of a series of editorials in the *New York Times* in January 1917. From the editorial of the 21<sup>st</sup> (Lionni):

“Unblushing materialism finds its crowning triumph in the theory of the modern school. In the whole plan there is not a spiritual thought, not an idea that rises above the need of finding money for the pocket and food for the belly ... It is a matter of instant inquiry, for very sober consideration, whether the General Education Board, indeed, may not with the immense funds at its disposal be able to shape to its will practically all the institutions in which the youth of the country are trained. If this experiment bears the expected fruit we shall see imposed upon

the country a system of education born of the theories of one or two men, and replacing a system which has been the natural outgrowth of the American character and the needs of the American people ... The plans of the General Education Board call for careful examination.”

And from Rockefeller’s General Education Board itself, in 1912 (Gatto, *History*):

“In our dream...people yield themselves with perfect docility to our molding hands....We shall not try to make these people or any of their children into philosophers or men of learning or men of science. We have not to raise up from among them authors, educators, poets or men of letters. We shall not search for embryo great artists, painters, musicians, nor lawyers, doctors, preachers, politicians, statesmen, of whom we have ample supply. The task we set before ourselves is a very simple as well as a very beautiful one.....we will organize our children...and teach them to do in a perfect way the things their mothers and fathers are doing in a perfect way.”

The idea that the United States should have an educational system fit for the needs of mass industry was not lost on the political powers of the country either. Addressing a gathering of business leaders before the First World War, President Woodrow Wilson had this to say on the matter (Gatto, *History*):

“We want one class to have a liberal education. We want another class, a very much larger class of necessity, to forgo the privilege of a liberal education and fit themselves to perform specific manual tasks.”

And so, modern, “scientific” education, to fit the utopian ideal of mass production and consumption, was on its way. There was only one problem: how to get people to actually attend these schools.

## **Legislating Compulsory Education**

Before addressing the machinations that led to the adoption of legally enforced schooling in the United States, let us turn our attention once more to the state of things in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century. Several competing notions about public education, combined with an agrarian expansion of the American population into new territories, had produced a situation in which land for schools was generally provided for, and in which the maintenance of education was occasionally mandated by law. Note again that there was no contemporary law compelling students to attend school. The first state to enact legislation requiring public schooling was Massachusetts, in 1852, and this law only covered children between the ages of eight and fourteen. It also required that these children and young adults attend school for just twelve weeks a year!

The following is a chart that shows dates for the adoption of compulsory education laws in various states and territories (Cubberley):

1852 - Massachusetts	1875 - Maine
1865 - District of Columbia	New Jersey
1867 - Vermont	1876 - Wyoming Territory
1871 - New Hampshire	1877 - Ohio
Washington Territory	1879 - Wisconsin
1872 - Connecticut	1883 - Rhode Island
New Mexico Territory	Illinois
1873 - Nevada	Dakota Territory
1874 - New York	Montana Territory
Kansas	
California	

By 1918, all 48 states in the Union had a compulsory education law (Gatto, *History*). Most of the states, as with Massachusetts, only required between twelve and twenty weeks of education per year, though the age range for students broadened and the length of time required rose consistently throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> Century (Cubberley).

As we have seen, in 1860, there were only a few hundred high schools in the United States. By 1890, there were 2,526 of them, and 68% of that student population attended public schools, rather than private ones. By 1920, the percentage of students in public, rather than private, schools had risen to 91% (ibid).

All of this occurred during the advances in “scientific management” concurrent with the advent of the Industrial Revolution in America, and this was not a coincidence. By 1914, the Federal Bureau of Education had endorsed a business-oriented school model much like our own, one which introduced divisions of the school day into various periods and had students moving around the school at the ringing of a bell. This plan, created by William Wirt for the steel town of Gary, Indiana, was supposed to make use of new efficiencies from the ideas of “scientific management” to allow double the number of school children to be educated at once. Part of this plan, known outside the town as “the Gary Plan”, involved the now familiar practice, then novel, of having teachers stay in the same place and repeat their lessons before groups of students who traveled from room to room (Gatto, *History*).

Although this plan did allow for things such as play-time and vocational training, it was criticized strongly by parents for, among other things, being an excuse to educate the children of steel workers to adjust themselves to factory life (Volk).

## The Reaction to Compulsory Education

After its endorsement by the Federal Bureau of Education, the Gary Plan was exported to New York City for a tryout in the Bronx. Wirt was brought in as the new Superintendent of Schools, and after a trial period of only seventy-five days, the plan was strongly recommended by the New York City Comptroller for implementation throughout the

entire city (Gatto, *History*). Compulsory education had now mandated industrial school management techniques. When the schools opened, street riots ensued, in part because of the idea that, as mills for industry, the Gary Schools were short-changing their young charges (Volk). These riots included up to 10,000 people in some neighborhoods, among them students of the schools themselves.

Partly because of the riots, Mayor John Purroy Mitchel was thrown out of office in 1918. The new Mayor, John F. Hylan, dissolved the Gary Schools, calling them “a system by which Rockefellers and their allies hope to educate coming generations in the ‘doctrine of contentment,’ another name for social serfdom”, a comment which correlates with certain of the complaints of parents that the schools were not doing enough actual teaching (Gatto, *History*).

This is one graphic case of the resistance that the new compulsory education generated among much of the public. But what of the less obvious cases elsewhere? The early 20<sup>th</sup> Century American educational historian Ellwood Cubberley (cited elsewhere in this paper), in 1934 described the process of legally mandating education this way: “everywhere laws have been enacted only after overcoming strenuous opposition” (ibid).

## **The Legacy of Compulsory Education**

Of course, many of the “innovations” of the Gary Schools are still with us. Though the Gary School experiment was eventually deemed a failure, the principles and methods derived from “scientific management” are still pandemic in our schools. Little by little, the control of public education was taken out of the hands of parents and communities and placed in the hands of a group of “professionals”, often with ties to industry.

As the 20<sup>th</sup> Century continued, centralization of compulsory education intensified. While the United States was home to 271,000 schools in 1920, by 1980, that number had been reduced to a mere 83,000 schools - even as the population of the country increased many times over (Berry). While this consolidation was happening, local control of schools by citizens was being squeezed out as well. Between 1930 and 1990, the number of school *districts* in the United States decreased from 144,102 to just 15,361; during that time, the ratio of adults on school boards, compared to the overall population, shrunk from one in sixty-three to only one in five thousand (Gatto, *History*).

The American public education system is often criticized as a failing enterprise, both by those who wish it well and by those who wish it ill. They cite figures such as those of the National Center for Education Statistics’ 2003 study showing that *30 million adult* Americans fall into a literacy category called “Below Basic” (NCES), or that literacy rates for much of the country were higher in the 1840s than they are now (Richman).

Perhaps the American education system is not failing at all, but succeeding, for the sake of our industries, at producing legions of mass-produced workers and consumers. Our compulsory public education system attempts to train us through the legacy of “scientific

management” to follow instructions without questioning them, to take for granted the economic system in which we live our lives, and to master meaningless “skills” without ever learning what they are for.

### ***Educational Development: An Artistic Response***

So far, we have not touched on the artistic aspect of the American educational system. To be sure, there are many such topics, including the affect of our educational system on arts instruction, awareness, appreciation, aesthetic development, etc., not to mention the possible relationship between arts instruction and other types of learning.

Such an investigation is not the purpose of this essay. After all, this thesis paper is part of a larger work: an interactive installation at Columbia College Chicago between March 30 and April 19, 2007. This installation was an artistic response to the information presented above.

In the age of media that has compounded (or been enabled by) many of the problems in our educational system, artists are confronted with the stark reality that they are no longer popularly relevant. After decades of post-modern art, the thrashing social critiques and identity-based personal tirades have spent the last of their shock value. It is common for the average cable TV subscriber to see far more outlandish stunts in a week, and for more banal (and less challenging) purpose, than could have been appreciated in preceding decades of performance art.

Further, as mass media continues to proliferate, more and more citizens become aesthetically schooled by television, film, and advertising ethos. When a contemporary museum-goer takes in *La Grande Jette*, he or she is also taking with them a scene in the movie *Ferris Beuler's Day Off* or a dozen other or so popular references. This is old territory. But what the contemporary art patron also brings to their gaze is the accumulated experience of literally thousands upon thousands of hours of staring, consciously or unconsciously, at images directed by human eyes, hands, and minds.

This must be a unique situation. One envisions no other time in history during which so much human-created imagery was available to be seen. Television viewing habits intensify, movies draw ever-larger crowds, and advertising creeps its way steadily into our periphery. It is not uncommon now for people to prefer the ideas and imagery of advertising to the media that are paying for the advertisements: witness the Superbowl.

In this climate, the artist must take the question of audience very seriously. “Takin it to the streets” and putting your work up on myspace.com are not the same thing. The current artist who does not see fit to preach art to other artists faces a conundrum. Sell out and work for an advertising agency’s “creative department”? The work will certainly be seen, but can something be considered artistic when it is subject to the approval of a Board of Directors? How is this different from working in court for an 18<sup>th</sup>-Century nobleman? Will such artists find themselves painting artistically conscious works at

night for the local coffeehouse while using their talents to apologize beautifully for Big Pharma during the day? Or must contemporary artists be content scream at the backs of a public whose gaze has been lured off with the succor of the moving image and the product brand identity?

Enter the video artist, hope of a generation! I wasn't born yet when Nam June Paik strapped TV sets to Charlotte Moorman's boobs, but there must have been some hope was that someday this new medium would allow artists to crack into the enormous pool of media that has been bubbling up from its own froth for decades with no signs of ceasing. Unfortunately, video art, spawned from the performance art and visual art traditions, seems to be relegated, like its forebearers, to the gallery. Think about this: I pay five bucks to go see a local band at a bar, and I buy my own liquor after I get in. The establishment makes money. At the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, I also pay to get in, but they survive on *donations*. So, it's the same old patronage system that has been going on for centuries, if not longer.

There is a difference, however: if you wanted to see stunning visual works of art before the modern media era, you had to go to a museum. Now, all you have to do is switch on your television. More people have probably seen Picasso's work on television or on a cheap poster print than in a museum, anyway. The upshot is that, in the media era, the patronage system becomes even more self-referential and irrelevant than ever before, and third- and fourth-generation (ad infinitum) iterations of work become acceptable.

So what is the contemporary media artist to do? In the case of this installation, *Educational Development*, the aim is to fight fire with fire, and on two fronts simultaneously. First, it is my goal to entertain my audience with an immersion environment that contains various areas of interest, where the viewer is entreated to sit and play with interactive sculptural video elements, while accosted by sound and light. It is my hope both to mimic the overstimulating environment to which media-age people have become acclimated and to mock an understimulating educational environment by pushing its opposite on the viewer.

The space itself is a forgery of an elementary school classroom, down to the nauseating prison-grade color schemes (Fielding). Each "station", or series, in the installation will provide media that attempts to entertain the viewers by making fun of their own acquiescence to the school system, even as it educates them about its history and the particular emotional blackmail that occurs within it.

This installation should not be misinterpreted as an attack on public schooling in general. After all, even supposedly good suburban public schools have been noted to be lacking in comparison to other modes of education (Hu). Even "good" public schools were still forged in the same slag pile as sweatshops and coal mines.

Once upon a time, education was seen as a way to make sure that most of the population had basic mastery over a few core subjects, considered to be the pathways to self-education. It did not take on the role of surrogate parent or even vocational trainer.

Students were free to pursue their interests in the wider world and to take apprenticeships and master diverse skills as their interests developed. Then, near the time of the Industrial Revolution in America, influential people decided that the American population should be molded for the coming factory age, and molded by force to respond to psychological, intellectual, and emotional pressure from the authority of an institution. Our current educational system – and society – is the legacy of their success in this molding experiment, and to drive this point home using a mockery of the very techniques which that experiment has perfected is the goal of *Educational Development*.

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# Columbia College Chicago

## Interdisciplinary Arts Thesis Project Form

INTERDISCIPLINARY ARTS DEPARTMENT  
Michelle Citron, Chairperson

Structural Concerns: address technical aspects of the work, including methodology, style, craftsmanship and general skill development exhibited in the work.

**The use of space within the formal installation is memorable. The Objects compose a larger framework of understanding the concept of “school” alongside with definite “old school” historicist ideals. The use of these items are obvious renditions of “school” however I feel that the use of them in such a sculptural manner highlights the ability of the artist to understand the use of gallery as a given framework of experimenting with space. I feel with time and more working opportunities these ideas of “installation” can assist Siegal with developing a strong conceptual narrative which can continue his ideas of education and political motivation. Time is on the artist’s side, as well as his interest in research and politics. Semantics of what is said vs. what is not said is the core of the artist’s voice. I urge Siegal to develop this, and focus on this aspect of his work and ideas. Baudrillard discusses what the notion of unknow vs. knowing, the same can be channeled into what Siegal is exploring here- target the uncomfortable question, and go to the social source where this is being practiced or learned (he did!).**

**Conceptually the work is uplifting as it begins to go beyond the typical associations with this topic of learning, and questioning the value of education. The work does not preach an often found Art School mantra - rather the work begins to narrate a larger issue of the political conundrums of our time. What is the value of education next to the almighty dollar of a disappearing generation? What is the value of education? Questioning these tomes in academia is fraught with narcissistic attitudes, however – realizing this point of view - Siegal took his work, his ideas to a real school setting where social collaboration begins. Questioning the Chicago Public School student within workshops with teachers is smart, and pushes the larger ideas that Siegal understand the need for social collaboration to see work into reality. The fact that these qualities loom in the work, a haunting, dark quality was present in the work as well as obvious consideration to craftsmanship, composure and composition. The strongest element is the concept, as Siegal attempts to grapple with questions that society asks only within the confines of academia or the corner liberal newspaper. What makes a good artist? Commitment to time and understanding that the work is ongoing and the questions are paramount in the development of a career and working practice.**

**I feel the artist needs to study the history of installation arts to notice the formal tendency to his style. The sound was strong, and could exist as an element on its own.**

Conceptual Concerns: discuss the stylistic approach involved, including issues of originality and/or appropriation and address the relationship (if any) between personal expressiveness and social responsibility within the work.

**Social responsibility is present. The work embraces what the attempts of the art world cannot seem to embrace, working with others in the formation of the work. The work is not “studio” driven, the social space is what the most interesting part is. I would like to know more about as a viewer, having the book to register thoughts of the interaction of the written questions is not enough, I feel having more interaction with the PROCESS might lift the work in a great way. I see this piece as a beginning, not an end, this is exciting! The work is researched, heartfelt and clear in its attempt to strive for connection with students. The more opportunity that students have with STUDIO SPACE at a school is needed. Seeing the work in place for the first time with only a week set up, is not ideal. Within this constraint, I feel that Siegal has done what the work would say, Illicit a larger dialogue about education.**

Intention vs. Reception: based on the Thesis proposal and aesthetics statement, has the student achieved what s/he stated in their objectives?

**Yes.**

**I feel that the work is a beginning language for the artist. I am familiar with the ideas and work of Siegal, his questions are social and political issues and how they fall into the practice of everyday life. This is expressed well within the installation. To turn theory into an emerging construct of art where sculpture, theory, sound and video and social interaction are at play is complex. The piece appeared effortless, and strong. Experimentation is key to the core of a practicing artist; Siegal needs to**

**develop a studio practice after his graduation - where his ideas can be expressed, and acquired through this dedication.**

Overall Evaluation: Is the work of acceptable high quality?

- Yes
- Somewhat
- No

Student: Josh Siegal \_\_\_\_\_ Date: april 07 \_\_\_\_\_

Evaluator: Stuart Keeler \_\_\_\_\_

# Columbia College Chicago

## Interdisciplinary Arts Thesis Project Form

INTERDISCIPLINARY ARTS DEPARTMENT

Michelle Citron, Chairperson

**Structural Concerns:** address technical aspects of the work, including methodology, style, craftsmanship, and general skill development exhibited in the work.

Structurally, this was a pretty complex , room-sized “classroom” composed of three work stations. The first, consisted of a life sized teeter-totter in front of a rear screen projected “window” on which sat a television monitor. The second part was an antique school desk, ( complete with a true/false test ) which had a hidden projector in it, projecting images on to a very convincing “blackboard” . Sitting at the desk activated the projector- sometimes. There were apparently some technical problems with this area, but both times I engaged with the piece it worked fine. The third and perhaps least successful part was a corner “play area” where participants were invited to create an impossible sculpture of “tiny lumber people” . Although the concept was solid, perhaps because of the impossibility of the task, it quickly became a one-note joke. The area, however, is important and just needs a little re-working .

All of the screens dealt with some aspect of elementary education in this country with many references to the “Industrial Revolution” as being a model for our educational delivery systems.

The craftsmanship was at a very high level. Josh designed and built virtually all of the elements including the teeter-totter, even carpeting the entire floor in order to conceal all cords and cables. There was also an accompanying sound piece of children which, unfortunately suffered from competition from another nearby sound piece as well as ambient room sounds. Nonetheless, it did add to the total “school experience” .

**Conceptual Concerns:** discuss stylistic approach involved, including issues of originality and/or appropriation and address the relationship between personal expressiveness and social responsibility within the work.

This is all Josh....funny, sarcastic, slightly annoying, genuinely interdisciplinary and interactive!

Although he clearly had a difficult time with elementary school, this is not just a personal diatribe. Josh currently works for the Board of Education, has done a lot of research about the history of public education in this country and wants us to think about our own experiences. He also is bent on subverting our nostalgia about those school years. However, this is not just about early childhood

education. The true/false test on the school desk ( which, interestingly enough, was filled out dozens of people) took cynical but very amusing jabs at higher education; especially at the post modern relativism so popular today.

Although much of the installation was a bit heavy handed in its message, its humor saved it from pedantry. With some “tweaking” of the weaker elements, I would love to see this installation travel; especially to schools and perhaps universities with large teacher education programs!

**Intention vs. Reception: based on the Thesis proposal and aesthetic statement has the student achieved what he/she stated in their objectives?**

Indeed! Josh stated that he wanted to make us think about our own educational experiences and he did it with wit and humor. The furniture in the classroom, the video images , especially the “blackboard” animation and the interactivity of the entire installation were quite successful.

Overall Evaluation: Is the work of acceptable high quality?

  X   Yes

           Somewhat

           No

Student: \_\_\_\_\_ Josh Siegal \_\_Date \_\_\_\_\_ May 1, 2007 \_\_\_\_\_

Evaluator:   Suzanne Cohan-Lange

# Columbia College Chicago

## Interdisciplinary Arts Thesis Project Form

INTERDISCIPLINARY ARTS DEPARTMENT

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**Structural Concerns:** address technical aspects of the work, including methodology, style, craftsmanship and general skill development exhibited in the work.

The piece was well crafted, colorful and engaging, visually interesting, and drew the audience in. Its childlike qualities were honest and the ideas put forth were manifest in a manner that brought forth memories without “talking down” to adults. I was thoroughly engaged in the desk, test, chalkboard/video screen, and drawing project. The teeter-totter had more problems for me, both from a visual and content standpoint.

**Conceptual Concerns:** discuss the stylistic approach involved, including issues of originality and/or appropriation and address the relationship (if any) between personal expressiveness and social responsibility within the work.

The subject was approached with originality and imagination. Much of it was clever as well as being fun and funny. Josh’s objectives were clear in every way, but also they [were] not obvious. The piece revealed itself as the audience participant attended to the suggested tasks and listed and read the information presented. It was fun to participate in the experience. And I am sure the content was accessible to a wide range of viewers.

**Intention vs. Reception:** based on the Thesis proposal and aesthetics statement, has the student achieved what s/he stated in their objectives?

In general, the work gets its point across.

**Overall Evaluation:** Is the work of acceptable high quality?

Yes  
 Somewhat  
 No

Student: Joshua Siegal

Evaluator: Nana Shineflug 5/2/07



**Educational Development, 2007.** Sculpture of Tiny Wooden Men stamped with Alphabet Letters.



**Educational Development, 2007.** Computers and Projector showing rear throw of unfinished window.



**Educational Development, 2007.** Framed-out recessed window and see-saw apparatus. Note black blocks for sensors and cables running under constructed wall.



**Educational Development, 2007.** Desk assembled with computer, projector, and sensor inside.



**Educational Development, 2007.** Inside of desk shows sensor, computer, projector. Final power supply solution will be concealed beneath carpet.



**Educational Development, 2007.** Solution for wires to come through pipes of SeeSaw and under carpeting and wall.



**Educational Development, 2007.** Finished desk and framed-out chalkboard projection. Animation is stop-action done with chalk on a chalkboard of the artist's creation.



**Educational Development, 2007.** Sculpture area, after use by audience.



**Educational Development, 2007.** View from the seat of the SeeSaw during operation. Window image undulates up and down to simulate teeter-totter action between motion graphics segments on the television.



**Educational Development, 2007.** Entrance to exhibit.



**Educational Development, 2007.** Final installation.

Name (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

Please select either TRUE or FALSE for each of the questions below. In the EXTRA CREDIT section, you may add a personal essay, if you think it will help.

1. If it is presented as course material, or as part of a curriculum, it must be important.

TRUE

FALSE

2. Assimilation of information by way of media constitutes a mediated experience.

TRUE

FALSE

3. Nothing can ever be completely opposite of anything else.

TRUE

FALSE

4. If "the media is the message", then it follows logically that content is irrelevant.

TRUE

FALSE

5. If deconstructionists fall under the Law of Entropy, communication will become ever more difficult.

TRUE

FALSE

6. Choosing is an act of learning.

TRUE

FALSE

7. Gutenberg's Bible and Murdoch's News Corp are manifestations of the same phenomenon.

TRUE

FALSE

EXTRA CREDIT:

<b>QUESTION</b>	<b>TRUE</b>	<b>FALSE</b>	<b>OTHER</b>	<b>NR</b>	<b>ANS</b>	<b>% CORR.</b>
1. If it is presented as course material, or as part of a curriculum, it must be important.	32%	59%	6%	3%	<b>TRUE</b>	<b>32%</b>
2. Assimilation of information by way of media constitutes a mediated experience.	58%	30%	6%	5%	<b>FALSE</b>	<b>30%</b>
3. Nothing can ever be completely opposite of anything else.	50%	39%	5%	5%	<b>TRUE</b>	<b>50%</b>
4. If "the media is the message", then it follows logically that content is irrelevant.	29%	58%	6%	7%	<b>FALSE</b>	<b>58%</b>
5. If deconstructionists fall under the Law of Entropy, communication will become ever more difficult.	56%	17%	12%	15%	<b>TRUE</b>	<b>56%</b>
6. Choosing is an act of learning.	77%	12%	6%	5%	<b>TRUE</b>	<b>77%</b>
7. Gutenberg's Bible and Murdoch's News Corp are manifestations of the same phenomenon.	53%	14%	18%	15%	<b>TRUE</b>	<b>53%</b>

## EXTRA CREDIT / OTHER RESPONSES

---

I'm scared!

Uhhh...

Are you trying to make me think? Nice.

[drawing of flower and tree]

!

?

Everything I say is a lie! He who rides a tiger never can dismount.

"A poopy diaper has its advantages for me and for my mother" True false? Rowan

Help! I'm just a little fetus. I don't understand this test. Please, don't make me go to PUBLIC SCHOOL - or I'll

I missed one.

I don't need extra credit!

Steve Gutenberg of the Police Academy films?

HA!

Hmmm

Wow! Very deep

Oh Poo!

Deep!

Josh has become very very cynical (also very clever!) [heart] S

"it's all rigged..." Lena Luna

thank you

I named my hamster "George" after my best friend + cousin, NOT after George HW or W Bush.

I am teaching you something very important about listening

Cheese & Grits [doodle]

?

Very Cool

I am the walrus koo koo kachoooo!

am I doing it right?

Everything can become true, only if you make it in your mind

?

I like Grapes!

A+ for me I liked this. Thank you.

Trying to confuse me now, huh?

Diadic thinking (dualism) is typically inadequate

This desk radiates heat which makes sitting here even more uncomfortable than the video does.

Can I receive X-tra credit if I draw a picture? How much does visual learning aid in comprehension?

hmm.

What?

I [heart] yoshee.

What the fuck?

This show is ridiculous. You make a few interesting observations but I do not see a thesis in this show that is the center is the core Reality is an illusion

[graffiti tag]

Don't understand

Q

<b>NUM CORR.</b>	<b>PER. CORRECT</b>	<b>PER. OF STUDENTS WITH SCORE</b>
0	0%	3%
1	14%	8%
2	29%	14%
3	43%	15%
4	57%	33%
5	71%	18%
6	86%	9%
7	100%	0%